WEAVING WORDS
A Diachronic Analysis of the Representation of Gender, Sexuality and Otherness in Women's (Re)Writings of *La Belle et la Bête*

Thesis submitted for the award of PhD

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Abstract

This thesis endeavours to conduct a comparative analysis between two corpora of fairy tales. The first group of tales dates from approximately 1696 to 1756 and originated from the two French vogues of literary fairy tales from this era. The second group comprises contemporary Anglophone rewritings dating from 1979 to 1999. The purpose of this comparison is to investigate the lineage of similar tales by women writers and the representations of gender roles, sexuality and otherness in the tales, in light of the authors' social contexts. The aim of this comparison is to uncover a common subversive message in both groups of tales that is specific to women authors in particular. The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on an interdisciplinary, comparative approach incorporating feminist criticism, intertextuality, reception theory and reader response theory. The tale type to be examined is the animal-bridegroom tale, more commonly known as *La Belle et la Bête* or 'Beauty and the Beast'. In order to provide a context with which to compare the modern versions of the tale, Apuleius' myth, 'Cupid and Psyche', is examined alongside tales by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French authors, namely Mme d'Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard, Charles Perrault, Mme Leprince de Beaumont and Mme de Villeneuve. Subsequently, these are compared with contemporary rewritings by Angela Carter, Robin McKinley, Emma Donoghue, Tanith Lee and Wendy Wheeler. Both corpora are analysed and compared in order to uncover a dialogic relationship that exists within women's fairy tales throughout history.

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INTRODUCTION

'Life is all about encounters with the other.'
Emma Donoghue

The first literary fairy-tale vogue in France during the seventeenth century spawned many of the tales that we know and still tell today. Almost all of these tales were influenced strongly by oral literature. Peasants' folk tales were transformed into printed tales, directed at upper-class readers and thus, evolved over time into the versions of 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'Cinderella' and 'Snow White' that are still popular today. Fairy tales nowadays are often regarded as a harmless genre for children and not that significant on the whole when compared to more highly regarded literary genres. This is not an entirely new attitude and, as we will see, fairy tales are often looked upon in an ambivalent fashion. On the one hand, they are considered important in the context of understanding our own fears and anxieties about life and providing an insight into culture and people in general. Yet, on the other hand, they are often viewed as merely a child's entertainment despite the many adult versions of tales published every year.

The aim of this thesis is to challenge these latter views by conducting a comparative analysis of a corpus of literary versions of *La Belle et la Bête* (Beauty and the Beast) and its variants, within the category of animal-bridegroom type tales, from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France together with a corpus of Anglophone, contemporary rewritings of the same tale type written at the end of the twentieth century. The purpose of doing so is to investigate the role of gender, sexuality and otherness and how these themes are represented in modern rewritings of the tales, when compared to more traditional versions. In addition, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the link between the theme of monstrosity, which is prevalent in animal-bridegroom tales, and what relation this bears to women's connection with the fairy-tale genre and, furthermore, to the tale types that women writers seem particularly

drawn to in both the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corpus alongside the contemporary tales. Also of importance is the link between the marginalisation of the fairy tale genre and women writers and thus, the relevance of representation of gender and sexual identity, and the use of the theme of monstrosity in relation to boundaries, otherness and marginalisation.

For the purpose of this thesis the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century corpus will span from 1697 to 1756 approximately, comprising a number of French *contes* (fairy tales) which led to the emergence of the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale as it is widely known today. As regards the modern day corpus, 'contemporary' will be defined as from approximately 1970 onwards. This is in light of the resurgence of fairy tales during this time. Indeed, Cristina Bacchilega states at the start of her study on postmodern revisions of fairy tales that 'abundance, rather than lack' motivates her work. She notes that fairy tales in the second half of the twentieth century have had 'explosive popularity' in North America and Western Europe.[1] In this study, the contemporary corpus will comprise English language rewritings, as these seem to make up the vast majority of modern retellings of 'Beauty and the Beast'. This is also relevant as regards the questioning of social norms, concerning sexuality, during times of political or social uncertainty which often appear at the turn of centuries.

One particular tale type has been chosen in order to narrow the field of investigation. This is also because of the particular popularity of 'Beauty and the Beast' with contemporary women fairy-tale authors and its relevance as regards discussing the theme of sexuality. Sexuality will be examined here in relation to its representation in the tales, the author's own sexuality and gender and its relevance as regards the socio-cultural aspect of the tale and its author. As women authors in particular are to be examined, it is necessary here to take into account the social context of the author and the bearing of this on the representation of sexuality in the tales. Fairy-tale scholar Lewis Carl Seifert contends that the fairy tale is a 'gendered' genre, whether the author be male or female; he sees the author's gender as being inscribed in the text. This in turn is

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[1] Bacchilega, Cristina, *Postmodern Fairy Tales, Gender and Narrative Strategies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 2.

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important to acknowledge when analysing representations of sexuality. Hence, this investigation will analyse the tales in light of this theory, while also taking into account the dangers of labelling all writing by women as 'women's writing'. As such, the analysis of both corpora of fairy tales will take into account the author's gender while attempting to avoid essentialism.

In taking into account existing research in the field, the critical review of this thesis will examine, among others, the work of Lewis Carl Seifert, Jack Zipes, Michel Foucault, Toril Moi, Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva, Elaine Showalter, Margrit Shildrick, Raymonde Robert, Maria Tatar, Marina Warner, Bruno Bettelheim, and Betsy Hearne. The four main areas of criticism to be investigated in the Critical Review are the context of women tale tellers and fairy tales, the binaries that are associated with gender and sexuality, sexuality and the beastly body and existing interpretations of the animal-bridegroom tale type. The purpose of exploring these four areas of criticism is to provide a background to women fairy-tale authors and the themes that they address in their work, specifically in relation to the animal-bridegroom tale.

The theoretical framework of this thesis consists of a comparative approach incorporating the theories of intertextuality, reception and reader response theories as well as feminist literary criticism. As regards intertextuality and feminist criticism, the metaphor of the tale teller as a weaver will be employed in order to illustrate the dialogic relationship that exists between readers and authors of fairy tales. According to Nancy K. Miller's theory, 'Arachnologies', the intertextuality between tale tellers, specifically women, can be thought of as a web.[2] Miller uses the myth of Arachne to demonstrate her point, in that her web, though a domestic art, is a means of expression, a *specifically* feminine means of expression because it is the only means available to her. In viewing the fairy tale in light of this theory we are taking into account the social position and gender of the author as an important factor in the meaning produced by the text. Miller asserts that the gender of the author is embedded in the text and thus the feminine signature is woven into the fairy tale. Karen E. Rowe uses a similar myth, that of Philomela, to demonstrate

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[2] Nancy K. Miller, 'Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text, and the Critic' in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. by Nancy K. Miller (Columbia: Columbia University, 1984), pp. 270-95.

this point.[3] Philomela is silenced for her tale-telling and is forced to weave to tell her story. Looking at tales in this way, we are considering them as a complex web of tales used by women to tell their stories which, otherwise, would be unheard.

We can then relate this back to Kristeva and Moi in their definition of femininity as marginality and connect this to the fairy-tale genre, the women who spin the web of tales and the use of the monstrous to represent them and their sexuality and/or gender. However, it must be reiterated that the purpose of this thesis is not to suggest that all women who write tales do so in the same way or that all women tale tellers are making a political statement through their tales. Rather, the tales will be investigated taking the author's identity into account and their gender and sexuality as hugely important facets of their identity, but the aim is to take the author's individuality and specific social and historical context into account when comparing the tales. What is more, the intended audience of the tales will have an impact on how sexuality is portrayed.

In employing reception and reader response theories, this thesis will make use of the premises put forward by Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish. Concepts such as the relationship between the text and the reader, the reader's horizon of expectations and interaction between the reader and the text will be discussed in relation to fairy tales. Also, Fish's notion of interpretive communities will be drawn on in order to argue that though the seventeenth-century *conteuses* (female fairy-tale authors) and contemporary women tale tellers have very different social backgrounds, both can be grouped as part of the same interpretive community because of how they both challenge gender stereotypes and notions of acceptability surrounding sexuality.

In order to produce a clear analysis of the representation of sexuality in the contemporary corpus, it is first necessary to examine the origins of animal-bridegroom tales and the start of their immense popularity. In order to do so, a discussion of the main precursors to the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale will

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[3] Karen E. Rowe, 'To Spin a Yarn: The Female Voice in Folklore and Fairy Tale' in *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. by Maria Tatar (London: WW Norton & Company, 1999), pp. 297-308.

preclude the comparative analysis of the contemporary corpus. The texts to be discussed are the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' by Apuleius, *Serpentin Vert* (The Green Serpent) by Mme d'Aulnoy, *Riquet à la Houppe* (Riquet with the Tuft) by Catherine Bernard, *Riquet à la Houppe* by Charles Perrault[4], *La Belle et La Bête* (Beauty and the Beast) by Mme de Villeneuve and *La Belle et La Bête* by Mme Leprince de Beaumont.

The comparative analysis of the contemporary corpus will follow this. The corpus consists of six rewritings of the animal-bridegroom tale spanning from 1978 to 1999. The tales to be analysed in this section are 'The Tiger's Bride' from *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter, *Beauty* and *Rose Daughter* by Robin McKinley, 'The Tale of the Rose' from *Kissing the Witch* by Emma Donoghue, 'Beauty' by Tanith Lee and 'Skin So Green and Fine' by Wendy Wheeler. Trends to be examined in relation to these modern versions include the challenging of gender stereotypes, the creation of utopian sexual liberation and the questioning of otherness, exclusion and marginality.

The contemporary corpus is solely made up of women writers. However, it is important to note that this was not done in a bid to exclude male fairy-tale authors. As the corpus expanded, it became clear that the vast majority of modern animal-bridegroom retellings are by women. It is also noteworthy that the original tales were for the most part from France but, looking at the corpus, it would seem that the Anglophone world, in particular women authors, have adapted the tale and rewritten it prolifically. In this way the analysis is an investigation of the links between gender, sexuality and otherness and how these issues are represented in fairy-tales by women from two different cultures and eras.

Thus, the research question to be examined here is whether there is a certain connection between these two groups of women authors and the themes that they address in their respective versions of the animal-bridegroom tale? Moreover, why are women writers attracted to this particular tale type and why do they prolifically rewrite it?

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[4] Charles Perrault is included amongst a corpus of female authors as his tale demonstrates the difference between tales written by men and women at the end of the seventeenth century in France. Furthermore, he is, today, the best-known fairy-tale author from this period. Thus, it would be remiss to exclude him.

CHAPTER 1
CRITICAL REVIEW

'What challenge does that excluded and abjected realm produce to a symbolic hegemony that might force a radical rearticulation as what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as "life", lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving?'

Judith Butler

Bodies that Matter

1   Critical Review

1.1   Part I Fairy Tales in Context: Women Telling Tales

Fairy tales are found in nearly all cultures, they are one of the best known and referenced genres and, yet, they are often dismissed as trivial or frivolous and are rarely included in literary canons. As Tzvetan Todorov highlights, 'we are told that it is pointless to speak of genres [...] for the work of art is essentially unique'.[5] This is true to an extent; no two fairy-tales are exactly alike. However, especially in the case of fairy tales, all tales are inextricably linked to each other whether by similar plots, themes or characters. There is a thread that connects fairy tales, as we shall see, and it is this thread that binds these tales into one specific genre. As Todorov continues:

> It is inconceivable, nowadays, to defend the thesis that everything in the work is individual, a brand-new product of inspiration, a creation with no relation to works of the past. [...] we must understand that a text is not only a product of a pre-existing combinatorial system [...], it is also a transformation of that system.[6]

It is the transformation and evolution of fairy tales that will be charted in this thesis.

Lewis Carl Seifert contends that fairy tales represent a culture's quest for identity and portray major cultural themes, such as the role of sexuality; fairy-tale characters explore 'highly codified attributes of sexual and gender identity'.[7] His study of the role of gender and sexuality in the fairy tales (*contes*) of seventeenth-century France explores how a corpus of fairy tales can reveal central myths of the culture in which it was produced. In this way, the *contes* show us prevalent ideologies of sexuality in France during this time and, more significantly, reactions to these ideologies by the tale-tellers (*conteurs et conteuses*).

Seifert's *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France 1690-1715, Nostalgic Utopias* (1996) examines the fairy tales (*contes de fées*) and *conteurs* and *conteuses* from the first fairy-tale vogue in France which lasted from 1690 to

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[5] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 5.
[6] *Ibid.* p. 7.
[7] Lewis Carl Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France 1690-1715 Nostalgic Utopias* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 2.

1715. Many of the tales from this vogue were the precursors to the animal-bridegroom type tales that are still popular today. The second vogue lasted from 1730 to 1789. I will analyse selected animal-bridegroom type tales from both vogues in order to establish a clear historical background for the rewritings that will subsequently be analysed. In order to compare the social background of this vogue and that of the current vogue which began at the end of the twentieth century, it is necessary first to understand how the first French literary fairy tales came into being and in what context.

Thus, let us examine some of the factors that led to the first fairy-tale vogue. Seifert attributes some of the cause of the first vogue to the period of enlightenment thinking between 1680 and 1715. This cultural movement occurred during a time of intellectual interchange in Europe when science and knowledge advancement were championed. Fairy tales were, conversely, a form of escapism as opposed to fitting into the dominant aesthetic of realism. Seifert uses Paul Hazard's term *crise de la conscience européenne*, to describe a period of sceptical and rationalist thought. Hazard sees the *contes de fées* as a by-product of this time, an outlet for the feeling of decline that pervaded the time, an imaginary compensation for the depressing reality of the present. Although Seifert agrees with this view to a point, he states that Hazard is somewhat reductive as there were many other factors that influenced the two fairy-tale vogues. Beyond being a means of psychological escape, the *contes de fées* were also produced very strategically in relation to what was happening socially. One of the main factors Seifert attributes to the rise of the *contes de fées* is the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns, a dispute among intellectuals in France at this time, concerning the inimitability of the Greek and Roman classics compared to other cultural forms such as the folktale and the *conte de fées*. Charles Perrault and others such as Mlle l'Héritier who supported the modernist cause used the *conte de fées* as a model of the importance of other cultural forms.[8]

The *contes de fées* are quite unusual in that most of the writers published during the two vogues were women. Although it was Mme d'Aulnoy who coined the phrase *conte de fées* in her novel *Histoire d'Hypolite*, in 1698, later

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[8] *Ibid.* p. 7.

Charles Perrault became the best known *conteur*, somewhat eclipsing the other fairy-tale writers. Despite this, the fact remains that, at that time, women dominated the genre as far as publishing was concerned. Between 1690 and 1715, of all tales published, two-thirds were by women writers. Perhaps this can be explained by the social context in which the tales were produced. At the same time as the rise of the *contes*, women were being relegated to the domestic sphere. Women's marital status was strictly regulated and there was hostility towards women who wished to forge a life for themselves as 'creative agents'.[9] A woman's place became a hotly debated issue and the virtues of domesticity were actively promoted. As women had less access to formal education, the genre of fairy tales became a permitted artistic outlet for them. Ironically, the connection of the genre with maternal and domestic life contributed to its marginalisation. The *conteuses,* however, turned this very prejudice into a form of creativity. They used the genre to assert and demonstrate their own vision of women's role in literary culture and society at large. Furthermore, the genre's marginality made it unthreatening to male writers, particularly the *Anciens* who looked on the *conte de fées* as a genre for the less well educated, especially women. Thus, the genre became an outlet of expression for the *conteuses* which was not available to them elsewhere. Moreover, the *conteuses*, seem to have particularly identified with the genre, perhaps because they had no choice in supporting the modernist cause in the quarrel as the opportunity to study Greek and Roman classics would not have been available to most of them. As Marina Warner aptly asserts; 'As Virginia Woolf pointed out, it is all very well to spurn Greek when you have been given the chance to study it, to reject tradition when you have been raised in it'.[10] The quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns affected men and women differently. The *conteuses* had to take a modern stance because they simply had no other choice. This, then, gave them a new-found freedom, in a sense, because they were not bound by the forms of Greek and Roman classics, but were free to experiment and innovate.

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[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Marina Warner, 'Mother Goose Tales: Female Fiction, Female Fact?', *Folklore* 101.1 (1990), 3-25(p. 10). See also Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Los Angeles, Green Light E-books: 2012[1929]), Amazon Kindle e-book.

Seifert contends that, because of the difference between men's and women's access to education, fairy tales became a gendered form of writing. In other words, 'the gender of the author is inscribed as a distinguishing feature of textual production'.[11] So, according to Seifert, the author's gender will have a bearing on the text that is produced. Furthermore, he suggests that a feature of fairy tales that allows us to analyse these differences is the use of *le merveilleux* (the marvellous). In analysing aspects of the marvellous Seifert contends that we can understand the social context of gender and sexuality that was prevalent when the tales were produced. He states, 'By means of the marvellous, then, the *contes de fées* (re)define the cultural boundaries of sexual desire, masculinity and femininity. They reveal the instability of a particular "sex/gender system".'[12] In other words, the function of *le merveilleux* in the tales is to undermine our concepts of reality and, in doing so, they can suggest ambiguity as regards conservative and unconventional notions of gender roles. Indeed, as we shall see later, in some contemporary tales, the reader is unsure whether the beast is male or female. What is not acceptable in the real world can be made acceptable in fairy tales through the use of the marvellous. Indeed, this is an intrinsic feature of the fairy tale. According to Tzvetan Todorov, in marvellous literature, as opposed to the fantastic, only a supernatural explanation is possible for whatever marvellous action occurs in the tale, or, sometimes, no explanation is given at all. If a seemingly supernatural event takes place in a text, the character must decide whether this event is imaginary or real. 'The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty'.[13] After this period of hesitation is over, Todorov explains that 'we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous'.[14] He distinguishes between the two in the following manner:

> If he [the character] decides that the laws of reality remain intact and
> permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work
> belongs to [...] the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws

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[11] Seifert, p. 10.

[12] *Ibid.* p. 12.

[13] Todorov, p. 25.

[14]*Ibid.* Freud's theory of the uncanny will be discussed later in relation to the monstrous. Though Freud and Todorov employ the term differently, there are links between the two uses as Todorov notes: 'there is not an entire coincidence between Freud's use of the term and our own'. Todorov, p. 47.

of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous.[15]

These two genres can also be known as 'the supernatural explained' and 'the supernatural accepted'. Fairy tales are one of the best examples of the marvellous or the supernatural accepted as supernatural events that occur within the tales provoke no surprise either in the character or the reader. The marvellous in fairy tales is what Todorov terms 'marvelous in the pure state'.[16] That is to set it apart from other instances where the supernatural may be somewhat justified, for example, 'hyperbolic marvelous' (exaggeration), 'the exotic marvelous' (the tale is set in a place one has never visited and, therefore, we cannot decide whether details are fiction or fact), 'the instrumental marvelous' (futuristic gadgets or technologies described) and, lastly, 'the scientific marvelous' (science fiction).[17] As the fairy tale lies within the realm of 'pure' marvellous, let our focus remain on this genre.

In fairy tales, the marvellous action is generally accepted because the features are repetitive and predictable and, therefore, become acceptable. Seifert points out that the marvellous in fairy tales must be accepted because it is the means by which familiar social structures and values are reinforced; the marvellous actions in the tales are acceptable without necessarily being plausible. Seifert reminds us that plausibility became an issue that was to remain attached to the *contes de fées* throughout their existence. *Vraisemblance* although often translated as verisimilitude or plausibility, had a very specific meaning in seventeenth-century France.[18] *Vraisemblance* was supposed to uphold the moral objective of art by 'refusing the chaos of history in favor of an ideal world in which right always triumphs over wrong'.[19] Therefore, the *contes de fées* were still *vraisemblables* even though implausible. *Vraisemblance* was a fundamentally ideological concept, determined by public opinion, which represents what is conceived as truth. Seifert notes that 'not surprisingly, the history of this critical notion in seventeenth-century France is that of an overtly

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[15] *Ibid.* p. 41.

[16] *Ibid.* p. 54.

[17] *Ibid.* pp. 54-56.

[18] Here, I discuss *vraisemblance* specifically in relation to its meaning with regard to fairy tales. However, for a more detailed discussion on the complex meaning of *vraisemblance* in seventeenth-century France, see Janet Morgan, 'The Meanings of Vraisemblance in French Classical Theory', *The Modern Language Review* 81.2 (1986), 293-304.

[19] Seifert, p. 27.

political construct by which the absolutist state exerted control over cultural production'.[20]

Seifert further underlines that *vraisemblance* became one of the main issues that centred in another debate of the time, the *Querelle du Merveilleux* (the quarrel of the marvellous). On one side were those who promoted the *merveilleux chrétien*, the Christian marvellous, the use of saints, angels and Satan in literature as opposed to the Gods of Greek mythology. On the opposing side of the quarrel were the defenders of the *merveilleux païen,* the pagan marvellous, who either tolerated the use of both Christian and mythological figures or solely advocated the use of mythological figures in epics. Theoreticians of the Christian marvellous posited the need for religious belief for *vraisemblance*, while those who promoted the pagan marvellous argued that the aesthetic beauty of mythology added moral coherence to the text. Perrault was an advocate of the Christian marvellous and argued that Greek and Roman mythological models were not an absolute necessity as *vraisemblance* was culturally specific. Critics, such as Boileau, argued that without the universal aesthetic value of mythology, there would be no poetry. Therefore, for supporters of the *merveilleux chrétien*, the marvellous contained in a text should be based on a belief system, whereas for the supporters of the *merveilleux païen*, moral *vraisemblance* was upheld in the aesthetic beauty and poetry of Greek and Roman mythology.[21]

The marvellous employed in the *conte de fées* is most similar to that of the Christian marvellous as it is a culturally defined type of marvellous. However, the *contes* do not fit neatly into either category. The *contes de fées* employ both forms of *merveilleux*, often together in the one tale. This influenced the genre's marginality during the seventeenth century as critics expressed disdain at over-use of the marvellous and, especially, at forcing Christian figures to fit into Greek and Roman models. This *invraisemblance* became a crucial factor in the way the *contes de fées* were viewed during that time. Seifert argues that it is this use of both types of marvellous together that marginalised the genre. They did not fit into what was considered either

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[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid.* p. 31.

morally virtuous or aesthetically beautiful literature which resulted in their peripheral status, which could be said to have lasted to the present day.

Seifert lists the marvellous as having four basic functions:

1)   to predict the hero/heroine's future,

2)   to advise the hero/heroine,

3)   to impose an obstacle,

4)   to help the hero/heroine overcome this obstacle.

Fairy tales can include anything from just one to all four traits. Metamorphosis of the hero/heroine is the most common form of marvellous whereby an obstacle is imposed, for example the transformation of man into animal or Beast, although, sometimes metamorphosis can also occur in a positive manner in order to help the protagonist. We can see this particular theme emerging in many contemporary rewritings of tales, such as in the work of Emma Donoghue and Tanith Lee, where characters choose to be Beast rather than human. The use of metamorphosis in fairy tales demonstrates the genre's ambivalent association with *vraisemblance*: 'when metamorphosis is imposed on the hero/heroine as an obstacle or a means of overcoming it, the altered physical state serves an initiatory function since it prepares him/her to assume a preordained place in the re-established order of the tale's conclusion'.[22] Metamorphosis is implausible. However, as its function is to bring about expected outcomes in the tale, it becomes acceptable or plausible to the audience. Therefore, fairy tales are *vraisemblable* and *invraisemblable* at the same time. The abnormal and the normal are constantly linked in fairy tales. Metamorphosis, as a function in the tales, highlights the importance of the body as regards the *contes de fées*; Seifert says the body is 'a "natural" essence that imparts meaning and truth'.[23] Plausible and implausible notions are related to the acceptable and unacceptable body; therefore, the marvellous defines the body as an essence and a social construct. The overcoming of a metamorphosis represents the removal of the body's vulnerability; fears are replaced with the assurance of marvellous pleasures.[24] In this way, a juxtaposition is created

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[22] *Ibid.* p. 35.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.* p. 36.

between the fear surrounding the body and sexuality in general, and the acceptance of the body through the symbolism of metamorphosis.

Alongside investigating the main characteristics of the fairy-tale genre in seventeenth-century France, Seifert also gives a detailed account of why he believes the genre became so popular at such a specific time. As social context is a major factor in how the analysis of contemporary tales for this thesis will be carried out, it is essential to understand the social context of the first literary fairy tales. Seifert sees the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns as being the most influential factor in the explosion of the genre as this created a very specific social context especially as regards the *conteuses*. The main battle of this quarrel took place between 1687 and 1694, between Perrault and Boileau, and involved differing stances as regards art and society. Boileau's *Satire* X, also known as *Contre les femmes*[25] was an attack on modernist thinking and Perrault's writings in particular, labelling all women as almost always unfaithful *coquettes*, spendthrifts, hypochondriacs whose main aim in life was to make their husbands miserable. Perrault retorted with his *Apologie des femmes*,[26] which held women as the models of taste, refinement and *naïveté*, although, it is evident in Perrault's tales that while these *femmes* may have been models of refinement, he didn't regard them as very *intelligentes*.

The reasons behind the quarrel revolved around the spurning of antiquity by the moderns. The moderns, Perrault included, contested that modern artistic creation could exceed that of antiquity, while the ancients saw Greek and Roman models as unsurpassable. The production of the *contes de fées* was a strategic ploy by Perrault and the other *conteurs* and *conteuses* to promote the modernist cause. Rather than denounce the *contes de fées*, the ancients ignored them for the most part; they would not dignify literature that was associated with the lower classes with a response. Despite academic scorn, the large amount of fairy tales published demonstrates the support the genre had. Indeed, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries over two hundred and fifty volumes of fairy tales were published in France.[27] The *contes de fées* were

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[25] Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux, *Satire X* (Paris, Norp-Nop Editions: 2011 [1667]), Amazon Kindle e-book.
[26] Charles Perrault, *L'Apologie des Femmes* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France: [1694]), < http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k108213g>, [Accessed 4 August 2013].
[27] Seifert, p. 5.

considered a part of *mondaine* culture. Seifert uses this term to refer to an elite social group and an ideal of sociability that exemplified it. This elevated socio-economic group read and produced most of the literature of the time.[28] During the final years of the seventeenth century there was overt hostility towards *mondaine* culture. Critics argued that French aristocratic society was in moral decline and that society in general needed to be more virtuous and less attached to worldly goods. The hostility towards *mondaine* society also resulted in opposition towards certain creative endeavours such as the theatre; in 1697 the *Comédiens italiens* were expelled from France as they were considered somewhat bawdy and therefore unworthy.[29] In reality, they were neither licentious nor immoral; they simply did not live up to the conservative standards of the time. Seifert asserts that this hostility played an important role with regard to the *contes de fées*; he sees the genre as a 'revalorization' of *mondaine* culture.[30] *Conteuses* such as Mme d'Aulnoy and Mlle L'Héritier defended the morality of their tales against critics. In this way defending the *contes de fées* was an indirect way of defending *mondaine* culture.

Fairy-tale authors found 'in the fairy-tale form a means of defining and defending their own stake in these conflicts'.[31] It is also important to note that, unlike the Grimms of nineteenth-century Germany, the fairy-tale writers of the seventeenth century in France did not collect and rewrite tales out of ethnographic interest; they used the tales for a different purpose. The folkloric origins of the fairy tales were emphasised as was the fact that it was a genre that bore the imprint of the lower classes in order to make a political argument. It is somewhat surprising that a genre with its roots in peasant folklore became a method for the defence of a culture that was connected to the social elite. Seifert explains that the genre was chosen by the moderns because of its status as 'radical other'.[32] Perrault and the other modernists wanted to evoke the image of the old woman storyteller, an idealist version of peasant life. She 'does not threaten the hegemonic system since she is constructed as

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[28] *Ibid.* pp. 68-9.
[29] *Ibid.* p. 70.
[30] *Ibid.* p. 71.
[31] *Ibid.* p. 61.
[32] *Ibid.* p. 74.

complicitous with it'.[33] The maternal figure of the female storyteller reaffirmed the social boundaries of *mondaine* culture and added an air of respectability at a time when its moral values were being questioned.

Thus, the *conteuses* found a way to assert themselves as writers in *mondaine* culture by highlighting their own gendered connection to the fairy-tale genre. As critics argued that the ideal of femininity was submission and silence, the *conteuses* used the inherent femaleness of the genre to affirm their place in society. They capitalised on the genre's association with femaleness; *contes de quenouille* (distaff tales)*, contes de vieilles* (old women's tales) and *contes de ma Mère l'Oye* (Mother Goose's Tales).[34] Whereas these associations would have had negative connotations originally, the *conteuses* exploited the element of maternal virtue in order to forge a place for their writing in seventeenth-century France. Seifert asserts that it is for this reason that the *conteuses,* as opposed to the *conteurs,* formed a collective identity in connection with the *contes de fées*. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that references to each others' tales are much more evident in the case of the women writers involved in the genre than the men. What is more, this type of referencing is still prevalent in women's fairy tales.

We see here the connection between fairy tales and femaleness. Although many men were involved in the production and championing of fairy tales, the women writers had a more loyal connection to the genre. They chose to appropriate a specific genre because it lent itself to their needs; it was a type of literature that they had access to and could publish without fear of oppression. If we look at present day rewritings of fairy tales, women writers vastly outweigh men, in the Western world, at least. This, undoubtedly, reflects the genre's past. I suggest here, and will later attempt to prove, that this connection with the maternal and femaleness that the *conteuses* used to their advantage has lingered and is still influencing contemporary fairy-tale authors.

1.1.1   Subversion and Women Tale Tellers

In his book, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion; The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*, Jack Zipes discusses the subversive role of women writers as regards the fairy tale. According to Zipes; 'All the

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[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.* p. 87.

authors employed the tale to engage in an ongoing institutionalized discourse about mores and manners'.[35] In this way, the tales were used as a means of communication and discussion of the issues of the day.

Zipes contends that it was really the women fairy-tale writers who founded the genre. While male and female writers both strove to civilise readers through their tales, it was the women writers in particular who undermined the conservative code in their tales and sought to replace it with a more liberal one. At this time, society was becoming more regulated and a strict socio-religious code sought to eliminate social deviancy. Women were constantly linked to potentially uncontrollable natural instincts, including sexual desire, therefore women's literature was often viewed with disdain and suspicion.

Zipes points out that the difference between the tales by the *conteurs* and those by the *conteuses* is notable. Perrault, for example, portrayed female characters as passive and patient. Stupidity, in fact, in many of Perrault's tales can be seen as a female attribute. Although Perrault supported *les modernes*, Zipes posits that independence in women made him feel uncomfortable. On the other hand, male characters are portrayed in a different light; it is 'not so much beauty and modesty that counts for men but brains and ambition' and, what is more, 'women are incidental to the fates of male characters, whereas men endow the lives of women with purpose'.[36] The *conteuses*, however, portrayed their female protagonists as being less naive and gullible and as having more brains than Perrault thought them worthy of. Zipes demonstrates this in relation to the animal-bridegroom tale type. Whereas Perrault uses the tale to symbolise the superiority of male intelligence over female beauty, women writers identified with the oppressed heroine.[37] We can see this demonstrated in Perrault's tale *Riquet à la Houppe*. Although the male protagonist is ugly and misshapen, he endows the woman's life with 'spiritual discipline' and 'dignity' that it would otherwise lack.[38] With this in mind, animal-bridegroom tales can be approached in two ways; either a tale that blames the heroine for her own fate or a harsh criticism of patriarchal rule, depending on who is writing it. In

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[35] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion; The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 32.
[36] *Ibid.* p. 42.
[37] *Ibid.* p. 49&51.
[38] *Ibid*. p. 50.

Mme d'Aulnoy's *Serpentin Vert*, d'Aulnoy reinforces Perrault's moral but there is also a hidden message that women had to obey or else face degradation. Many of the *conteuses* used their tales to subtly criticise arbitrary male behaviour. We can certainly see this recurring in many contemporary rewritings, whereby feminist revisions continue this tradition of subversive resistance.[39]

1.1.2 The Fairy Tale as a Meme?

Exploring how the fairy tale, as a genre, and how specific tales stay in our consciousness, Jack Zipes uses the idea of the meme as suggested by Richard Dawkins and elaborated by Susan Blackmore, to explain the constant replication of tales. In order to examine Zipes theory, let us first look at the ideas proposed by Dawkins and Blackmore respectively.

The concept of the meme was first suggested by Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* in 1976. He introduced the term meme as a new type of cultural replicator stating; 'most of what is unusual about man can be summed up in one word: "culture"'.[40] He argues that cultural transmission, like genetic transmission can give rise to a form of evolution. Examples of cultural evolution are language, dress, diet, ceremonies, customs and art. In order to understand culture, Dawkins proposes the meme as a kind of cultural replicator, using the gene as an analogy; the importance being that they are both replicators:

> Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperm or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in a broad sense, can be called imitation.[41]

Dawkins explains the meme as a parasite that propagates itself in human minds: 'when you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just a way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell'.[42] In order for a meme to replicate it must have longevity, fecundity and copying-fidelity. The meme can

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[39] This link will be discussed in more detail in the analysis section of the thesis.
[40] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene,* 30th Anniversary edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 189.
[41] *Ibid.* p. 192.
[42] *Ibid.*

be compared to the metaphor of 'the selfish gene', working purposefully for its own survival. Dawkins wonders what makes memes lodge themselves in our consciousness: 'Can we [...] look for selfish or ruthless memes?'[43]

According to his theory of the meme as cultural replicator, memes live in human brains, which means that, if a meme wishes to dominate the brain of a human being, it must compete for this space with other memes. What is more, there can also exist mutually assisting memes, memes that help each other to replicate. In order to illustrate this notion Dawkins gives the example of the concept of hell. This meme is self-perpetuating because of its great psychological impact, but it is also linked to other religious concepts which could be seen as assisting memes, that make up a broader meme complex, such as faith.[44] Also, selection favours memes that exploit their cultural environment to their own advantage. In this way certain ideas or concepts can become ingrained in human consciousness, and this will be influenced by cultural context.

Some aspects of fairy tales could certainly be regarded as memes that are dominant in the collective consciousness in almost every culture. Moreover, fairy tales, when regarded as memes, can be seen to exploit their cultural environment as they evolve and change over time depending on the mores of the society in which they are produced. Therefore, the concept of the meme could be a key to understanding the constant replication of fairy tales over the past centuries and the secret to their success.

Susan Blackmore develops Dawkins's theory in greater detail. She defines memes as 'instructions for carrying out behaviour, stored in brains (or other objects) and passed on by imitation'.[45] Therefore, according to Blackmore's definition, anything that is passed on from person to person by imitation is a meme. This can include words in your vocabulary, stories you know and skills and habits you have picked up. Blackmore's main argument is that human beings' ability to imitate is what makes us capable of passing on memes, and, what is more, memes can use this ability in order to replicate themselves. As with genes, there is also meme selection; some memes will be

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[43] *Ibid.* p. 196.
[44] *Ibid.* p. 198.
[45] Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 43.

successfully replicated and others not. Blackmore also states that truth is of no relevance when it comes to memes; if it can be replicated it will (whether the information be truthful/correct or not) and variation will inevitably occur during the replication process.[46]

Thus, if we consider fairy tales as memes, we may gain a clearer understanding of why some fairy tales will be replicated and others not. Jack Zipes contends that it is important to know something about memetics in order to explain how the literary fairy tale originated and remained in our consciousness.

Zipes states that most tales 'entered into cultural discursive practices in diverse ways so that they became almost 'mythicized' as natural stories, as second nature'.[47] In this way, certain fairy tales have become ingrained in the consciousness of different cultures. Due to greater levels of literacy and with the help of the printing press, the literary fairy tale 'erupted' during the seventeenth century and, according to Zipes, has continued to transform itself vigorously to the present day. Zipes talks of the fairy tale in terms of memes, considering the genre and different motifs and plots as viruses that spread. Furthermore, Zipes sees the different fairy-tale memes as exploiting their environment by adapting themselves to be told in different ways according to their socio-cultural context. This is an interesting point, as it has been noted time and again by fairy-tale scholars that the socio-cultural environment of a fairy tale has an impact on how it is told, leading to variations in tales throughout different nations and times throughout history. If we, however, consider the fairy tale itself as the driving force behind its own transience and evolution, where does that leave the function of the fairy tale writer? Zipes asserts that 'like the selfish gene, a fairy tale as meme is concerned with its own perpetuation and will adapt to changes and conflicts in the environment.'[48]

Zipes does acknowledge the role of the author in relation to the fairy tale as a meme in that they 'knowingly play upon a scale of memorable and notable motifs, conventions, and topoi to engage the audience in a dialogue',[49] but we

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[46] *Ibid.* p. 14-15.
[47] Jack Zipes, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 1.
[48] *Ibid.* p. 15.
[49] *Ibid.*

are left wondering here if the fairy-tale author is thus merely a meme medium, whose role is to play host to a meme, or if it is the fairy tale author who manipulates the fairy tale for their own purpose, or both? If we take into account the link between the socio-cultural context of both tale and author, it would seem that perhaps it is a matter of the fairy-tale author manipulating a tale for a specific use, and thus replicating the tale, rather than the other way around. However, if we consider that the fairy tale is a marginalised genre, as are women writers who make up the majority of contemporary fairy-tale authors, then it would seem that both tale and author benefit from a mutually advantageous partnership, in that the author can use the tale to question prevailing social norms and in so doing the tale is replicated.[50]

Zipes develops his theory of the fairy tale as a meme drawing on the work of Jean-Michel Adam and Ute Heidmann. The principle behind their theory of *généricité* (genericity) is that a series of enunciations form a complete communication, making up a text, which by the '*effect of genericity*' is inscribed into a particular practice of discourse.[51] The relevance of this as regards the genre of the fairy tale, as Zipes points out, is that a meme cannot proliferate itself without the assistance of other memes. Therefore, one must take into account how the genre of the fairy tale interacts with and depends on other memes. In other words, the fairy-tale genre is touched on and affected by other genres. What is important in relation to an analysis of contemporary rewritings is that Adam and Heidmann demonstrate that, in order to gain a thorough analysis of a tale, it is necessary to analyse its transformation beyond its original publication and to study new texts from varied socio-historical contexts that interrogate the original text. Consideration of the different variations of fairy tales, in relation to their socio-cultural or historical context, can lead to a better understanding of the development of a tale over time and, significantly, can give us an insight as regards the views and morals surrounding a social issue, such as sexuality, during that period, as Zipes points out:

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[50] The role of the reader will also be considered in relation to reception and reader response theory in the following chapter.

[51] See Jean-Michel Adam and Ute Heidmann, 'Des Genres à la généricité: L'exemple des contes (Perrault et les Grimm)', *Languages,* 153 (2004), 62-72 for a more in-depth discussion of the term.

Certain fairy-tale texts have become formative and definitive, and they insert themselves into our cognitive processes, enabling us to establish and distinguish patterns of behaviour and to reflect upon ethics, gender, morality and power.[52]

Whilst looking at the fairy tale as a unit of cultural production and therefore as a meme, we must consider a meme's most important trait, which is the ability to be replicated. To reiterate, the fairy tale's ability to adapt according to its environment could be the key to understanding how this genre remains in our collective consciousness. Therefore Zipes's general concept when looking at the fairy tale as a meme is that the fairy tale spreads like a meme by undergoing 'multiple mutations in interaction with the environment'.[53] The fairy tale's symbolic code and flexible structure allow for varied interpretations, which has led to various fairy-tale vogues and to the rich and diverse collections of tales that are known throughout the world. As fairy-tale memes spread, authors use the tales in different ways to comment on the complexities of society and culture:

Almost all of the rewritings of the traditional fairy tales have a greater awareness of the complexities of sexuality and gender roles and have sought to explore traditional fairy tales with a social consciousness and awareness in keeping with and critical of our changing times.[54]

In light of Zipes's observations on the complex unit of cultural transmission which can be defined as the fairy tale, it seems relevant to explore a corpus of contemporary rewritings which do comment critically on the role of sexuality in our society and perhaps lead to a better understanding of how we view gender and sexuality in the present day.

In this section I have discussed the fairy tale as a 'gendered' genre, the use of subversion in fairy tales and considered the fairy tale as a meme. What is important here, as regards this study, is the use and transmission of the tales. Whether the fairy tale is a meme or not cannot be answered definitively, since a meme is an abstract notion by definition; however, the concept can help us to understand the transmission of tales and why some are prolifically rewritten and others are not. Also, while we can accept that fairy tales can be transmitted

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[52] Zipes, p. 26.
[53] *Ibid.* p. 94.
[54] *Ibid.* p. 103.

almost unwittingly from one generation to the next, as far as the seventeenth-century authors are concerned, there was a conscious effort on their part to write and pass on tales. We can certainly see this trend in both seventeenth-century tales and contemporary versions. In this way, there is a definite similarity between the two corpora to be examined in this study. It is my argument that both groups of tales were transmitted for a purpose and the use of subversion is evident in both cases, though in different ways. I will elaborate and demonstrate this argument over the following chapters. Before this, as the themes of gender and sexuality are to be examined in both corpora, let us, beforehand, examine and attempt to define these concepts in more detail.

1.2   Part II Disrupting Borders and Binaries

Issues surrounding sexuality and the body in relation to their representation in fairy tales are at the core of this thesis but in order to analyse it later, it is necessary first to consider the place of the body in the history of sexuality. Michel Foucault provides a detailed account of the history of sexuality. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I shall look particularly at Foucault's discussion of the body in relation to the self and the association between sexuality and danger. According to Foucault, the body, throughout history, has been associated with fragility. As Foucault reminds us, since the classical period there has been vigilant attention paid to the body and in the question of sexual pleasures and their positive and negative values. In the 1st century AD, scientists such as Galen (also known Aelius Galenus or Claudius Galenus) cited the inherent weakness of the body, its inevitable corruptibility and failure in relation to immortality.[55] However, sexuality can also be seen as a means of overcoming this weakness and triumphing over the corruptibility of the body. In pro-creation the body finds a means of overcoming its own mortality and, in a way, cheating death.[56]

The common thread throughout Foucault's discussion of the body is the connection between danger and sexuality. Throughout history, many dangers were associated with sex, and sexual intercourse was even considered similar to an epileptic convulsion; 'dread diseases' were also warned against.[57] Medical texts of the first and second centuries, however, saw sex itself as natural and therefore not harmful, but the sexual act always carried with it a correlation to danger. This was because precious substances were considered to escape during sex and, furthermore, as Foucault reiterates, the sexual act was considered almost an illness, with medical texts citing spasms, panting, sweating and rolling of the eyes as side effects.[58] The violence of the sexual act was also considered cause for concern. In this way, we can see the historical associations between sex and danger. What is more 'the patient' was seen to lose restraint during sex and it is noted by Galen that particularly women 'throw aside all

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[55] Michel Foucault, *The Care of The Self, Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), p. 105.
[56] *Ibid.* p. 106.
[57] *Ibid.* p. 109 & 111.
[58] *Ibid.* p. 113.

sense of shame' in their irresistible desire for sexual intercourse.[59] Hence, it would seem that Galen was more concerned with the moral danger that sexual intercourse posed to women, than any real physical danger.

Foucault points out the tendency in early medical writings to attribute positive effects to sexual abstention. Although not seen as wholly evil, sexuality was viewed in an ambiguous manner; it was natural and necessary, but there was a certain aspect of menace attached to it too. Sexuality was linked to both the soul and the body and it was believed that desire occurred in both. As Christian ethics were introduced, modesty became important. It was advised that sex should occur in the dark rather than daylight in order to protect oneself from images which would then be engraved in the soul. Foucault cites Plutarch's theory that the images would then renew desire, thus, sex at night would eliminate these dangerous visual stimuli.[60] Pleasure was also seen as an accompaniment to sex but not as a reason to engage in it. Likewise masturbation, which earlier had been seen as a natural elimination of semen, was later regarded as immoral in the view of Christianity. 'Disorderly sexual behaviour' was deemed by these later ethics as dangerous and as a likely cause of 'collective ills'.[61]

Through Foucault's demonstration, we can see the evolution of how sexuality is viewed. However, the common factor, throughout history to the present day, would seem to be the ambivalence with which sexuality was and still is regarded. The connection with danger is ever-present in relation to sexuality and this can be seen in representations of sexuality in literature. Moreover, dangerous sexuality is commonly linked to the female or feminine and this is also evident in the themes that are addressed in literature concerning women's sexuality. Let us then turn to the question of what exactly is understood by the terms 'female' and 'femininity'.

In developing a corpus of contemporary rewritings of fairy tales, it becomes increasingly evident that the vast majority of fairy tales produced at present are by women authors. However, this fact does not automatically lead to the conclusion that all rewritings are feminist or that the genre is to be

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[59] *Ibid.* p. 115.
[60] *Ibid.* p. 138
[61] *Ibid.* p. 143.

considered as feminine. In order to distinguish between the three terms 'feminist', 'female' and 'feminine', and investigate where contemporary fairy tales lie in relation to each, let us refer to the work of Toril Moi. Moi defines feminism as a political construct, femaleness as a matter of biology and femininity as a set of culturally defined characteristics.[62] According to Moi, feminist discourse is a specific kind of political discourse, committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature. She also asserts that feminists must always be pluralists as there is no pure female space from which to speak from and, in any case, all ideas are 'contaminated' by patriarchal ideology.[63] In defining female, Moi notes that being female does not guarantee a feminist approach; not all books written by women represent an anti-patriarchal stance and, as such, feminist critics can also investigate books written by male authors. Lastly, in defining feminine, Moi notes that it is widely accepted by feminists to use 'feminine' and 'masculine' to refer to social constructs as opposed to 'female' and 'male' which would represent the biological aspects of sexual difference. Therefore, 'feminine' is generally used to describe how it is to be female; feminine represents nurture as female represents nature. Thus, Moi asserts that patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women in order to imply that certain standards of femininity are natural. A woman who does not conform to this ideal is, therefore, deemed unnatural. 'Femininity' is no doubt the most difficult term to define out of the three and Moi asserts that it is in the patriarchal interest that it remains so; patriarchy encourages the notion that there is such a thing as a female essence: femininity.

In order to avoid biologism, feminists assert that, although women are female, they are not necessarily feminine. Furthermore, any attempt to assign a new set of characteristics to define femininity would leave the term in a new tangle of essentialist dilemmas. Commenting on this, Moi says:

> It is after all patriarchy, not feminism, which has always believed in a true
> female/feminine nature: the biologism and essentialism which lurk behind

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[62] Toril Moi, 'Feminist, Female, Feminine' in *The Feminist Reader,* 2nd edn, ed. by C. Belsey and J Moore (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), pp. 104-16 (p. 104).
[63] *Ibid.* p. 105.

> the desire to bestow feminine virtues on all female bodies necessarily
> plays into the hands of the patriarchs.[64]

Hence, Moi is suggesting that we disregard the idea that there are specific feminine or, indeed, masculine characteristics as this leads us into the area of binary oppositions where, usually, the feminine side is seen as the negative. Further problems arise then, when feminist scholars like Hélène Cixous attempt to define a feminine writing (*écriture féminine*). In 'The Laugh of the Medusa', Cixous refers to the struggle women have faced to have their writing recognised as valuable and, more specifically, she calls for women to recognise their own writing as valuable:

> Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to
> writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their
> bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal.
> Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history
> – by her own movement.[65]

Cixous acknowledges that to define women's writing is an impossible task as, naturally, all women do not write in the same manner just because of their sex: 'It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.'[66] However, although it is impossible to define women's writing, Cixous acknowledges a commonality that exists in their writing. This commonality stems from how women's writing has been viewed and treated by patriarchal society *because* of their sex. It is this commonality that allows us to group women writers together in certain cases to examine how and if their common experiences have influenced their writing.

Moi questions if grouping women together in this manner is essentialist. However, she also argues that 'as long as patriarchy is dominant, it still remains *politically* essential for feminists to defend women *as* women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as

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[64] *Ibid.* p. 109.

[65] Hélène Cixous, Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, 1.4 (Summer, 1976) 875-93 (p. 875).

[66] *Ibid.* p. 883.

women'.[67] Therefore, although we can never group writers together solely because of their sex, gender or, indeed, sexuality, it is acceptable and essential to acknowledge similarities (and differences) in women's writing. Moi is correct in asserting that it is treacherous to group writers together because they are male or female but Cixous qualifies her assertions that we can group women writers together by highlighting their shared experience of femaleness in a patriarchal society and, so, her viewpoint is not essentialist.

Whilst considering the issue of defining women's writing, the problem of how to define femininity arises once again. Moi draws from the work of Julia Kristeva in order to address this concern. Kristeva refuses to define femininity but sees it simply as that which is marginalised by the patriarchal symbolic order. Moi states:

> Kristeva's emphasis on femininity as a patriarchal construct enables feminists to counter all forms of biologistic attacks from the defenders of phallocentricism. To posit all women as necessarily feminine and all men as necessarily masculine, is precisely the move which enables the patriarchal powers to define, not femininity, but all women as marginal to the symbolic order and to society.[68]

Therefore, when women are seen as marginal, they are seen as a borderline, the boundary between man and chaos, but because of their marginal position they also merge with the chaos. I will return to this notion later when discussing Kristeva in more detail. The most important concept that Moi borrows from Kristeva is that of a feminine writing representing a marginal writing, not necessarily female and not necessarily feminist.

Hence, in attempting to distinguish between the three terms she started off with, Moi terms 'female writing' as writing by women, (although this does not tell us anything about the nature of the writing), 'feminist writing' as writing that takes a discernible anti-patriarchal approach and 'feminine writing' as that which is marginalised.[69]

Thus, applying Moi's definitions, the genre of the fairy tale could be said to be feminine as it is a marginalised genre, and female if the tale is written by a woman, which the vast majority of contemporary tales are, but is it a

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[67] Moi, p. 113.
[68] *Ibid.* p. 111.
[69] *Ibid.* p. 115.

feminist genre? Some fairy-tale authors certainly have an evident feminist approach while others do not. Therefore, for the moment, we must define the corpus of this study, according to Moi's definitions at least, as female, feminine and possibly feminist.

In her essay, 'Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?', Rosalind Coward questions whether all women's writing can be considered feminist. In her view, all accounts of reality are only *versions* of reality and, as such, nothing is ever truly neutral. Therefore, a text will either have a feminist agenda or not. Coward argues that grouping all female writers together is a risk, as all women will have different viewpoints, agendas and styles.[70] She strongly refutes the assumption that all writing that is, what she terms, 'woman centered' will be of interest to feminists. By 'woman centered', she is referring to literature that is by women, about woman and read by women, but this category includes a vast amount of literature that would not usually be termed as feminist, such as Mills and Boon romance novels and 'chick lit', etc. In fact, many would argue that these types of texts represent polar opposite values to that of feminism. As such, Coward sees labelling all 'woman centered' texts as feminist as misguided. In her view, 'feminist' is a term that can only be applied when we can see evidence of a particular political message or viewpoint in the text:

> [...] feminism can never be the product of the identity of women's experiences and interests – there is no such unity. Feminism must always be the alignment of women in a political movement with particular political aims and objectives. It is a grouping unified by its *political interests*, not its common experiences.[71]

Coward's logic cannot be denied here. Feminism can only be defined as a political viewpoint, which allows this project to group a corpus of women authors together to analyse, precisely, their similar *and* different viewpoints. Women will, certainly, not all write texts from a feminist point of view, but there is a common experience there to be explored, feminist or not.

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[70] Rosalind Coward, 'Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?' in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory,* ed. by Elaine Showalter (London: Virago Press, 1993), pp. 225-39 (p. 228).
[71] *Ibid.* p. 238.

Whereas Toril Moi defines sex as a matter of biology and gender as a social construct, Judith Butler explains that sex is also an 'ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time'.[72] Butler expands by explaining that sex is not a static condition of the body but should be seen as something produced through a reiteration of norms. Therefore, Butler defines sex as a socially constructed ideal alongside gender. According to Butler, norms work in a 'performative fashion' to materialise sexual difference 'in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative'.[73] Hence, Butler posits that sex is not static, not what one has or is but rather a norm by which a person becomes visible at all, and as such qualifies a body for life. Following on from this notion, she suggests a reformulation of the idea of sex, whereby sex is no longer regarded as a bodily given on which the 'construct of gender is artificially imposed, but as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies'.[74] Butler, in this way, highlights the problematic nature of placing gender alone in the category of social construct acting upon nature/sex. Sex, therefore, is seen as akin to nature and as such passive, awaiting the 'penetrating act' of gender to assign meaning.[75]

> Indeed, as much as the radical distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the de Beauvoirian version of feminism, it has come under criticism in recent years for degrading the natural as that which is 'before' intelligibility, in need of the mark, if not the mar, of the social to signify, to be known to acquire value.[76]

If one accepts that the natural assumes value only when social character is assigned, then what is left of sex after the social construct of gender has been allocated? Is sex replaced by these social meanings and therefore, does it no longer exist? Butler argues that if sex no longer exists, 'then gender does not presume a sex which it acts upon, but rather, gender produces the misnomer of a prediscursive 'sex', and the meaning of construction becomes that of linguistic monism, whereby everything is only and always language'.[77] As

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[72] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On The Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 1.
[73] *Ibid.* p. 2.
[74] *Ibid.* p.3.
[75] *Ibid.* p. 4.
[76] *Ibid.* p. 4-5.
[77] *Ibid.* p. 6.

such, the construction of gender operates through exclusionary means, whereby abjected beings, those who are not properly gendered, are seen as non-human beings. If we take the case of monstrous bodies or 'delegitimated bodies' in light of Butler's discussion of sex and gender, they are cast as failing to count as bodies at all; if gender replaces sex and nature is replaced by society/culture, then social norms will dictate which bodies matter.

Thus, a domain of excluded or 'delegitimated' sex exists. However, these abjected bodies form the necessary boundary and support for those bodies which qualify as the ones that 'matter'. If a body fails to qualify as fully human or gendered, in failing to qualify, it fortifies the regulatory norms that cast it out in the first place. She suggests that the exclusion and degradation of the feminine is extremely problematic for feminism. However, she rejects the notion that the 'feminine monopolises the sphere of the excluded' and includes slaves, children and animals as also in the category of 'peripheral bodies'.[78] In this way, we see the likeness between the feminine and these *other* others who together make up this border between man and chaos. Women and other bodies that are termed as delegitimized or bodies that do not matter or count are grouped alongside each other. Therefore, one can see the link between women and monstrous bodies and, as such, we can see a possible reason for the trend, fascination even, of women authors with animal-bridegroom tales and indeed other forms of the monstrous within literature.

Julia Kristeva, like Butler, sees women as marginal others. She rejects attributes that would be traditionally considered feminine or maternal; she sees feminism as situated outside the linear time of identities and as a 'marginal movement'.[79] In *Women's Time*, Kristeva posits that women's struggle is no longer concerned with equality but with that of difference and specificity. Rather than regard women as a group that must overcome the oppression of patriarchy, what is more important to Kristeva is to discover the specificity of the female and that of each individual woman.

Kristeva highlights the pitfalls of acknowledging a 'woman's writing', stating that it can lead to a belittling of men's writing and what is more a

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[78] *Ibid.* p. 16.
[79] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', in *The Feminist Reader*, 2nd edn, ed. by C. Belsey and J. Moore (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 201-216 (p. 202).

peddling of 'naïve whining or market-place romanticism' by adopting the label feminist.[80] In discussing the existence of a 'woman's language', Kristeva states that its 'lexical specificity is perhaps more the product of a social marginality than of a sexual symbolic difference'.[81] Thus, Kristeva queries the notion of a writing that could be determined as inherently female or feminine as essentialist and counter-productive. She accepts that it is possible to see recurrent styles in women's writing but questions whether this should be defined as specifically feminine.

Furthermore, if we accept the ideal of the second sex as a counter-society or 'female society', which is in some way an alter ego of the official society and imagined as harmonious and without prohibitions, do we always find the guilty other in the other sex, the other religion, in the foreign, and therefore, does feminism not become 'a kind of inverted sexism'?[82] Hence, we must look at the individuality of the woman author and avoid the essentialism that could be the outcome of trying to define a specifically female writing.

Kristeva suggests a separation is necessary from the belief in an inherent or essential 'Woman':

> [...] feminism will be able to break free of its belief in Woman. Her power. Her writing, so as to channel this demand for difference into each and every element of the female whole, and, finally, to bring out the singularity of each woman, and beyond this, her multiplicities, her plural languages, beyond the horizon, beyond sight, beyond faith itself.[83]

Kristeva attributes the dichotomy of man/woman as belonging to metaphysics and questions what identity and sexual identity mean in a new theoretical space where the very notion of identity is challenged. According to Moi, Kristeva does not suggest a theory of femininity or femaleness but rather, a theory of 'marginality, subversion and dissidence'.[84] She rejects any theory based on the belief in any absolute form of identity and defines femininity as that which is marginalised by patriarchy and, as such, sees femininity as a patriarchal construct. Following her definition of feminine as marginal, to posit all women

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[80] *Ibid.* p. 203.
[81] *Ibid.* p. 206-7.
[82] *Ibid.* p. 209.
[83] *Ibid.* p. 214.
[84] Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 164.

as feminine would cast every woman as marginal to the symbolic order and thus to society.

Like Butler, Kristeva sees the feminine as occupying a symbolic marginal position, on the borderline, the necessary frontier between man and chaos which they also merge into. Moi suggests that it is this positioning which allows women to be vilified and venerated at the same time, cast as virgin and whore simultaneously, despite the fact that neither corresponds to any essential truth of women. Also, Moi argues that Kristeva romanticises the marginal but does concede that her work is important in allowing us to look at men and women's writing alike in an anti-essentialist way.

To further explore the place of women's writing let us consider Bonnie Zimmerman's work in the area of lesbian writing. Zimmerman argues that lesbian authors write from a borderline position due, not only to their sex, but also, their sexuality. This is of significance to this study, as in exploring representations of gender and sexuality, I am theorising that it is necessary to take into account the author's social context, their sexuality being a part of that, for example, in the case of lesbian author Emma Donoghue whose work will be discussed later. Zimmerman posits that it is necessary to acknowledge the impact of *otherness* on a work. She asks, 'Does a woman's sexual and affectional preference influence the way she writes, reads, and thinks?' and, moreover, 'Is there a lesbian aesthetic distinct from a feminist aesthetic?'[85] I would add here, is a lesbian aesthetic necessarily in line with a feminist one in the first place? As I have already discussed, we cannot assume that a woman's writing is necessarily feminist, thus, we cannot assume likewise as regards a lesbian author's work.

To return to the notion of lesbian writing being on the borderline, Zimmerman states that 'heterosexism assumes heterosexuality to be the only natural form of sexual and emotional expression'.[86] Indeed, it is telling that more articles on lesbian literature have appeared in traditional literary journals than in Women's Studies presses. There is reluctance within feminist literary criticism to address the question of lesbian writing. Zimmerman reasons that

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[85] Bonnie Zimmerman, 'What Has Never Been; An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism', in *The New Feminist Criticism, Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* ,ed. by Elaine Showalter (London: Virago Press, 1993), pp. 200-23 (p. 200).
[86] *Ibid.* p. 201.

'possibly, feminist critics continue to feel that they will be identified as 'dykes', thus invalidating their work',[87] if they focus on the work of lesbian authors. We must acknowledge that, in the past, in any case, there has been a stigma surrounding homosexuality, and it could be argued that this stigma has been even worse for lesbians.

Indeed, Luce Irigaray, in *This Sex Which is Not One*, argues that whilst male homosexuality might be stigmatised, female homosexuality is often simply ignored. She argues: 'The exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another'[88], whereas female homosexuality is unthinkable in this society:

> In this economy any interplay of desire among women's bodies, women's organs, women's language is inconceivable. [...] Commodities can only enter into relationships under the watchful eyes of their 'guardians'. It is out of the question for them to go to 'market' on their own, enjoy their own worth among themselves, speak to each other, desire each other, free from the control of seller-buyer-consumer subjects. And the interests of businessmen require that commodities relate to each other as rivals.[89]

Irigaray suggests a utopia where these 'commodities' refuse to go to 'market' and maintain their own kind of commerce, amongst themselves and, in fact, many fairy-tale rewritings have at their core the notion of women helping women by passing on knowledge through tales, as is suggested by Pauline Greenhill in relation to the tale 'Fitcher's Bird': 'Women in the tale identify socially and culturally with other women as sisters, as helpers and as friends, not as with men as their daughters, and most definitely not as their wives'.[90] As shall be discussed later, Emma Donoghue embeds this type of thinking within the narrative of *Kissing the Witch,* whilst forging a place for female homosexuality at the same time. Each tale is passed on from woman to woman, many of whom are homosexual, and so, Donoghue's collection of tales represents the kind of accepting lesbian-friendly utopian society that Irigaray considers.

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[87] *Ibid.* p. 202.
[88] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 192.
[89] *Ibid.* p. 196.
[90] Pauline Greenhill, 'Fitcher's [Queer] Bird: A Fairy-Tale Heroine and Her Avatars', *Marvels & Tales*, 22.1 (2008) 143-67 (p. 154).

The commentary on female homosexuality within Emma Donoghue's work will be discussed later. Indeed, she herself confirms that *Kissing the Witch* was written purposefully from a lesbian viewpoint. However, firstly, let us return to the more general notion of taking an author's sexuality into account whilst analysing their work. We must, again, be careful not to place labels onto authors where they are unnecessary, unwanted and, perhaps, unhelpful. Whilst asking whether a text by a female can automatically be defined as feminist (it cannot), then, we must ask also when can we say that a text is a 'lesbian text' or that a writer is a 'lesbian writer'? This once more, leads us dangerously close to adopting an essentialist perspective. As Zimmerman affirms, we must be careful when labelling writers 'innately' anything as 'it is not evident that women, let alone lesbians, are "innately" anything'.[91]

Zimmerman highlights the difficulties in defining what might be termed as a 'lesbian text' as this could be classified in different ways. Firstly we could identify a lesbian text as a text written *by* a lesbian (and how do we know who is a lesbian?). Secondly, we could say that a text written *about* lesbians is a lesbian text or, thirdly, we could say that a lesbian text must be defined as a text that expresses some sort of lesbian ideology or vision, though, this, of course, is ambiguous.[92] Hence, rather than label texts as lesbian or not, it is a better solution to avoid labels altogether but to consider the author's sexuality as a facet of their identity and their social context that, when considered, will help us gain insight into their work. As Zimmerman argues, 'lesbian criticism […] has more to gain from resisting dogma than from monotheism'.[93] For example, to refer to Emma Donoghue as an example once more, we cannot label her work as *inherently* lesbian, but knowing that Donoghue is homosexual will help us to better understand the representations of sexuality in her work. As such, an author's sexuality cannot be the only factor we take into account with regard to their work but, it is part of a wider social context that will, subsequently, lead us to a clearer understanding of their writing.

In discussing this concept, Zimmerman states that criticism cannot fail to take into account 'the influence of sexual and emotional orientation on literary

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[91] Zimmerman, p. 204 & 206.
[92] *Ibid*. p. 208.
[93] *Ibid.* p. 215.

expression'.[94] Zimmerman contends that sexual orientation does have an effect on an author's writing, as we have also seen Seifert argue. She demonstrates her position by reminding us that many texts that were presumed to have been written by heterosexual women are now being re-read in light of the discovery that the author was, in fact, homosexual. Zimmerman contends that not only the sex, but the sexuality, of an author will have an effect on how we read a text. Thus, we cannot label writers due to their sexuality, but it makes sense not to ignore it as an influencing factor either:

> I do believe that there is a common structure – a lesbian 'essence' – that may be located in all these specific historical existences, just as we may speak of a widespread, perhaps universal, structure of marriage or the family. However, in each of these cases – lesbianism, marriage, the family – careful attention to history teaches us that differences are as significant as similarities, and vital information about female survival may be found in the different ways in which women have responded to their historical situation.[95]

So, we can position lesbian writing 'on the boundary', alongside women's writing in that both occupy a marginalised space. We cannot, however, group all types of women's writing or lesbian writing together; we must seek out both their commonalities and differences.

This study, therefore, must be wary of potential pitfalls in the definition of women's writing, and of generalisations. Nonetheless, if we wish to examine the writings of a marginalised genre, by authors who because of their sex/gender/sexuality have been marginalised, then, surely, we must take their sex/gender/sexuality into account when analysing their work and their connection with the genre. This will be discussed in further detail in relation to Nancy K. Miller in the following chapter, but firstly let us look at the relationship between the fairy-tale genre and the times throughout history when rewritings are most prolific.

1.2.1 *Fin de Siècle* **Thinking and Fairy Tales**

Elaine Showalter remarks, in *Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, that 'the terminal decades of a century suggest to many minds the death

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[94] *Ibid.* p. 210.
[95] *Ibid.* p. 216.

throes of a diseased society and the winding down of an exhausted culture'.[96] As the corpora of this study were produced near or at the end of the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, these are the particular eras that will be focused on here; though, of course, *fin de siècle* thinking applies to other centuries also.[97] As discussed in relation to Lewis Carl Seifert earlier, the questioning of gender roles and sexual boundaries often occurs at the turn of centuries. Showalter sees this as a repeating pattern of *fin-de-siècle* thinking - the term 'endism' being used to refer to the last decades of the twentieth century.[98] Showalter questions why these time markers that are, in fact, purely imaginary borders, have such an impact and evoke certain sentiments. She cites Frank Kermode in explaining that this 'sense of an ending' is a myth of the temporal that affects our feelings about ourselves: 'We project our existential anxieties on to history; there is a real correlation between the ends of centuries and the peculiarity of our imagination that it chooses always to be at the end of an era.'[99]

The end of a century is weighted with symbolic meaning. According to Showalter we project the metaphors of death and rebirth into the final years of a century and as a result of this symbolism, the laws that govern sexual identity and behaviour are questioned. This has resulted in the past in social purity campaigns and a renewed sense of public moral concern. Showalter gives the example of fear of sexual threats such as disease in the late twentieth century and a backlash against the sexual liberalism of the 1960s and '70s. During the '80s and '90s the AIDS epidemic fuelled homophobia and there was an emphasis socially on monogamy. Showalter explains: 'In periods of cultural insecurity, when there are fears of regression and degeneration, the longing for strict border controls around the definition of gender, as well as race, class, and nationality, becomes especially intense'.[100]

However, an examination of the fairy-tale rewritings produced, in particular, by women writers at the end of the twentieth century tends to

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[96] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy, Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 1.
[97] For a discussion on the representation of women at the end of the nineteenth century see Françoise Gaillard, 'Naked, but Hairy: Women and Misogyny in Fin de Siècle Representations', trans. by Colette Windish, *South Central Review* 29.3 (Fall 2012), 163-76.
[98] Showalter, p. 2.
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] *Ibid.* p. 4.

indicate a reaction against this type of thinking and, rather than calling for strict boundaries in relation to sexuality. Many show, in fact, a blurring of these very boundaries in order to question them. Showalter cites Carol Pateman's observation that, as women have traditionally been perceived as figures of disorder and of social and cultural marginalisation, 'on the border', perhaps this places them in the position to blur these boundaries and also, perhaps, this makes the connection between women writers, specifically, and *fin-de-siècle* thinking and questioning.[101] However, Showalter underlines that *fin-de-siècle* questioning also marks an identity crisis for men, as masculinity like femininity, is a socially constructed ideal.

Questioning of the place of sexuality and gender roles is strongly linked to *fin-de-siècle* culture and thinking. This can be seen in literature that is produced during these times, and, in the case of the fairy tale, the type of genres that are popular. Showalter asserts that compulsive retelling is evident at the end of centuries; stories from the 1880s and 1890s are retold in the 1980s and 1990s and so on. As Seifert has shown, the first major vogue of literary fairy tales occurred in France towards the end of the seventeenth century. Showalter comments that 'in retelling these stories we transmit our own narratives, construct our own case histories, and shape our own futures'.[102] My argument, in this study, is that when we examine rewritings of tales produced at the end of the twentieth century, we can see a pattern repeating itself. Though seventeenth- to eighteenth- and twentieth- to twenty-first-century tales are produced in under very different social and cultural influences, many commonalities can be unearthed. It is these commonalities that I intend to explore in order to demonstrate the notions considered here.

To summarise briefly, in this section I have discussed the link between sexuality and danger, ambiguities as regards attempting to define the terms 'feminist', 'female' and 'feminine' alongside the sometimes ambiguous terms 'sex' and 'gender'. I have outlined the connection between the feminine and the marginal and discussed the positioning of women's and/or lesbian writing on the border or boundary. In the analysis to follow I will demonstrate that, indeed, both corpora to be examined here share important similarities, not only because

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[101] *Ibid.*

[102] *Ibid.* p. 18.

they are both by women (with the exception of Charles Perrault who is included as a means of demonstrating the contrast between women's and men's fairy tales at the time) but because they are both, in similar and different ways politically motivated. So, although, as I have outlined in this section, we cannot say that all women's writing is feminist, in the case of the fairy tales chosen for this study, we can, precisely because we can trace a common political motivation. This will be demonstrated later in the detailed comparative analysis of texts.

1.3   Part III Sexuality and the Beastly Body

Julia Kristeva defines the 'abject' as that which is 'ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable'.[103] She states, 'It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches worries and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects'.[104] The abject is something that is radically separate, loathsome. It is a 'something' that we do not recognise as a thing. It is this combining of repulsion and fascination that ties monstrosity and sexuality together. Kristeva sees the abject as that which 'disturbs identity, system, order', something that does not 'respect borders, positions, rules'. It is 'the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.[105]

This is what is important as regards the abjection of monstrosity; it is something familiar yet alien, simultaneously interesting yet frightening; it is part of us and yet it is other. 'The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts, uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them'.[106] It is this potential corruptible influence of the non-normative body that leads it to be simultaneously alluring yet dangerous. Sigmund Freud termed what is both frightening and familiar as 'the uncanny', something that 'evokes fear and dread' but which is also somehow familiar.[107] The terminology for this particular 'species of the frightening' stems from the German words 'heimlich' and 'unheimlich', the former denoting what is familiar and comfortable and the latter referring to that which is concealed or kept hidden. The term uncanny, then, is a merging of these two words. Freud reasons that 'the uncanny' refers to 'everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open'.[108] Indeed, the monstrous is a form of the uncanny as the most frightening monsters are always those that are familiar yet frightening. Monsters reflect our own humanity in a strange way and represent, ultimately, what we fear we may become. It is because of this that the monster holds such a

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[103] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 1.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] *Ibid.* p. 4.
[106] *Ibid.* p. 15.
[107] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 123.
[108] *Ibid*. p. 132.

lure in literature and film alike. Humans are fascinated by what is like us but different. With this in mind let us look at Margrit Shildrick's theory of femininity and the monstrous.

Margrit Shildrick refers broadly to monsters as 'figures of difference'.[109] She points out that these figures are seen as a disruptive force. Their vulnerability is seen as a negative attribute as it is a failure of self protection. Also, the notion of the monstrous is often projected onto the 'other', whether this may be in the physical or cultural sense. However, Shildrick notes, as well, that the 'differential body' is essential to identifying the self. She categorises the monstrous as also referring to the feminine, racial others, the physically disabled and generally those whose bodies distort morphological expectations. Therefore, the exclusion of monstrous bodies refers to the exclusion of those who disrupt corporeal norms. Shildrick's aim is to 'contest the binary that opposes the monstrous to the normal'.[110]

She relates femininity and the monstrous, stating that they are closely linked and asserts that it is important to reject biologism in all its forms. She discusses the intermingling of fascination and fear that accompanies the interest in the monstrous and furthermore sees monsters, along with the feminine as haunting the margins of western discourse, 'simultaneously seductive and threatening'.[111] Women, like monsters, are figures of ambiguous identity, that are abhorrent and at the same time enticing: 'Simultaneously threat and promise, the monster, as with the feminine, comes to embody those things which an ordered and limited life must try, and finally fail, to abject'.[112] Shildrick positions the monstrous as confounding normative identity. Embodying fascination interlinked with shame, monsters mirror our own vulnerabilities as they are neither inside nor outside, self nor other. They are 'always liminal, transgressive, transformative' and, in this way, they disrupt boundaries and order.[113]

Shildrick states that the binaries that divide monster/other and human demonstrate the instability of 'the categories that ground the normative human

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[109] Margrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 1.
[110] *Ibid*. p. 3.
[111] *Ibid.* p. 5.
[112] *Ibid.*
[113] *Ibid.* p. 4.

subject'.[114] Furthermore, she states that 'the differential interpretations of monstrosity may speak clearly to the mapping of specific socio-historical anxieties and interests'.[115] Shildrick's observation may lend itself to the study of fairy tales, specifically those concerning monstrosity such as animal-bridegroom tales. As Seifert also pointed out, the fairy tale as a genre often reappears in times of cultural or political uncertainty, so perhaps there is a link also between the monstrous and specific periods in history. This link is clearer if we consider the symbolism associated with the monstrous. Shildrick states that 'monsters signify the binary opposition between the natural and the non natural' and, what is more, not only do they threaten to overrun boundaries, they promise to dissolve them altogether.[116] As Shildrick demonstrates, the monstrous is strongly connected to binaries and the concept of boundaries, in one sense preserving them yet, in another, destroying them.

According to Shildrick, the monster is a fluid entity; it cannot be separated entirely from humanity despite its *otherness*.[117] In other words, the monster is, in one sense, the antithesis of humanity, yet we cannot define humanity without it. A dialogic relationship exists between the monster and humanity whereby they mutually define one another. The monster is a mirror of the human condition; it reflects truths about humanity; only by marking out the boundaries of self and other can we have a sense of self. If we use the monstrous to define what we are not, then it serves a positive function, yet is generally considered as something which is negative. Shildrick sees the monstrous as distanced, yet it is too close to humanity for comfort. Therefore, the monstrous inspires 'denial *and* recognition, disgust *and* empathy, exclusion *and* identification'[118], and invokes vulnerability. The monstrous is an object of ambivalent repulsion and attraction; humanity and monstrosity are always connected, one defining the other, which may be the reason for our ceaseless fascination with monsters.

Shildrick also addresses the relationship between monstrousness and the feminine. Similarly to Kristeva who defines the feminine as something which is

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[114] *Ibid.* p. 9.
[115] *Ibid*. p. 10.
[116] *Ibid.* p. 11.
[117] *Ibid.* p. 16.
[118] *Ibid.* p. 17.

always marginal, Shildrick sees marginality as the element that connects the two. Although the monster may appear to be alien, she sees its place as always encompassed in the order of self and other and reckons that one defines the other. Shildrick links the feminine and the monstrous, not by equating sexual difference with monstrous difference but by showing that often the two signifiers are 'doing similar work in both supporting and contesting the structure of the western logos'.[119] She sees both monsters and women signifying the other, the boundary, the borderline. Following this logic, we could posit that it is this similarity that links women writers with representing monstrosity in literature. Do women relate to monsters as *other* others?

Shildrick further links women and monsters as being stripped of their threat by the highlighting of their non-identity to the dominant standard, historically being the European white male. Therefore, in the wake of this standard, there still lies a general uneasiness in relation to the female body and the corporeal in general. The female is associated with disorder and danger, particularly in relation to the spheres of sexuality and maternity. The 'unpredictable', 'leaky' bodies of women are connected to monstrosity;[120] their fecundity is directly linked with their power and consequent supposed danger. In demonstrating this point Shildrick uses the example of Aristotle who defined monstrosity as any being that does not take after its parents and who stated that the most common form of monstrosity at birth was that of the birth of female babies, as the 'proper order of paternal power was compromised'.[121] This link between the female and deformity throughout history confirms Shildrick's notion of the link between the two.

In her discussion of 'vile bodies', particularly in relation to Irish women writers, Maureen O'Connor also makes the connection between women and animals. She suggests that imagery of defenceless animals is often used in literature to symbolise the plight of women. As women, in the past, were deemed somehow inferior, and Irish women especially so due to colonialism, the stereotype of the 'raving native Irishwoman partaking in unspeakable

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[119] *Ibid.* p. 28.
[120] *Ibid.* p. 31.
[121] *Ibid.*

'beastliness'' was created.[122] This dates back to the twelfth century and was due to a combination of racism and sexism. Later, during the 1800s, Irish women were then compared to wild animals by the English in an exotic sense.[123] As a result of these associations, there came about a link between the culturally different woman and animals. Later, the animal was used in writing to represent oppressed groups such as women, children and slaves and, in doing so, authors exposed the sexist values that considered women as property:[124] 'oppression of women is yoked with the experiences of animals'.[125] This goes some way to giving an explanation for women's ongoing fascination with tales that are about animals, animal-bridegroom tales in particular.

The fear and lack of understanding of the process of conception and birth also left the area of women's sexuality open to suspicion. Margrit Shildrick gives the example of maternal imagination, an idea which came about during the seventeenth century. It was believed that a mother's thoughts or dreams could somehow be projected onto the unborn child and, thus, produce a monstrous baby. Indeed, the term teratology (the study of the monstrous) originates from the Greek word *teratos,* meaning both prodigy and demon. In this sense, pregnancy and birth have a long-standing connection with both fascination and horror. The concept of maternal imagination was certainly connected to the anxiety and lack of knowledge that surrounded the whole area of sexuality and female fecundity. In Rosemary Betterton's discussion of maternal imagination and its representation in the work of contemporary artists, such as Alison Lapper and Tracey Emin, she notes that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries monstrous births could be linked to women's sexual perversion, mixing of sperm from different races, intercourse during menstruation, eating forbidden food, illicit looking, or even demonic possession.[126] Betterton demonstrates this idea by citing Catharina Schrader, an eighteenth-century Frisian midwife:

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[122] Maureen O'Connor, *The Female and the Species: The Animal in Irish Women's Writing* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010) p. 8.
[123] *Ibid.* p. 15.
[124] *Ibid.* p. 19 & 23.
[125] *Ibid.* p. 27.
[126] Rosemary Betterton, 'Promising Monsters: Pregnant Bodies, Artistic Subjectivity, and Maternal Imagination', *Hypatia*, 21.1 (Winter 2006) 80-100, (p. 83).

1733 on 10 November with Maryken, wife of the servant to the orphanage. A son. But he had a face like an ape. At the back of the neck an opening as big as a hand. Its genitals were also not as they should be. She had seen apes dancing. It did not live long. Oh Lord, save us from such monsters.[127]

Herman W. Roodenburg also cites Schrader in his essay on the fears of pregnant women in seventeenth-century Holland. He notes that anything that was deemed as abnormal in a baby, from something as small as a birthmark, to a baby with two heads, was considered the result of maternal imagination. Even if a pregnant mother encountered a 'lunatic', it was feared that the baby would also be born insane.[128] What is more, 'mishapen babies' were considered not to have a soul and Roodenburg suggests that it is possible that some babies were 'stifled' at birth as they were considered monsters.[129] It's clear that birth defects, on the whole, were attributed to a transgression of some sort on the mother's part. In this way, women were cast as denying their own child humanity and hence, salvation. Their wanton imaginations were believed literally to breed monstrosity into their children. This type of thinking led to the opinion that sexuality, especially women's, was an area that needed to be strictly controlled.

The maternal body in general was regarded as monstrous. Not only was a woman capable of producing monstrosity but she was monstrous herself; it is the woman's 'monstrous (re)productivity'[130] that labels her as monster. Female fecundity elicits normative anxiety as it is something simultaneously familiar and alien, as the monster is simultaneously self and other. Shildrick posits that this is the key to understanding our own fascination with monstrosity; something that is half us and half something else is equally captivating and disturbing.

Shildrick positions both the feminine and the monstrous on the margins of Western discourse because of their specific power to be same and other at the same time. She states: 'What lies beyond the unproblematic horror of the

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[127] C.G.Schrader, *Memoryboeck van de Vrouwens.Het notitieboek van een Friese vroedvrouw, 1693-1745*, ed. by M.J. van Lieburg (Amsterdam, 1984), cited in Betterton, 2006, p. 80.
[128] Roodenburg, Herman, W. 'The Maternal Imagination. The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland', *Journal of Social History*, 21.4 (Summer 1988) 701-16, (p. 701).
[129] *Ibid*. p. 704.
[130] Shildrick, p. 42.

absolute other is the far more risky perception that the monstrous may not be recognised as such, for it is not so different after all'.[131] This constant anxiety in relation to corporeal differences, according to Shildrick, leads to violent policing of boundaries. However, policing of boundaries will inevitably also lead to breaking boundaries. In writing tales of monsters, women question where their place is in relation to the borderlines of sexuality and the marginality of monstrosity and, thus, change where the boundaries lie or strive to eradicate them all together.

In this section I have proposed the importance of the connection between the concepts of the monstrous and the feminine. As we have seen, both fit into the category of abject beings and can be considered to be linked to the idea of *otherness*. My argument here, which will be demonstrated later, is that this link is relevant in understanding representations of the monstrous in women's writing. In the two corpora of chosen tales, I will examine specifically the notion of beastliness in animal-bridegroom tales as the themes of monstrosity and otherness permeate these narratives. What is more, in these tales particularly, the elements of monstrosity and otherness are nearly always associated with gender and sexuality. In examining these themes together, I will ask; do women use representations of monstrosity to explore the issues of gender and sexuality in their writing? Is *otherness* a dominant theme in their writing precisely because of the history of marginality of women's writing and of women in society in general? And, finally, can we trace this link and uncover a shared preference for representing these themes, in similar ways, in the fairy tales of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century *conteuses* and in twentieth and twenty-first-century fairy-tale rewritings. These questions will inform the analysis of tales to come in the following chapters. Before moving on to the analysis section of this study, however, let us continue to the final section of this chapter which will outline some existing interpretations of the animal-bridegroom type tale.

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[131] *Ibid.*

1.4   Part IV Analysing Beastliness:

Interpretations of the Animal-Bridegroom Tale

Raymonde Robert's informative study of the literary fairy tales of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries sheds light on the origins of the animal-bridegroom tale type. Among the other tale types that Robert focuses on, she acknowledges the *époux monstrueux* (animal-bridegroom)[132] to be one of the most used and, what is more, most of the examples that she analyses are written by women. The recurring motif of animal-human metamorphosis, according to Robert, can be viewed as a type of '*jeu érotique*' (erotic game)[133] with the reader. In this way the tale teller uses animality to convey sexual imagery:

> Dans l'ensemble des contes types qu'ils empruntent au folklore, il apparaît que les auteurs de contes de fées recourent avec une certaine prédilection au no. 425 « La recherche de l'époux disparu ».[134] [Amongst the tale types that were borrowed from folklore, it appears that fairy-tale authors had a certain predilection for no. 425 'The Search for the Lost Husband'.][135]

Furthermore, Robert also explains that we can group numbers 432 (The Prince as Bird) and 433 (The Prince as Serpent), with the Search for the Lost Husband tale type due to the very close similarities in their themes and plots. Robert categorises some examples of this tale type: *Le Mouton* (1697), *L'Oiseau Bleu* (1697), *Serpentin Vert* (1698) and *Le Prince Marcassin* (1698) by Mme d'Aulnoy, *Le Roy Porc* (1699) by Mme de Murat, *L'Histoire de la Princesse Zeineb et du Roi Léopard* (1712-1714) by L'abbé Bignon, *La Belle et la Bête* (1740) by Mme de Villeneuve and *La Belle et la Bête* (1756) by Mme Leprince de Beaumont. [136]

Some of these tales will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 3, however, at a glance, the list of tales is telling in that women authors in particular seem to have had a predilection, as Robert puts it, for this tale type and, moreover, Mme d'Aulnoy would seem to have exploited this particular theme to a great extent. She also notes that d'Aulnoy's *La Chatte Blanche* and

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[132] Raymonde Robert, *Le Conte de Fées littéraire en France de la Fin du XVIIe à la Fin du XVIIIe Siècle*, (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1982), p. 134.
[133] *Ibid.*
[134] *Ibid.*
[135] All translations of Raymonde Robert are my own.
[136] Robert, p. 22-30.

La Biche au Bois are of interest as the roles are reversed, so the heroine is the character who undergoes the metamorphosis. This can be seen in some contemporary rewritings and it is interesting to see that it is not a new phenomenon; this tale type already existed in folklore as a variation of the animal-bridegroom tale.

Robert attributes Mme d'Aulnoy's preference for the animal-bridegroom tale type as being directly related to her social position and describes her, alongside Mlle de la Force, a contemporary of Mme d'Aulnoy as '*des femmes actives, agitées, peu satisfaites de leur condition',* (active, restless women who were not satisfied with life).[137] Robert defines Mme d'Aulnoy, specifically, as a strong, ambitious woman, very different from the image of the virtuous, even meek, woman that, as we have seen in Seifert's study, had become the desired ideal that a woman was to aspire to. The animal-bridegroom tale type is generally acknowledged to comment on a young woman's position in the world and, hence, Mme d'Aulnoy was drawn to the tale to comment on her own situation. Robert acknowledges Mme d'Aulnoy's *Serpentin Vert* as the first animal-bridegroom tale to be directly influenced by Apuleius's 'Cupid and Psyche'. However, whereas Apuleius's monster is purely in the mind of Psyche, d'Aulnoy's serpent is very real. We can see that d'Aulnoy uses the tale to comment on her social situation. She emphasises that, marriage, for a young woman at the end of the seventeenth century was, often, an ordeal, and not simply an imagined fear.

Robert also provides an in-depth analysis of the two tales that gave birth to the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale that we still know today, those by Mme de Villeneuve and Mme Leprince de Beaumont. In comparing the two, Robert gives us a commentary on the moral overtones that Leprince de Beaumont added to de Villeneuve's tale. Mme Leprince de Beaumont, after the breakdown of her marriage, moved to England to work as a governess. She used fairy tales as part of her *Magasin des enfants*, the purpose of which was to teach the young girls French while imparting virtues and morals. As such, the tales she chose were '*adapté[s] à leur sexe et à leur situation sociale',* (adapted

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[137] *Ibid.* p. 135.

for their sex and their social situation).[138] Here, we can see the main difference, then, between the tale that de Villeneuve produced and Leprince de Beaumont's. Whereas de Villeneuve's tale appeared as part of a longer text in *La Jeune Ameriquaine et les Contes Marins* (1740) and was for entertainment, rather than educational purposes, Leprince de Beaumont's tale had the specific function of influencing young girls to lead a proper and 'good' life. Thus, the tales that Leprince de Beaumont adapted, including Charles Perrault's *Riquet à la Houppe*, another animal-bridegroom tale which will be discussed later, were adapted in a specific way. The language was simplified as the tales were used as an aid to learn a second language but, most importantly, almost all of the sexual imagery of de Villeneuve's version was removed by Leprince de Beaumont.

Robert gives us some interesting examples of this. Mme de Villeneuve's *bête* is similar to d'Aulnoy's serpent and de Villeneuve plays on the repugnance of the Beast, emphasising his ugliness, whereas Leprince de Beaumont leaves more to the imagination and does not describe *la bête* in as much detail. Also, the motif of the Beast asking *Belle* to marry him every night is reduced by Leprince de Beaumont to occurring just once in the tale; it would seem that for Mme Leprince de Beaumont, once was enough. Physical descriptions and any references to sexuality were removed in order to render the tale less offensive to a polite readership.

Another deletion carried out by Mme Leprince de Beaumont is the removal of the dream motif. Mme de Villeneuve's *Belle* is visited by a voice in her dreams that she eventually falls in love with. The voice is of course *la bête,* whom she cannot see in the dreams:

> Mme Leprince de Beaumont ne considère pas comme «innocentes» toutes ces rêveries nocturnes, aussi coupe-t-elle impitoyablement tous les développements que nous venons d'analyser; en revanche, elle introduit un élément moral qu'elle développe avec insistance. (Mme Leprince de Beaumont did not consider these nocturnal reveries as 'innocent', therefore she mercilessly cut out all the aspects just analysed and,

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[138] *Ibid.* p. 146.

conversely, she introduced a moral element which she develops
insistently.)[139]

Robert contends that in deleting the sexual imagery from the tale Leprince de Beaumont erases the element which is essential to the functioning of the erotic game in the text. Instead, she adds a moral subtext emphasising the goodness and virtuousness of the relationship between *Belle* and *la bête*. Thus, here we can see that, as Kristeva suggests, we cannot group women writers together purely because they are women. However we can analyse women's writing while taking into account the author's individuality, their gender being one facet of this.

The two *La Belle et le Bête* tales will be analysed in greater detail later, but, let us first look at some other possible interpretations of the animal-bridegroom tale type, moving from the literary tales of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France towards modern-day rewritings.

Maria Tatar points out that animal-bridegroom tales are different from most other fairy tales in that they chart the challenges facing both Beauty and the Beast,[140] whereas most fairy tales tell of the obstacles faced by one main character. Aarne and Thompson classify this tale type as The Search for the Lost Husband (AT425).[141] Linked to this tale type are the many others that make up the various animal-bridegroom tale types. Tatar says that these tales in particular are 'deeply entrenched in the myth of romantic love'.[142] Indeed the earliest known version of this tale that led to the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale as we know it today was the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' which first appeared in Roman writer Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* in the second century AD. As Cupid was traditionally the God of love, the myth truly is one of the great love stories that has remained popular for two thousand years. 'Cupid and Psyche', however, is different from the tales that are currently popular. Cupid, rather than having a beastly appearance, is the most beautiful man in existence but Psyche is forbidden to ever see him. Psyche's curiosity and her failure to heed her groom's warnings lead to her downfall. The tale has evolved extensively

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[139] *Ibid.* p. 152.

[140] Maria Tatar (ed.), *The Classic Fairy Tales* (London: W.W Norton & Company, 1999), p. 25.

[141] Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography,* trans. and enlarged by Stith Thompson (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981), p. 140.

[142] Tatar, 1999, p. 25.

since its incarnation, and as we track the changes in the tale over time, we can see that the changes are specifically linked to the times and cultures of the respective rewritings.

Tatar analyses some aspects of animal-bridegroom tales. She points out that often it is desire for wealth that motivates parents to give their daughter away to a beast. This is most often the father, as in animal-bridegroom tales, for the most part, the mother is absent. Sometimes this is explained as the father being a widower; on the other hand, often the lack of a mother is not alluded to at all. This has been interpreted by some fairy-tale scholars as the representation in tales of the silencing of women; the mother has no voice as she is not included in the tale.

Historically, the tales have acted as a 'socially acceptable channel for providing therapeutic advice, comfort and consolation'[143] to young girls being married off at a young age, often to a man a great deal older than them, whom they hardly knew. In this way the heroine may see her groom as the incarnation of bestial impulses.[144] His physical ugliness can represent her fear of her first sexual experience, according to Tatar. However, this theory also posited by Bruno Bettelheim, as we will see, has been somewhat refuted in more recent fairy-tale scholarship, as it tends to lay the blame for the Beast's monstrosity with the heroine at all times, rather than acknowledge Beauty's unpleasant situation.

Often in this tale type, the father can also be seen as a beast character. Whilst he does not appear monstrous, his deeds can be. In giving his daughter to a Beast he forsakes a bond of trust with his daughter and becomes beastly himself. Tatar suggests that the father is often portrayed as the voice of reason in the tale, despite his misdeeds. The Beast is burdened with the savage appearance but it is the father's deeds which are truly savage. Thus, animal-bridegroom tales portray the opposition between civilised and savage and love's power to civilise.[145] Likewise Tatar suggests that tenderness and aggression go hand in hand in animal-bridegroom tales. It can be a cruel act, such as the princess throwing the frog against a wall in The Frog King that

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[143] *Ibid.*
[144] Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 171.
[145] *Ibid.* p. 173.

disenchants the Beast or an act of tenderness such as a kiss or tears that sets the Beast free.

The Beast can appear in animal-bridegroom tales as a number of different animals depending on where and when the tale is produced. Animal-bridegrooms have metamorphosed into lions, bears, frogs, snakes, pigs, hedgehogs and donkeys. The ferocious animals are most common, however, as they inspire fear. Often it is a wicked fairy that has caused the beast's metamorphosis although we are rarely told of the reason for this. Tatar suggests that the fact that the wicked fairy is always female represents the metaphorical wisdom of old women tale tellers and their knowledge of sexuality.[146] In making the groom a beast in a young bride's eyes and then transforming him into a handsome prince, the older woman prepares the young girl for entering marital life. In this way, historically, this tale type had an educational purpose and this purpose has changed and evolved as the tale has. Looking at rewritings, we can see the didactic changes that have been applied to this tale over the years. Tatar points out that 'while eighteenth and nineteenth-century versions of the tale celebrated the civilising power of feminine virtue and its triumph over crude animal desire, our own culture hails Beast's heroic defiance of civilisation, with all its discontents'.[147]

In recent rewritings a movement can be seen from a celebration of culture's superiority over nature to celebrating nature's triumph over culture. Tatar states that rather than reading into didactic changes that were appended onto tales over time, we must read the messages that are on the surface of fairy tales and set aside preconceptions of the lessons that were added by 'experts in the art of bowdlerizing fairy tales'.[148] Further to this, she adds that 'Beauty and the Beast' tales have become domesticated, moving in the direction of 'sentimentalization', and that 'the theme of love's humanising power has so overshadowed the link between sexuality and bestiality that few readers are shocked by the appearance of the animal-bridegroom'.[149] However, Tatar does not give examples of which tales she is referring to here, although one would assume she is alluding to the Disney and other similar versions, as these are the

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[146] *Ibid.* p. 177.
[147] Tatar, 1999, p. 29.
[148] Tatar, 1987, p. 177.
[149] *Ibid.*

versions that the general population are most familiar with today. Nevertheless, this blanket observation seems somewhat one-sided in light of the many rewritings of animal-bridegroom tales that strive to emphasise the goodness of the animal nature in the Beast, and what is more, Beauty's choice to be Beast also. Examples of some such tales will be discussed in detail in the comparative analysis.

1.4.1   The Lineage of Mother Goose

The fairy-tale genre has long been associated with a female origin; the maternal image of Mother Goose goes hand in hand with fairy tales and, within the tales themselves, there is often a mother figure who advises or warns younger girls. Marina Warner suggests that there is a connection between the traditional inherent femaleness of fairy tales and their status of marginality. Indeed the genre's association with the female was used as an argument by Perrault and the moderns for the genre's 'aboriginal status'.[150] However, many were not as enthusiastic in accepting or promoting this image of the fairy tale. Mother Goose was also seen as a speaking woman, therefore an object of suspicion.[151] The seduction of women's talk reflected the seductive capabilities of their bodies, and was thus, something dangerous that was to be feared:

> Garrulousness was a woman's vice, and silence – which was not even considered an appropriate virtue in the male – was one of the chief ornaments a good woman should cultivate. It is commonplace that what counts as articulateness in a man becomes stridency in a woman, that a man's conviction is a woman's shrillness, a man's fluency a woman's drivel.[152]

This followed a tradition of fear of profanity and a certain type of talk, old women's stories, which became known as 'old wives' tales'. The church played an important role in planting suspicion in the public's consciousness; there were many trials against men accused of being werewolves and women who were thought to be witches during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The witch craze was no doubt initiated by the *Papal Bull Summis Desiderantes Affectibus* from Pope Innocent VIII in 1484, where it was stated, that like cats, werewolves were the favourite cohorts of witches and were to be

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[150] Warner, 1990, p. 5.
[151] *Ibid.* p. 10.
[152] *Ibid.* p. 12.

exterminated.[153] This was most likely exploitation on the church's behalf of folk superstition 'in order to keep all social groups under its control'.[154] Similarly, in 1624, a profanity law was passed in England that was not only aimed at outlawing the use of bad language but also targeted women who had the ability to conjure. The crone storyteller, indeed almost a fairy-tale character, was not only seen as marginal from society but moreover as someone to be feared.

Fairy tales' association with Mother Goose is not the only reason for the genre's apparent marginality. This is also due to the themes that fairy tales address. When we explore the themes that the animal-bridegroom tales explore, it becomes clear why the tale type has been enormously popular with fairy-tale authors, particularly women authors. The main issue that is explored in this tale type, according to Warner, is that of exogamy, leaving the family home for the first time and entering a new life, something that in the past would have been a situation common to most young women and more importantly, completely out of their control. Writers such as Mme d'Aulnoy, Mlle L'Héritier and Mme de Murat were against marrying off daughters as young as fourteen or fifteen and used their tales to express this. For higher class women, at this time in France, their class worked against them on this issue. Love in marriage was an elusive ideal for upper-class women until the revolution.[155] Thus, the first 'Beauty and the Beast*' tales were directed at a young female audience awaiting marriage. Warner's study of the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale in *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers* has revealed that in most of the tales the Beauty character is accepting of her fate, despite her seeming unhappiness. She attributes this to the fact that at the time all publishers and printers were male;[156] therefore Beauty never had the opportunity to protest outright. Fairy tale writers did, however, embed social commentaries in the tales, as a way of expressing their distaste for the matrimonial customs of the time.

Attitudes to the Beast are constantly in flux; this can be seen in this study when tales from the seventeenth century to the present day are examined.

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[153] Jack Zipes, (ed.) *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 69.
[154] *Ibid.* p. 70.
[155] Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 278.
[156] *Ibid.* p. 279.

Representations of the Beast change according to the time and culture in which the tale is produced. Warner refers to the traditional view of the Beast representing male sexuality which must be tamed or domesticated (which I will discuss further in relation to Bruno Bettelheim) and compares this to contemporary representations that re-imagine the Beast as the principle of nature within every human being. In this way many contemporary tales see the Beast as 'intrinsic goodness' and necessary to survival[157]. Therefore, the animal-bridegroom tale type evolves over time and changes along with society's ideals.

The theme of beastliness or monstrousness is at the centre of all animal-bridegroom tales. It is an inherent fear in us as human beings. When the tales emerged in the form we know them today, in the seventeenth century, the threat of animals such as wolves and bears was a real and frightening one.[158] Perhaps, this reflects, in a way, the evolution of the tale, as these threats are negligible for most today. Monstrousness is a condition in flux, according to Warner, subject to changing attitudes. Characters with beastly characteristics can be seen in different ways; being devoured by a savage beast is a primal fear. However, animals can also be mocked and be made the subject of ridicule. The bear, a Germanic royal symbol seen as the king of the beasts in oral literature, was later a symbol of sadness in the seventeenth century when many bears were kept chained in captivity and forced to perform dances. In contemporary literature, often the Beast is portrayed as the victim and in this way 'holds up a mirror to human values'.[159] When exploring animal-bridegroom tales we can also chart the changing attitudes towards the themes that are explored in the tales. Warner sees these tales as representing women's struggles against arranged marriages and striving towards a definition of the place of sexuality in love[160].

This can be said to be the case for tales that were written in the vogues of the seventeenth century when women, especially upper-class women, were afforded little say in their own destinies as regards love and marriage. However, when we look at the enormous amount of contemporary rewritings of this tale

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[157] *Ibid.* p. 280.
[158] *Ibid*. p. 299.
[159] *Ibid.* p. 306.
[160] *Ibid.* p. 317.

type, can the same be said? If women, in the Western world at least, now rule their own destinies as to whom they can love and marry, there must be a new relevance for animal-bridegroom tales. It is through the analysis of tales in this thesis that I hope to uncover this relevance.

1.4.2   Psychoanalysis of Beauty and the Beast

Bruno Bettelheim's book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales,* first published in 1976, is still one of the most referenced texts concerning the psychoanalysis of fairy tales. Bettelheim proposed a psychoanalytical approach in order to uncover the importance of fairy tales as regards their use in the education of children and more generally their importance as didactic tools in teaching us lessons and universal truths of humanity. Bettelheim explores in detail the role of gender and sexuality in fairy tales. Here I will discuss Bettelheim's view on the representation of sexuality in animal-bridegroom tales and its psychoanalytical relevance.

Bettelheim contends that a child gains preconscious comprehension of matters that would perturb him if acknowledged consciously. Therefore, fairy tales express these matters in symbolic language that the child can disregard if s/he is not ready for them. Fairy tales, thus, are a way for a child to learn about sex and sexuality in an age appropriate fashion and this protects the child from being overwhelmed.[161]

As regards the animal-bridegroom cycle of fairy tales, Bettelheim sees the tales' psychoanalytical function as teaching a child to undo the repression of sex that has happened during childhood. According to Bettelheim, when the Beast is disenchanted this is the representation of the undoing of this repression. Also, the daughter's oedipal attachment to her father is transferred to her lover, further undoing the repression. The sexual partner is first seen as something to be feared or animal; however, as this changes, sexual desires, when directed towards an appropriate partner, are experienced as something that is pleasurable.[162] This repression of sexuality in childhood, Bettelheim theorises, happens so early that it cannot be remembered and is represented in animal-bridegroom tales by the characteristic lack of explanation for the Beast's

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[161] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 279.
[162] *Ibid.* p. 281.

transformation. Bettelheim draws on the Freudian view that sex must be experienced as something that is disgusting as long as these feelings are attached to a parent; when they are directed at an appropriate partner they are experienced as beautiful. In disenchanting the Beast, Beauty transfers her attachment from her father to her lover. Taking this view of the tale leaves the responsibility always with the female to overcome her view of sex as loathsome and furthermore if the bride sees her groom as animal-like, he appears as beast to himself. Bettelheim posits that as long as one partner loathes sex, the other cannot enjoy it[163], thus, the sexual anxieties of both sexes are linked to animal-bridegroom tales.

Let us now look at some examples of this trait in animal-bridegroom tales that Bettelheim provides. He lists the typical features of animal-bridegroom tales as;

- It is unknown why the groom has been transformed,
- It is a sorceress or evil fairy (always female) who carries out the transformation; she is not punished,
- The father causes the heroine to join the Beast,
- She does this due to her love/filial duty to her father.

Bettelheim analyses the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' as a didactic tale that warns against trying to find love's meaning too quickly and the disastrous consequences that this can lead to. Psyche's female curiosity, once again, is interpreted as the reason for her downfall. Bettelheim neglects to question, however, the justice of Psyche's predicament, being married to a man/creature that she is never allowed to see. He points out that Psyche is the Greek term for the soul, yet, despite her name, she displays narcissism. He contends that consciousness has not yet entered her existence as she does not understand that naive sexual enjoyment is different from mature love based on knowledge.[164] This myth influenced all other animal-bridegroom tales that followed, some staying close to the original, some varying greatly. The Norwegian tale 'East of the Sun and West of the Moon' follows the 'Cupid and Psyche' myth very closely, the only difference being that the groom is a white bear rather than a

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[163] *Ibid.* p. 286.
[164] *Ibid.* p. 293.

god.[165] This perhaps is one of the first tales that followed the myth almost exactly except for the addition of the animal appearance of the groom. Like the myth, the groom is animal by day, but human by night; Bettelheim interprets this as the female's unwillingness to accept the isolation of purely sexual aspects of life from the rest of it.[166] A common theme is the persuasion by the mother (if present in the tale), or more commonly jealous sisters, to attempt to see the groom during the night. In this way, the enchantment of the groom is an older female's work and the girl's sexual anxieties are strongly tied to what they have been told by older female family members.[167] However, exposing the groom's true form often leads to persecution of the female character because she is then deemed untrustworthy.

Bettelheim analyses several different animal-bridegroom tale types. As regards 'The Frog King', he sees a specific symbolic purpose in the choice of the frog to represent the groom. The frog is a non-threatening animal, yet is seen as disgusting, tacky, clammy and evokes the sensations of the sex organs. Also he draws parallels between the frog's life cycle and the foetus developing in the womb and between the frog's ability to inflate itself and a penis's erectability.[168]

In the Romanian fairy tale 'The Enchanted Pig', the groom is transformed into a pig during the day but is a human by night. In this tale, knowledge about marriage is found in a book in a forbidden room. Bettelheim sees the book as the carnal knowledge that girls are forbidden to know.[169] In this case, it is the girls' father who forbids them to enter the room. However, similar tales exist where the animal-bridegroom forbids his new wife to enter a secret room, for example the English tale 'Mr. Fox' and Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's 'Fitcher's Bird' and 'The Robber Bridegroom', which both contain similar plots and motifs.

Interestingly, along with some other fairy-tale scholars, Bettelheim places the Bluebeard tale as an animal-bridegroom tale, although the groom in this tale does not have an animal form. Despite this, Bettelheim labels

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[165] See translated version of the tale 'East of the Sun and West of the Moon', <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/norway034.html> [accessed 4 August 2013].
[166] Bettelheim, p. 294.
[167] *Ibid.* p. 297.
[168] *Ibid.* p. 289.
[169] *Ibid.* p. 300.

Bluebeard as the most monstrous and beastly of all fairy-tale husbands.[170] This tale first appeared in seventeenth-century France as '*Barbe Bleue*' and was written by Charles Perrault. Following this, the tale underwent numerous changes and rewritings by the Grimms and many others. The bride in '*Barbe Bleue*' is given a key which Bettelheim asserts is the symbol of the male sexual organ. The key unlocks a forbidden room, which inevitably the girl opens. When the key is stained with the blood of Bluebeard's previous wives, this represents first intercourse but more importantly for Bettelheim, it represents infidelity on the bride's part. The blood cannot be washed away, as the loss of virginity, and infidelity are irreversible. Bettelheim sees Bluebeard as a tale of sexual temptation and the destructive aspects of sex. The groom in this tale will destroy his loved one rather than allow her to be unfaithful. Bettelheim contends in relation to Bluebeard that the child on a preconscious level understands that the key symbolises the wife's indiscretion, therefore it is a moral tale that seeks to portray the dangers of succumbing to sexual curiosity and that the person who seeks cruel revenge will be undone.

Unlike 'Bluebeard', where the groom does not develop humanity, 'Beauty and the Beast', according to Bettelheim, shows us a Beast that develops humanity thanks to the healing love of Beauty. Bluebeard cannot be loved or love; the Beast, despite his appearance, is in fact much less monstrous than the groom in 'Bluebeard'. The common motif of the broken rose in 'Beauty and the Beast' is a symbol of Beauty's lost virginity, similar to the key motif. Bettelheim also sees the Beast's palace as the place where narcissistic wishes are fulfilled, similar to the motif in 'Cupid and Psyche'. The most important psychoanalytical issue for Bettelheim in 'Beauty and the Beast' is that of transferral of oedipal attachments from a parent to a lover. The symbolic transformation of the groom from beast to man represents the transferral of this attachment.[171]

Bettelheim sees these representations embedded in fairy tales as being as valid now as they ever were. The tales reveal 'manifold truths' which can guide our lives.[172] However, if this is the sole interpretation of animal-bridegroom

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[170] *Ibid.* p. 299.
[171] *Ibid.* p. 309.
[172] *Ibid.* p. 310.

tales, the responsibility rests with the female to disenchant the male. Also, the Beast's and the father's respective beastly characteristics are explained away as being solely created by the fears and insecurities of the female. This leaves no room for the possibility that the male characters in the tales could truly be beastly, apart from Bluebeard, to whom Bettelheim does assign the label of true beastliness. What is more, often female curiosity, echoing Eve, leads to the heroine's demise, but Bettelheim does not explain the act of temptation that plants the curiosity in the heroine's mind. There is a lot to be gained from a reading of animal-bridegroom tales using Bettelheim's theory; however, there are also issues that he does not address and any culpability seems to rest with the female. This issue is addressed in many fairy-tale rewritings with authors questioning views such as Bettelheim's and, more specifically, questioning where blame should truly be apportioned.

1.4.3 Rewritings of Beauty and the Beast

Betsy Hearne has gone some way into delving into the many rewritings of 'Beauty and the Beast'. The scope of her investigation ranges from 1950 to 1985, and therefore is of great assistance as a starting point for the contemporary-tale analysis of this study which will range from 1978 to 1999. Hearne's investigation looks at rewritings alongside illustrations. However, for the purpose of contextualising Hearne's work within the framework of this investigation, I shall focus on her findings as regards literary rewritings.

Hearne acknowledges the origins of the 'Beauty and the Beast' tale type as we know it today beginning with Mme de Villeneuve and Mme Leprince de Beaumont's versions. Hearne sees the development of this tale type as 'an organic shaping and reshaping around a core of basic elements in response to historical and cultural influences'.[173] We can certainly see evidence of this in the tale's evolution over time. Many of the original themes and plot-lines remain though they have been modified to reflect changing values. Hearne explains how the tale has been affected throughout the centuries; in the eighteenth century an effort to forge folk narratives with a new literary tradition brought about changes. The tale was affected by innovations in bookmaking in the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century by new psychological

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[173] Betsy Hearne, 'Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale: 1950-1985', *The Lion and The Unicorn*, 12.2 (1988), pp. 74-111, (p. 74).

interpretations, media techniques and mass market distribution.[174] These changes over time have had positive and negative effects: on the one hand, the fact that the tale has survived so long is a testament to its enduring relevance and resilience; on the other, as Hearne states, some retellings have led to 'trivialisation of images, both written and pictured. A work of essentially poetic nature is often caricatured for light comic effect or reduced to its lowest common denominator for a consumer perceived to be substandard'.[175] This reminds us not only of how fairy tales can be trivialised sometimes, but also of the similar disregard that can be shown to fairy-tale audiences.[176]

Hearne, not surprisingly, examines some of the works that will also be examined here. She discusses Robin McKinley's *Beauty; A Retelling of the Story of 'Beauty and the Beast',* Angela Carter's 'The Courtship of Mr. Lyon' and Tanith Lee's *Red as Blood* alongside other retellings such as picture books. Interestingly, she notes that the film *E.T* could also be investigated as a 'Beauty and the Beast' type tale due to the themes of self acceptance and reconciliation that it addresses. She notes, 'In the film *E.T*, the motif of 'Beauty and the Beast' rose like a phoenix and captured the imagination of yet another generation'.[177] However, Hearne also raises the important question as regards the tale's remoulding: 'with a growing trend toward variation on the story: when is a remodelled version no longer the same tale?'[178] The tale's survival would seem to suggest that certain themes or elements have led to its transience, many of which will be discussed in the analysis of this investigation. Hearne also suggests that 'the tale's survival through so many re-creations would seem to demonstrate the fact that plurality does not dissipate a story but may in fact be healthy and even essential to its continuation'.[179] This theory would seem to support Jack Zipes's concept of the fairy tale as a meme; the fairy tale remodels

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[174] *Ibid.*
[175] *Ibid.* p. 77.
[176] Indeed, many translations of fairy tales, especially those aimed at children, have passages omitted or amended due to differing attitudes concerning what is acceptable in children's literature. See Tiina Puurtinen, *Linguistic Acceptability in Translated Children's Literature* (Helsinki: Joensuu University Press, 1995), Riitta Oittinen, *Translating for Children* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 2000) and Riitta Oittinen, *I am me, I am other: On the Dialogics of Translating for Children* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 1993) for more information on translation for children.
[177] Hearne, p. 104.
[178] *Ibid.* p. 105.
[179] *Ibid.* p. 107.

itself or is remodelled to fit with changing mores, values and trends in popular culture and thus, enables its own survival. Nevertheless, Hearne aptly points out that interpretations should not be limited to fitting the tales around theory and that, rather, we should generate our theories from the tales themselves. Hence, in the analysis set forth as part of this thesis, the objective is to analyse the corpus of tales in light of existing fairy-tale scholarship, but to strive, also, to gain new insights which will create new directions in the area of fairy-tale research.

To summarise, here we have seen that often the fairy tale is regarded as a lower form of literature, sometimes precisely *because* it is associated with the feminine or domesticity. It is my contention that this is partly the reason that the genre is so fiercely defended and relentlessly promoted by many women authors. They wish to re-invigorate a misunderstood and somewhat forgotten genre and to highlight culture's ongoing fascination with telling tales. We have seen in this section an overview of the many versions and interpretations that exist of the animal-bridegroom tale type. Indeed much more could be written on this topic alone. However, within the scope of this investigation, what is relevant is the trend in interpretation of this type of tale up until now. As we have seen numerous scholars, such as Marina Warner and Maria Tatar, note when it comes to the story of 'Beauty and the Beast', usually it is Beauty's task to humanise the Beast and to come to terms with her own situation. In the past, very little concern was given to Beauty's own well-being or the fact that her situation is grossly unfair and undeserved. I suggest, and will attempt to prove, that in contemporary rewritings of this tale type, it is this unjustness that is being addressed. Today's fairy-tale authors are railing against the interpretations that cast Beauty as another Eve, and are righting the wrongs of the past through rewriting Beauty *and* the Beast's destinies. Many authors, like Angela Carter to name just one, now present us with strong female characters who are quite capable of saving themselves. In order to demonstrate this, I will first discuss the theoretical framework around which this thesis centres.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

WEAVING WORDS

'Only for women does the thread, which spins out the lore of life itself, create a
tapestry to be fully read and understood.'

Karen E. Rowe,

To Spin a Yarn: The Female Voice in Folklore and Fairy

2   Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is informed by the theories of Reception, Reader Response, Intertextuality and Feminist Literary Criticism. What I would like to put forth here is a methodology of comparative analysis that draws on these four areas of investigation. I propose that reception theory, reader response theory and intertextuality are inherently linked. This can be demonstrated in the context of feminist literary criticism, especially when considering the reader or author's gender. Throughout this chapter I will draw on the work of various scholars in these fields. Let us begin with an overview of the two main theorists in the field of reception theory, Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser.

2.1   Part 1 Reception Theory

2.1.1   Hans Robert Jauss

In this section I will examine the first chapter of Hans Robert Jauss's *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception,* namely, *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory* and its relevance in relation to the reception of the fairy tales to be examined in this thesis. In what Paul de Man terms 'Jauss's manifesto'[180], Jauss offers his theory of reception as an alternative to the traditional discipline of literary history. The problem with literary history, as Jauss sees it, is the 'aesthetic abstinence' of the literary historian; too much objectivity has left literary history without a real consideration for the reader and the text.

Jauss draws on Marxist and Formalist methods to construct his theory. He sees both these schools as attempting to solve the problem of how the seemingly autonomous work can be brought back into a historical context. The Marxist school sought to investigate the link between text and social context by exploring the reciprocal action between art and mankind. In investigating this reciprocal relationship it was determined that the relationship between texts should also be investigated.

The Formalists, on the other hand, separated literature from historical conditions and, instead, categorised literature by the stylistic devices employed

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[180] Paul de Man, 'Introduction' in Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [1970]), p. x.

in the text. When this method was extended, the historicity of literature was once again acknowledged. In rethinking the principles of diachrony, the Formalists accepted that a work of art is always perceived against the background of other works of art, and hence, these must be taken into account.[181]

Though Jauss references both these schools, neither entirely satisfies him in that he sees the audience or addressee playing a limited role. According to Jauss, neither theory addresses adequately the issue of who the work is addressed to, the intended receiver of the text.[182] Jauss suggests that the solution to this problem lies in bridging the gap between literature and history. He posits that the critic, writer and literary historian are first and foremost readers of the work, before any other type of relationship can begin. He sees this role as an active one; the reader is not a passive participant in the triangle of author, work, and public: 'The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its addressees'.[183] As such, Jauss sees the reader's role as an integral part of the dialogic relationship that exists between reader and text. This theory is important as regards the analysis to come in this thesis, in that the receiver of the fairy tales plays an important role in passing on the tales in the form of re-writings. We will discuss this also in relation to Wolfgang Iser in the following section.

Prior to this, let us review the concepts that Jauss puts forward in his theory of reception and their relevance as regards the comparative analysis that will be conducted as part of this thesis.

Jauss sees a removal of the prejudices of historical objectivism as necessary. He emphasises the idea that a literary work is not a monument with a timeless essence but one instead that strikes 'ever new resonances'.[184] The literary work does not offer the same view to every reader in different periods throughout history, but will be received differently depending on various factors, such as cultural and social context. Here, Jauss coins the term 'horizon

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[181] Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010 [1970]), p. 9-10.
[182] *Ibid*. p. 19.
[183] *Ibid*.
[184] *Ibid*. p. 21.

of expectations'[185] to explain the way a literary work is received will depend on the texts that are already known to the reader. This concept raises important issues as regards the analysis of re-writings insofar as the author's social context may have a bearing on how the tale is received and, hence, re-written. Different horizons of expectations will produce different re-writings.

Jauss also posits that the horizon of expectations of a work will have a bearing on how its artistic character is determined. In this way, Jauss reasons that, if the way in which a work is received by the audience (satisfies, disappoints or surpasses expectations) is important in playing a role in the evaluation of its aesthetic worth, then, the audience must play a significant role in how we understand literature. Thus, Jauss reinforces the place of the audience as integral in his theory of reception. What is more, a text will be received in a certain manner by an audience at one point in time but at another will be received in a completely different way. Over time, perspectives will change and Jauss points out that the first experience of a work is not the only or most important or relevant experience. We must acknowledge that a work will be received differently throughout history. Once again, this is important when examining rewritings that span over different periods as the audience of one text becomes the writers of the next and, as such, will encounter different horizons of expectations because of the passing of time and changing ideologies regarding culture, society and literature. Looking at a genre in this light, we can piece together a relationship over time involving both authors and readers of texts.

Jauss expands further on his 'horizon of expectations' with the notion of reconstructing the horizon in order to understand how the contemporary reader of a work may have understood it. This leads to the question; should a work be evaluated according to the perspective of the past, the present or 'the verdict of the ages'?[186] Jauss responds to this question in a threefold manner: we should consider the historicity of literature diachronically, (spanning throughout history), and synchronically, (occurring at the same time / over a short period of time) while, at the same time, acknowledging the relationship between literary developments and the general process of history. Diachronic and synchronic

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[185] *Ibid*. p. 22.
[186] *Ibid*. p. 30.

evaluations are of mutual importance in order to understand how texts throughout history are related to each other. As such, we must explore works that appear at the same time and works that have a relationship with others at different points throughout history, such as fairy tales. Jauss states that 'the historicity of literature comes to light at the intersections of diachrony and synchrony'.[187] In performing this type of analysis the aim is to understand the literary work within the context of its historical unfolding, as opposed to solely cataloguing texts chronologically.

Expanding on this, Jauss refers to the Formalist school's theory of 'literary evolution', the concept that a new work arises from and against the background of previous works. He considers this theory important as regards the development of literary history into a theory of reception that allows us to fully understand literature against a historical, cultural and social background. Furthermore, Jauss theorises that a new reception can draw a literary past back into the present 'whether an altered aesthetic attitude wilfully reaches back to reappropriate the past, or an unexpected light falls back on forgotten literature from the new moment of literary evolution'.[188] This idea is of particular importance as regards rewriting. As has been outlined, a text may be viewed differently throughout history due to changing ideologies, but, more importantly, certain groups of writers (such as women rewriters) may reappropriate texts from the past (such as fairy tales) and, in doing so, may use the process of rewriting to make a social or political statement. In this way, we can trace changing ideologies over time through the changes that authors make to the texts that they rewrite. The question that this concept raises as regards this thesis is whether the past can be reappropriated in different ways depending on the receiver, the receiver, in this case, being an author who rewrites a tale. I will further discuss this point later in relation to intertextuality and the theory put forth by Nancy K. Miller.

Finally, as we saw before, what is important for Jauss is that a work of art cannot be evaluated without taking into account its social context. A work of art is received and evaluated against the background of other works of art but also against the background of the everyday experience of life. We cannot

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[187] *Ibid*. p. 37.
[188] *Ibid*. p. 35.

separate the two; literature will always have a social context and it should be acknowledged, explored and understood.

Consequently, in light of Jauss's theory of reception, the tales to be analysed as part of this thesis will be examined taking social and cultural context into consideration; that of the author and the time in which the tale is produced. The aspect of social context that will be examined here specifically pertains to views of gender, sexuality and otherness and how they are represented in the tales. These themes are to be examined in light of Jauss's theory, alongside others, in order to investigate the relationships that exist between texts. The two corpora of texts to be examined span over time, but within both corpora, many of the tales are from a relatively short time-frame. As such, I will examine the tales both diachronically, and synchronically, which is why Jauss' model for understanding the relationship between text and reader will be of considerable value.

2.1.2 Wolfgang Iser

Like Jauss, Wolfgang Iser also inextricably links the reader to the text in his theory of 'aesthetic response'. He sees the text as representing a 'potential effect that is realized in the reading process'.[189] As such, the literary work is a form of communication because it impinges upon the world, upon prevailing social structures and on existing literature. Similarly to Jauss, Iser insists that a text cannot be evaluated as if it existed in a vacuum; we must take into account the factors that have an effect or influence on the text.

Iser justifies the title of his theory (aesthetic response as opposed to Jauss' term aesthetic reception), by explaining that 'response' refers to the imaginative faculties of the reader that are brought into play during the reading process. In this way, the text is always linked to other texts and life in general. Elaborating on this idea Iser states that: 'The literary work is to be considered not as a documentary record of something that exists or has existed, but as a reformulation of an already formulated reality, which brings into the world something that did not exist before.'[190]

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[189] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading, A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. ix.
[190] *Ibid*. p. x.

In this manner, there is a reciprocal influence between the text and the everyday world. He goes on to distinguish 'aesthetic response' from 'aesthetic reception' by clarifying that, whereas 'aesthetic reception' investigates actual readers' experiences, 'aesthetic response' explores the philosophy of how a text is experienced by a reader. Although Iser separates the two theories in order to define and explain them, they are, in practice, inseparable. If 'aesthetic response' gives us the tools to examine the reading process, 'aesthetic reception' is the methodology that will allow us to demonstrate Iser's theory. As such, in the analysis section of this thesis, a simultaneously philosophical and empirical approach will be applied by applying reception theory to a corpus of texts. The corpus of texts will serve as the practical demonstration of this theory.

The Implied Reader

One of the key components of Iser's theory is that of the 'implied reader'. This term refers to whom the text is addressed. According to Iser, an 'ideal' reader exists; this reader would share the codes and intentions of the author. If we accept Iser's point, this would suggest that the reader is already involved in the author-text-reader triangle before the text is even completed, and, as such, plays an integral role as the person to whom the text is destined. Of course, the text is not always read by an 'ideal' reader, but this would explain why certain genres appeal to certain groups of readers. I will return to this point in more detail as regards the fairy-tale genre and women writers and readers in the analysis section.

Speech-Act Theory

Iser makes use of the language philosophy 'Speech-Act Theory' in examining the text-reader relationship and what exactly is happening during the reading process. 'Speech-Act Theory' essentially attempts to describe the factors that determine the success or failure of a linguistic communication. Iser applies this theory by looking at the reading of fiction as a linguistic action, in that it involves the understanding of information that a text seeks to convey. According to 'Speech-Act Theory', all utterances take on meaning depending on their context or situation. There are three types of speech-acts:

    1. A locutionary act, which is uttering a sentence with a certain sense and reference.

2. An illocutionary act, which is, for example, informing, ordering, warning.

3. A perlocutionary act, which is, for example, convincing, persuading, deterring.[191]

Iser sees fictional language as having the basic properties of the illocutionary act as it brings the reader to an understanding of the text. Here, he reiterates that, although fictional language may not lead to any real action, this does not mean that it does not have an effect. Furthermore, Iser concludes that the illocutionary force of fictional language can elicit a response. I would suggest that this response is found in the form of re-writing, and specifically in the fairy-tale genre. Hence, the speech-act that occurs between the author, reader and text can bring about a very real response on the reader's part. When the reader subsequently becomes the author, a new speech-act relationship can occur and so on. This theory works particularly well when examining the fairy-tale genre as, by their nature, fairy tales survive by being passed on from story-teller to listener or from author to reader and so forth.

Interaction between Text and Reader

Iser's main concern is to find a way to describe the interaction between text and reader. He asserts that if the text is to be understood, it requires active participation on the part of the reader: 'Any successful transfer [...] – though initiated by the text – depends on the extent to which this text can activate the individual reader's faculties of perceiving and processing.'[192]

As such, it is a two-way process, involving both text and reader, which secures the comprehension of the text. Iser sees the lack of control, on the part of the text, as the basis for the creative side of reading. There must be input from the reader to internalise the information that is held in the text. The text generates a set of governing rules but the reader's imagination must come into play. Iser believes that the reader's enjoyment begins when their own imaginative faculties come into play. There are limits to this relationship in practice though, namely boredom and overstrain; if a reader finds a text too boring or overly difficult s/he will most likely give up. Therefore, the text needs

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[191] For further explanation of Speech-Act Theory, see J.L Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 2nd edn, ed. by J.O Urmson and Marina Sbisà (Cambridge, Harvard University Press: 1975), pp. 95-102.
[192] Iser, p. 107.

to engage the reader if it is to be read. Referencing Sartre's premise that 'art exists only for and through other people', Iser posits that the act of writing needs the act of reading to exist. This is what Iser terms 'the wandering viewpoint'; it is not an object – observer relationship that exists between text and reader but, conversely, it is a reciprocal relationship that requires input from both sides to exist.

It is a difficult task to explain the process that occurs between reader and text and it can lead to complex questions with regard to exactly how much the reader is involved, or, furthermore, if the reader is absent, does the text exist? This is a complicated question to tackle and perhaps impossible to answer. However, what is clear and important from Iser's theory is that the reader certainly does play a role, and a vital one at that. Even if the text does exist without a reader, it only acquires meaning when it is read. Thus, without the reader we are either left with a meaningless text or no text at all. Either way, we must acknowledge that the reader is crucial, and consequently, should be recognised as such.

Hence, if we accept that the reader plays a significant role in this relationship, we must acknowledge what happens to the reader whilst reading. Iser sees the text as manipulating the reader's viewpoint. However, at the same time, the reader's own previous experiences will have a bearing on this viewpoint also. Iser reasons that, 'Indeed, we *can* only bring another person's thoughts into our foreground if they are in some way related to the virtual background of our own orientations (for otherwise they would be totally incomprehensible)'.[193] Thus, the reader's response to the text depends on their own pre-existing experiences and views: 'The significance of the work, then, does not lie in the meaning sealed within the text, but in the fact that meaning brings out what had previously been sealed within us'.[194] Therefore, the reader must unlock the meaning in the text, which will in turn be influenced by the reader's own viewpoint. If we take re-writing as a form of response to a text, we should look at these re-writings, taking into account Iser's theory that the reader's viewpoint will have an influence on that response. As such, we can say

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[193] *Ibid*. p. 155.
[194] *Ibid*. p. 157.

that, in turn, the viewpoint of the reader who then becomes writer will be embedded in their text and so on.

Iser articulates the act of reading as being taken out of our own reality. Following this we 'awaken'[195] when we stop reading, and we return to our own world again. Subsequently, we can view our own world in a new light. Hence, what we read affects our own world and vice versa. We cannot, as Jauss also states, separate the two. We rely on our already existing experiences to inform us when reading a text, and we expand on them. Following on from this, we can posit that we must certainly rely on these experiences and what we have taken from a text when responding to it. It is in this light that re-writings will be viewed throughout this thesis.

We have seen, in the work of Jauss and Iser, the importance of the theories of reception and response as regards analysing rewritings. We can, in effect, take a rewriting to be a form of response itself. Before moving on to examine the place of intertextuality concerning rewritings, specifically of fairy tales, let us first briefly examine the views of Robert C. Holub with respect to reception and response.

2.1.3 Issues arising from Reception Theory

The common thread that runs through both the theories of Jauss and Iser is the notion of a dialectical relationship between text and reader, although they approach this notion in different ways. In *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Robert C. Holub gives us an overview of the main schools of thought in the area of reception theory. While he gives an informative commentary on the theories of Jauss, his critique is more detailed in relation to Iser. Holub points out a number of issues that he sees as problematic in Iser's theory, mainly regarding his treatment of the reader. Holub sees Iser as wanting a way to account for the reader's presence without having to deal with the complicated prospect of real empirical readers. This ambivalent attitude towards the reader can cause confusion, according to Holub.[196]

What is more, Holub sees Iser as presuming a certain type of reader, namely an educated European: 'throughout *The Act of Reading* we encounter a competent and cultured reader who, contrary to Iser's wishes, *is* predetermined

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[195] *Ibid*. p. 140.
[196] Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 85.

in both character and historical situation'.[197] Holub continues that Iser's consideration of the text-reader relationship as a timeless concept does not work when he then appends 'real' examples on for illustrative purposes, leaving us with discrepancies. Again, we cannot consider the reader as an abstract concept and ignore the 'real' reader. Holub sees this as the main flaw in Iser's reasoning and he is justified in critiquing the ambiguous nature of Iser's premise which posits an 'implied reader', yet somewhat neglects the role of the author, leaving himself, as Holub comments, unwittingly close to New Criticism. This abstract reader, as such, becomes what Holub terms 'an immanent construct'.[198] Iser neglects the empirical reader and we are left asking if this abstract reader has any real effect. Also, Iser's borrowing of countless terms from various disciplines does not help articulate his theory but, rather, causes confusion.

Holub also notes that, although Iser makes use of Speech-Act Theory, he does not acknowledge the fact that this theory assumes a human agent with a certain intention in performing the utterance. Holub suggests that Iser is 'unwilling to discuss directly the author's intention in producing the literary work'.[199] Although it is somewhat implied in Iser's theory that there is an intention in producing a text, his focus is solely on the text-reader relationship and the author, as Holub points out, is ignored for the most part. This is where reception theory benefits from an interdisciplinary merging with the theory of intertextuality. Moreover, I would suggest a fusion with intertextuality from the specific perspective of feminist criticism in order to conduct the analysis of this thesis. While reception and response focus for the most part on the text and the reader, intertextuality, specifically from a feminist point of view, focuses mainly on the (female) author. Hence, in merging these complementary disciplines, we can construct an author-text-reader relationship which can then be traced through a lineage of texts. I will expand on this point in relation to the works of Nancy K. Miller and Karen E. Rowe.

To return to the problems encountered concerning reception theory, Holub objects to Iser's ambiguous treatment of the issue of indeterminacy and determinacy. In attempting to tackle the issue of who or what creates meaning

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[197] *Ibid*. p. 97.
[198] *Ibid.* p. 100.
[199] *Ibid.* p. 101.

from a text (author or reader), Holub sees Iser as trying to take a middle ground. Iser suggests that the text allows for different meanings, while restricting the possibilities and, what is more, that the meaning is constituted by the reader but under the guidance of the text. Iser's ambiguous messages as regards who or what actually *creates* meaning, and his use of complex terminology do make comprehending his theory a demanding task, but perhaps Holub is too hard on Iser in demanding a clear notion of who or what creates meaning. We cannot say that just one being/thing creates the meaning; it is a process of interaction and, although Iser somewhat ignores the author's part in this process, it is nonetheless useful to acknowledge Iser's description of the act of reading as a reciprocal process. If we take for example a folk-tale that is passed on orally, which then becomes a literary fairy-tale which is subsequently read and rewritten many times, we cannot pin-point exactly who creates meaning in the text as it is an ongoing process of reception and response. Each reader and writer plays a vital part in giving meaning to the text.

Both Jauss and Iser have advocated the need for sociological grounding concerning the reader. To engage with this problem would be to acknowledge a 'real' reader as opposed to an abstract concept of a reader. Jauss and Iser, in different ways, both dismantle the idea of the monumental text as the sole source of meaning and acknowledge the reader's role in the process of meaning production. The 'real' reader and their social context must be taken into consideration. What is more, one must also take the author and his or her social context into consideration. As such, in taking both the social context of the author and the reader into account, we can examine the author-text-reader relationship that I have mentioned previously. In the case of examining rewritings, as will be carried out here, the reader's response is a very real and tangible one and can be analysed as such.

Let us now look at the theory of intertextuality and how it can coincide with reception theory to create the author-text-reader relationship model that will serve as the methodology for the analysis of rewritings in this thesis.

2.2   Part II Intertextuality and Tale Telling

Graham Allen, in his discussion of the theory of intertextuality, posits that no utterance is ever neutral; that is to say, no speech act or text is ever without a specific meaning influenced by who is creating the utterance and who it is directed at.[200] All language responds to previous utterances and to pre-existing patterns of evaluation. What is more, all language seeks to promote further responses. Mikhail Bakhtin introduced the term 'heteroglossia' meaning 'multiplicity of voices'. This term seeks to convey the numerous meanings that a single utterance can have. Bakhtin also developed the concept that language is socially influenced; that is to say, the multiple meanings and interpretations of an utterance are influenced by the social groups of the speaker and the intended receiver:

> At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic), but also [...] into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages, languages of generations and so forth.[201]

Referring to Bakhtin's concepts, Allen notes that these notions not only apply to speech but also to the written word: 'One cannot understand an utterance or even a written work as if it were singular in meaning, unconnected to previous and future utterances or works'.[202] If we apply this theory to fairy tales, we can see how it underlines that each tale will be connected to those ones that came before and likewise, tales that will come after. One tale cannot stand alone as it is, by its nature, connected to a whole web of similar tales that exist throughout history. Therefore, all utterances are dialogic, their meaning and logic dependent upon what has previously been said and on how they will be received by others. Hence, the most important feature of any utterance is its dialogism; its intertextual dimension, how it is connected to other utterances and perhaps most importantly, in what context.

Let us look firstly at how feminist literary criticism relates to intertextuality. If one examines how texts are connected or related to each

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[200] Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London, Routledge, 2000), p. 18.
[201] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011 [1981]), pp. 271-2.
[202] Allen, p. 19.

other, we can see that certain types of writing are marginalised. Elaine Showalter defines *gynocriticism* as 'the feminist study of women's writing, including reading of women's texts and analyses of the intertextual relations both between women writers and men'.[203] If we take Moi's previously discussed definition of feminist, gynocriticism then becomes a politically motivated study of the intertextual links between texts. This theory sees women writers as a marginalised group and, moreover, their writing as influenced by this marginalisation. Also, gynocriticism puts forward the notion that writing and reading are experienced differently depending on the gender of the subject who reads or writes.

2.2.1   The Resurrected Author

As we have seen, reception theory leaves us pondering the reciprocal relationship that exists between author, text and reader. With Roland Barthes having famously declared the author as dead, Susan Stanford Friedman suggests a resurrected author. Friedman sees Kristeva coining the term *intertextuality* in 1966, and Barthes proclaiming the death of the author in 1968, as two significant moments as regards the question of the author's mortality. She reminds us of Kristeva's theory of the text as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and subsequent transformation of other texts.[204] In proclaiming the death of the author, Barthes was protesting against the use of the author's biography or social context being taken into account in analysing a text or the author's intention in creating the text. Kristeva, being trained in Russian formalism, used Bakhtinian ideas in expressing a heteroglossia of voices within a text. Hence, both Barthes and Kristeva rejected a theory of intertextuality that was based upon influence. Rather, intertextuality, as Barthes and Kristeva understood it, was a 'dialogism' within the text, and they rejected the author's omnipotent presence and metaphorically killed him/her off. However, Friedman suggests that influence and intertextuality cannot be separated completely as they are inherently linked. I suggest that neither can we separate intertextuality and reception theory as the two are so closely related.

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[203] Elaine Showalter, 'Feminism and Literature', in *Literary Theory Today,* ed. by Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 179-202 (p. 189).
[204] Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Weavings: Intertextuality and the (Re)Birth of the Author' in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. by Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 146-80 (p. 147).

Both theories focus on searching for the links between texts, and although the methodologies of both theories differ, they can be complementary when used together in tracing and attempting to understand the complex relationship between the text, author and reader. We will return to this concept when exploring Friedman's thoughts on Nancy K. Miller's theory.

2.2.2   An(*Other*) Tradition?

Annette Kolodny's *A Map for Rereading* is a play on Harold Bloom's *A Map for Misreading* (1975). Kolodny borrows Bloom's theory that all writing is a response to other writing. Agreeing with Barthes and Kristeva, Bloom maintains that when we read a text, we read a whole system of texts, and meaning is always wandering around between texts.[205] Bloom applied this particular theory to the analysis of poetry. His use of the word 'misreading' refers to the interpretation of a poem by a reader and the subsequent misinterpretation and response in the form of writing a new poem. According to Bloom, all interpretation is an act of deciding meaning and, moreover, can only ever, in fact, be misinterpretation as we can never fully understand the author's intent:

Influence, as I conceive it, means that there are *no* texts, but only relationships *between* texts. These relationships depend upon a critical act, a misreading or misprision, that one poet performs upon another, and that does not differ in kind from the necessary critical acts performed by every strong reader upon every text he encounters. The influence-relation governs reading as it governs writing, and reading is therefore a miswriting just as writing is a misreading.[206] If we accept Bloom's concept, we would have to acknowledge that all rewritings are poor attempts to understand and/or recreate an 'original' text. However, we can refute Bloom's theory with the example of fairy-tales and other genres that have developed from oral literature; in these cases we cannot say which specific text is the 'original' and, as such, rewritings are not mere imitations but are the natural evolution of texts. Kolodny recycles Bloom's theory, highlighting the fact that Bloom, in discounting interpretation, disregards the notion that interpretive strategies can be influenced by the gender of the reader. As she explains, if we are to accept

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[205] Annette Kolodny, 'A Map for Rereading, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts', in *The New Feminist Criticism, Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (London: Virago Press, 1993), pp. 46-62 (p. 46).

[206] Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003[1975]), p. 3.

that interpretive strategies are indeed learned and historically determined, these strategies are therefore, gender-inflected. As such, we must take the gender of the author into account when analysing re-interpretations of previous works. Kolodny demonstrates this lacking in Bloom's theory when she questions the lineage of influence that he takes into account. He references a 'continuity that began in the sixth century BC when Homer first became a schoolbook for the Greeks'.[207] She rightly points out that this view of 'continuity' does not include women or other marginalised groups and, in this way, an alternative lineage of influence lies buried.[208] Therefore, when taking into account a whole system of texts, it depends what system of texts one has access to and is familiar with. Depending on cultural context and time in history, different texts are/were available to men and women. This creates the alternative lineages of influence that Bloom has disregarded.

Kolodny sees Bloom (along with Iser) as ignoring the sex of the interpreter. According to Kolodny, Bloom 'effectively masks the fact of an *other* tradition entirely – that in which women taught one another how to read and write about and out of their own unique (and sometimes isolated) contexts'.[209] By not taking into account the reader's gender, one effectively disregards the importance of gender as a social signifier. There is a gender-specific lineage of influence to be examined, especially in the case of women, traditionally the marginalised gender. Furthermore, marginalisation is the very condition that shapes much of this lineage. As we will see, there is a reciprocal relationship between women writers and readers. Kolodny eloquently sums up this idea:

> Each woman that took up the pen had to confront anew her bleak premonition that, both as writers and as readers, women too easily became isolated islands of symbolic significance, available only to, and decipherable only by, one another.[210]

This reciprocal relationship between women in literature indeed exists and it will be demonstrated in the analysis of tales to follow, as well as maybe more importantly, the question which remains as to *why* this type of

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[207] *Ibid.* pp. 33-4.
[208] Kolodny, p. 48.
[209] *Ibid.* p. 59-60.
[210] *Ibid.* p. 54.

relationship still exists today. In the Western world, at least, men and women now have equal access to education for the most part. One gender is supposedly equal to the other, so why does an alternative lineage continue in the age of equal rights? This question will also be tackled during the analysis section. However, before moving on to the analysis, let us look at the interdisciplinary approach of intertextuality and feminist literary criticism.

2.3   Part III Mythic Tale Tellers: Arachne and Philomela

2.3.1   Arachne

Nancy K Miller's theory of 'arachnologies' goes some way to theorising this intertextual link between women authors specifically. She borrows Barthes's theory of the text as tissue and expands on this to produce the metaphor of a web of texts, an *arachnology*. In this way, we examine the web along with the spider; we are linking texts that are held together by this virtual web. The purpose of using this metaphor is to 'discover the embodiment in writing of a gendered subjectivity'.[211] Thus, agreeing with Seifert, Miller also sees certain texts as being *gendered*. In looking at a web of tales and examining how they are connected, we observe 'the interpretation and reappropriation' of tales.[212] Miller sees these tales as unveiling 'the interwoven structures of power, gender, and identity inherent in the production of mimetic art'.[213]

Miller uses the myth of Arachne from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to demonstrate her theory. In this myth, Arachne challenges the goddess Athena to a weaving contest. Aptly, Athena weaves a scene illustrating the fate of mortals who defy the gods. As Patricia B. Salzman-Mitchell points out, Arachne either fails to decode this message or chooses to defy it.[214] In further defiance, Arachne chooses to create a tapestry depicting scenes where mortals are raped by transformed gods. She becomes a warrior in the act of weaving and transforms her textile into a weapon. However, being too outspoken often bears a cost. Although Arachne's weaving is as beautiful as Athena's she inevitably loses the contest and must bear the punishment of being transformed into a spider. Thus, Arachne can continue to weave but she is relegated to the sphere of weaving mere cobwebs. Her punishment is the lack of ability to signify meaning through her art-form. Her only voice is through the seemingly meaningless spider's webs. Here, Miller is demonstrating the muteness of women's creative voice and, hence, *Arachnologies* seeks to uncover this voice that may be lost. The spider, like the old-time weaver of fairy-tales, is consigned to the realm of the domestic. Rather than weaving a tale in a tapestry,

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[211] Miller, p. 272.
[212] *Ibid.*
[213] *Ibid.*
[214] Patricia B. Salzman-Mitchell, *A Web of Fantasies, Gaze, Image and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005), p. 125.

Arachne is now limited to producing sticky and incomprehensible webs. She is now 'all belly, all instinct and no brains'.[215] Miller employs the metaphor of Arachne as a representation of the marginalisation of women's writing, as well as the marginalisation of genres that are considered to be feminine or domestic, such as fairy tales or children's literature, and, therefore, of a lower status.

Miller's stance is certainly a political one: 'when we tear the web of women's texts we may discover, in the representations of writing itself, the marks of the grossly material, the sometimes brutal traces of the culture of gender; the inscriptions of its political structures'.[216] Miller is searching for the 'female signature of protest'[217], implying that all texts written by women bear this 'signature of protest'. What Miller terms as 'overreading',[218] is to look for the signature of the author, the spinner, in the text. However, what Miller does not address is the possibility that not all women's writing will bear this signature. Undoubtedly some will, mostly texts that are from a feminist view-point, but many texts written by women uphold the same patriarchal values that feminism opposes and this is something that we must also consider when searching for the author's signature. Certainly, as Jauss has argued, fiction is attached to life and we cannot separate the two. In the case of fairy tales, the web that connects them is not only metaphorical. Indeed, there is a very tangible link between all these narratives and their social background must be taken into account in order to properly comprehend these links. Women authors of fairy tales have used them as a means of expression, and even protest but we cannot merely assume that this is always the case. Thus, the social context of authors and tales is crucial to developing a full understanding of the nature of women's rewritings.

2.3.2 Philomela

Karen E. Rowe employs a similar theory to Miller and applies it directly to the genre of the fairy tale. She sees telling tales as a way of breaking enforced silences. Weaving tales, like tapestries, is to make meaning out of inarticulate matter. The fairy tale, a seemingly domestic art form, can be used to convey

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[215] *Ibid*. p. 138.
[216] Miller, p. 275.
[217] *Ibid.* p. 280.
[218] *Ibid.* p. 288.

'silent matter'[219], or explore issues surrounding topics that are considered taboo or as secondary/domestic female concerns.

Rowe uses the myth of Philomela, also from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to illustrate this point. In the myth, Tereus, Procne's husband rapes her sister Philomela. Following this he silences her by cutting out her tongue and imprisoning her in order to completely remove her from society and keep his crime hidden. Also, in Ovid's myth, Tereus contrives a false story of Philomela's death in order to further silence her. Philomela, however, weaves a tapestry telling her story and has an old woman deliver it to Procne. Receiving the tapestry and understanding Philomela's message, Procne then kills her son Itys and feeds him to Tereus as revenge. The Gods then intervene to prevent a further cycle of violence and Philomela is transformed into a swallow, Procne, a nightingale and Tereus, a hawk.

The metaphor of weaving is a crucial one in this myth. As Tereus has completely silenced Philomela and removed her ability to express herself, she is forced to weave as her only means of communication with her sister. Through rape and the further mutilation of removing her tongue, Tereus has doubly violated Philomela. Tereus's fear that Philomela's body will expose his crime, through the birth of an illegitimate child, leads him to remove her from society. In this way, Philomela's body inspires both lust and fear. It is for this reason that she is exiled. In the end, however, both Philomela and Procne, in the form of birds, are free; the image of the nightingale being traditionally linked to tale tellers.

Philomela, through her tapestry, is able to speak, despite her physical inability, and is, hence, able to avenge the wrongs done to her. Rowe likens her endeavour to that of female tale tellers expressing themselves through seemingly domestic tales. These are an outlet and a means of expression when other means are not available. We can look at fairy tales like tapestries sewn together by the women who write them, in a similar manner to Miller's web metaphor. As alluded to in the previous chapter fairy tales were the one genre in the seventeenth century that women dominated, or rather that they were allowed to dominate, because of the genre's lower status in comparison with

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[219] Rowe, p. 300.

other types of literature. This situation, as we will see in the analysis, certainly created a dialogue between women fairy-tale authors. The tales became a means of expression and communication amongst the writers.

Rowe sees Philomela as a prototype of the female story-teller, transmitting secret truths of culture itself. She posits that women story-tellers are 'speaking at one level to a total culture, but at another to a sisterhood of readers who will understand the hidden language'.[220] Therefore, Rowe is suggesting that there is a subtext in these tales, whereby women express themselves. She likens this idea to Scheherazade, the woman story-teller of *The Arabian Nights*, who must tell stories to save herself. Rowe sees these tale tellers as meeting the needs of the listener but, at the same time, communicating something specific to other intended (female) listeners. Men who fear the sexual woman, both in body and voice, will hear one tale, while a female audience will hear the subtext of the tale.

This image of the weaver/tale teller is important in understanding the intertextual links between fairy tales by women. Rowe compares the thread that links women tale-tellers to the thread of life of the three fates, Klotho, who spins the thread of life, Lachesis, who draws out the thread of lifespan and destiny and Atropos, who finally cuts the thread to end life:[221]

> *Contes de fées* are, therefore, not simply tales told about fairies: implicitly they are tales told by women, descendants of those ancestral Fates, who link once again the craft of spinning with the art of telling fated truths. In these women's hands, literally and metaphorically, rests the power of birthing, dying, and tale-spinning.[222]

Thus, Rowe and Miller, in different ways, employ a similar metaphor. In appropriating these mythological figures, they are empowering the voices of contemporary women.[223] Both see the art of tale-telling as a form of weaving words. As plots and characters are interlinked through tales, an intertextual network of tales is formed. It is within this network that women tale-tellers find a place to create and express. An apparently harmless and domestic craft

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[220] *Ibid.* p. 301.
[221] For an interesting discussion on the connection between 'crone goddess' figures and myth see Sharon Rose Wilson, *Myths and Fairy Tales in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[222] Rowe, p. 307.
[223] Salzman-Mitchell, p. 126.

becomes the sanctuary for the discussion of issues regarding sexuality and gender within a societal context. Hence, this web of tales grows and strengthens.

We can see the same web metaphor employed in recent fairy-tale scholarship in the work of Cristina Bacchilega. In examining Caribbean Canadian author Nalo Hopkinson's collection of tales, *Skin Folk* (2001), Bacchilega sees Hopkinson as an author who 'consciously draws on both Caribbean culture and world-wide folklore'.[224] In this sense, not only does Bacchilega accept the concept of intertextuality between fairy-tale authors, but, moreover, she sees authors, such as Hopkinson, as *consciously* drawing from a tradition of tale telling. As such, social context is not just something which affects the subconscious of an author but something which the author can knowingly draw upon. Bacchilega positions Hopkinson's work within a web of feminist fairy-tale revisions alongside other literary rewritings and film versions. She sees women authors as approaching the fairy tale from a woman-centred, feminist perspective and refers to the tales themselves as 'renovated' texts which make up a web. She notes that many authors have already added to and drawn from this web, notably Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and A.S Byatt, but that women writers continue to add to the expanding web of fairy-tale rewritings that exist. She notes that contemporary fairy-tale rewritings, rather than cementing patriarchal values that may have been embedded in tales of the past, now question social reality. Bacchilega sees this questioning of values as 'a poetics of transformation articulating a desire for change, affirmation, and proliferation of meanings'.[225]

Looking at recent fairy-tale scholarship in the area of English language rewritings, we can see that the web of women's fairy tales that exists is ever expanding. Particularly in the years surrounding the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the new millennium there is evidence of a fairy tale revival, explosion even, in works for both adolescents and adults. Within this

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[224] Cristina Bacchilega, 'Reflections on Recent English-Language Fairy-Tale Fiction by Women: Extrapolating from Nalo Hopkinson's *Skin Folk*', *Fabula*, 47.3/4 (2006), pp. 201-10 (p. 202).
[225] *Ibid*. p. 205.

fairy-tale revival, the vast majority of tales are written by women authors.[226] In order to explore this trend, I propose developing a feminist theory of reading out of reader response theory in order to develop a framework that will allow the grouping of women writers and readers together so as to understand the connection between women writers, readers and fairy tales. In doing so, let us firstly examine the theory of reader response, specifically the work of Stanley Fish.

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[226] I make this assertion based on personal experience of researching fairy-tale rewritings. The vast majority of retellings that I came across were by women. In fact, it is difficult to even find a contemporary male author of fairy tales. However, there are, of course, some, for example, Gregory Maguire whose novel, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* charts the life and unfair treatment of Elphaba, the Wicked Witch of the West. Maguire adapted his tale from L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and its 1939 film adaption. The novel has since been transformed into the hugely successful Broadway musical, *Wicked*.

2.4 Part IV Reader Response Theory

2.4.1 Interpretive Communities: A Fishy Question?

When Stanley Fish made the question 'Is There a Text in this Class?' famous, the answer he gave was 'there is and there isn't', for, it depends what you mean by *text* and herein lies the argument around which reader response theory revolves. Fish asserts that the text is not a stable entity but rather, 'a structure of meanings that is obvious from the perspective of whatever interpretive functions happen to be in force'.[227] Fish's intention is to dislodge the text as a privileged container of meaning and to acknowledge the author and reader's joint responsibility in the production of meaning, a meaning that Fish sees as an event, rather than an entity. In dislodging the text from this position, his first port of call is to raise the question of why so many different interpretive strategies can be, and are, applied to one text. Surely, if the text were a stable entity, we would all just know its inherent meaning. Fish's answer to this question is that texts can be read differently depending on the interpretive strategy that you employ. As such, the text is not stable. The illusion of stability, however, relies on how, and by whom, it is read. When readers employ the same interpretive strategy they will agree, for the most part, on the meaning of the text, thus creating the impression that the text has a fixed (stable) meaning. Conversely, if another group of readers employ a completely different interpretive strategy, the meaning they garner from the text will, consequently, be completely different also. In this way, Fish argues that the text can never have a fixed or determined meaning but the meaning will be constantly in flux as interpretive strategies develop and change.

Fish defines groups of readers employing the same interpretive strategies as 'interpretive communities'. In explaining this notion he asks two questions; firstly, how do we explain that the same reader will perform differently when reading two different texts? Secondly, how do we explain that different readers will perform similarly when reading the same text, if not due to the text's stability? He sees these patterns of stability and variety as functions of interpretive strategies rather than as functions of texts. In this way, interpretive strategies make texts rather than arise from them. What is more, he denies the

[227] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. vii.

possibility of pure, 'disinterested' perception. As Fish sees it, we are always making interpretive decisions and when we perform these interpretive strategies, whatever they may be, this is the act of reading.[228]

In explaining how we use interpretive strategies Fish sets out four parameters:

1. We are not forced to execute any particular interpretive strategy, it is a decision.

2. We can use the same interpretive strategies for different texts.

3. Readers can use similar interpretive strategies on the same text and they will think they agree about the text, but what they really agree on is the strategy they used.

4. Readers who employ different interpretive strategies on the same text will disagree about the text, but what they really disagree on is the strategy they used.[229]

What is important to note from these points is that Fish sees the notions of 'same' and 'different' texts as 'fictions'.[230] The notion of the 'same' text is simply a result of two or more readers employing the same interpretive strategy. Therefore Fish asks; how do we explain the stability of certain readers at certain times and, at the same time, the variety of interpretation, if the answer is not the stability of the text? His answer is the concept of 'interpretive communities'. Fish defines these communities as:

> [...] made up of those who share interpretive strategies, not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around.[231]

Therefore, each community will regard the other as not seeing the 'true text':

> This, then, is the explanation both for the stability of interpretation among different readers (they belong to the same community) and for the regularity with which a single reader will employ different interpretive

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228 *Ibid.* p. 168.
229 *Ibid*. p. 169.
230 *Ibid.*
231 *Ibid.* p. 171.

strategies and thus make different texts (he belongs to different communities).[232]

However, the stability of communities is always temporary. They grow larger, decline, people move from one to another, providing 'just enough stability for the interpretive battles to go on, and just enough shift and slippage to ensure that they will never be settled'.[233] The only stability, according to Fish, is that interpretive strategies are always being employed.

If we consider the two corpora of texts in this thesis to be the products of two different yet similar interpretive communities we can use this methodological concept as a means of analysis. The two corpora date from very different time periods, were produced against different cultural and social backdrops and yet are rewritings of the same tales and display many similar thematic traits. What is more, women authors dominate both corpora. Taking all this into account, I suggest that the two groups of women writers are from different interpretive communities but that they share very similar interpretive strategies; one example of this would be the constant questioning of gender roles that we see in the seventeenth-century tales and that is still evident in the contemporary corpus. Of course, the extent of this questioning of gender roles differs greatly from the seventeenth century to present day but, nonetheless, we can draw parallels between the two corpora. One example of this is Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy's portrayal of an ugly yet intelligent protagonist, *Laidronnette*, in *Serpentin Vert* and Robin McKinley's unattractive, yet pragmatic *Beauty* character in her rewriting of *'Beauty and the Beast'*. Both tales present unconventional heroines who do not display the foremost expected characteristic of a *Beauty* character in an animal-bridegroom tale, namely physical beauty. In this way, both tales though centuries apart, question the same ideal of physical attractiveness of a woman. The analysis section of the thesis will shed light on more examples of this nature, drawing on Fish's concept of interpretive communities. We must, however, firstly address the fears that some critics harbour as regards the practicality of Fish's theory of interpretive communities. In the following section the concept of interpretive anarchy and Fish's subsequent defence of his theory will be discussed.

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[232] *Ibid.*
[233] *Ibid.* p. 172.

2.4.2   The Fear of Interpretive Anarchy

Literary critics have questioned the practicality of Fish's theory, asking if this will not lead to interpreters being free to impose 'their idiosyncratic meanings on texts'.[234] If we ignore the universal constraints and determinant meanings of language, do we not leave literary interpretation wide open to any meaning, no matter how obscure or ridiculous? Does Fish ignore the linguistic meanings that words undeniably have? According to Fish, there are no completely determinant meanings in language. However, he refutes the idea that his theory of reader response could lead to interpretive anarchy by reminding us that an endless succession of meanings for every utterance is not possible, because utterances always occur within a specific context, and that context gives meaning: 'Sentences emerge only in situations'.[235] Furthermore, according to Fish, if we regard the meaning of a statement as obvious, this is not due to the determinant meaning of the language used in the statement but, rather, due to the fact that the language of the statement is already embedded in a certain context. It is the context that makes the meaning clear to us; it is because this context, whatever it may be, is already part of our 'repertoire of organizing the world and its events'[236] that we understand the statement.

Fish views the issue of context as a crucial one as regards how we think about the role of the reader. In response to the argument that without a determinant core of meanings for words, meanings could just become arbitrary, not subject to challenge or correction, Fish argues that communication always occurs within a context and, as such, we are already in possession of a certain set of assumptions as regards the context of an utterance. Therefore, some perceptions of an utterance will automatically be ruled out due to this context; utterances can have several possible meanings but not an unlimited number. An unlimited number of meanings could only occur if an utterance occurred in 'dead space', with no context at all.[237] As we do not live in a vacuum and everyday life is always imbued with some type of context, this, of course, is impossible.

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[234] *Ibid.* p. 10.
[235] *Ibid.* p. 307.
[236] *Ibid.* p. 313.
[237] *Ibid.* p. 318.

What is more, when we see agreement among interpretations of a text, Fish would argue that this is not testament to the stability of the text but to the existence of interpretive communities who are employing similar methods of interpretation. As Fish puts it: 'language is always perceived, from the very first, within a structure of norms. That structure, however, is not abstracted and independent but social'.[238]

Hence, the social context involved is of key importance, when looking at the role of the reader. We will see this demonstrated in the analysis section of this thesis where, as mentioned above, I am, essentially, grouping women writers into interpretive communities. This could lead to an accusation of essentialism but in using the notion of interpretive communities, I believe essentialism is avoided. To clarify, I consider the women authors from both corpora as making up interpretive communities because of their shared experience as women in the world, in a certain social and cultural context. However, women can also belong to various other interpretive communities, influenced by a myriad of other social factors which will, in turn, have a bearing on how they receive (and rewrite) texts. As such, in taking into account women's commonality, I am also taking into account their individuality. Nevertheless, when women have a shared experience or connection, such as through the type of text that they read and/or write, in this case fairy tales, it should be explored.

Fish's theory, while affirming the important role the reader plays, could also be seen as being an essentially pessimistic one. If our interpretations of literary works depend solely on the methods of interpretation that are in vogue, at a certain time, are our interpretations futile? In other words, are we all trying to answer a question to which there is no absolute answer? In a way, like Fish's answer to the title question of his essay, one could be tempted to answer yes and no. It depends on how you look at it. On the one hand, one must concede that, indeed, there are no absolute answers, but what is really interesting lies in our *varied* interpretations, in why we interpret texts the way we do and what we can learn from this variety. Looking at social contexts and how texts are received is key to understanding it.

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[238] *Ibid.*

2.5　A Feminist Theory of Reading

In this section, I wish to explore the place of gender in a theory of reading. More specifically, I will ask does gender have an effect on reading, is there a *woman* reader and, if so, what makes the relationship between the woman writer and the woman reader of significance. If we accept that there is a connection between writer and reader, then we can also posit that there is a connection between *woman* writer and reader. Firstly, let us look at some empirical research that has been done on the concept of gender and reading.

While some empirical research has been carried out as regards the role that gender plays in affecting how a person reads a text, it is somewhat lacking, in that, while taking gender into account, other influential societal and cultural factors have been ignored. In Marisa Bortolussi's, Peter Dixon's and Paul Sopčák's study on the effect of protagonist gender on reader evaluations of excerpts from novels, they found that the protagonist gender had unexpected effects on readers, in that both male *and* female readers identified more with a male protagonist. They attribute this result to the notion of 'situational justification'; men are generally perceived as more situationally justified than women. Consequently, when an individual reads a text they tend to identify with the male character more as he seems more 'situationally justified'. An example of this is a man's anger being perceived as justified, whereas a woman, in the same situation, may be judged as irrational or volatile. Although their study does not reference other societal factors apart from that of gender, their conclusion merely underlines the fact that readers are influenced by the society that they are part of. If all readers are part of a patriarchal society, then it is not surprising that all readers, men and women, will identify more with a male protagonist. One could argue, equally, that the men and women who took part in the study are part of the same interpretive community or are members of various interpretive communities that have over-lapping ideals as regards literary interpretation and, hence, they read in a similar manner.

Furthermore, this study presumes that compiling data on protagonist identification is a reliable method to measure the effect of gender on reading. I concede that it is *one* way of exploring the issue, but the effect of gender on reading is a complex issue, which cannot be limited to such a restricted area of

enquiry. In their conclusion, Bortolussi, Dixon and Sopčák assert that 'some of the assumptions implicit in feminist theories of reading are not true under all circumstances'.[239] Firstly, they never precisely indicate which theories they are refuting and secondly, their theory of 'situational justification', in fact, supports many feminist theories of reading, in that, the social context of a reader is the most important factor in determining how they read. Gender is one facet of this context but cannot be analysed in an isolated fashion. It must be taken into consideration amongst a host of other societal and cultural factors such as location, social class, period in history etc. While this study is not an empirical one in the sense of measuring female readers' likes or dislikes, I am examining 'real' readers and rewriters, so, in this way, I require a theoretical framework that enables me to analyse the role of gender in reading and rewriting in a comprehensive manner, taking all important societal and cultural factors into account.

Patrocinio P. Schweickart provides an alternative framework for the analysis of the role of gender in reading, specifically looking at the connection between woman reader and writer. She sees this relationship as something important and possibly inherently female; 'to read a text and then to write about it is to seek to connect not only with the author of the original text, but also with a community of readers'.[240] Here, I will examine the relationship between woman writer and reader in the context of reader response theory and feminist criticism.

Schweickart puts forward an interesting case for a connection between reader-response theory and feminist criticism. She sees current reader-response theory as unrealistic in that it does not account for injustices in society with regard to race, class and sex. In Schweickart's opinion, reader-response theory needs to take these historical implications into account, and, as such, the place for feminist criticism within reader-response theory needs to be examined. She argues that both theories oppose the monumental art object of New Criticism, and that it is not much of a leap to go from acknowledging that the reader

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[239] Marisa Bortolussi, Peter Dixon and Paul Sopčák, 'Gender and Reading', *Poetics*, 38.3 (2010), pp. 299-318 (p. 316).

[240] Patrocinio P. Schweickart, 'Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading', in *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts,* ed. by Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocinio P. Schweickart (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 31-62 (p. 56).

attributes meaning to the text, to acknowledging that there are different types of readers: 'If it is possible to formulate a basic conceptual framework for disclosing the 'difference' of women's writing, surely it is no less possible to do so for women's reading.[241] For feminists, according to Schweickart, how we read is inextricably linked to what we read. This will be influenced by what literature is available to us and how this literature is viewed in our society. If we have been socialised into viewing literature in a certain way, this will affect our reading of it. Hence, it matters who wrote the text and who is reading it.

Schweickart cites Kolodny, in pointing out that reading is a highly socialised or learned activity. We read what we have learned to read, what we already know how to read, what we are familiar with.[242] What and how we read is dependent on our societal context. Accordingly, we are caught in a kind of vicious cycle. In demonstrating this, Schweickart focuses on an essay by Adrienne Rich on Emily Dickinson. In her essay, Rich purposefully focuses on the social context of Dickinson; her life, where she lived, society at that time, etc. Schweickart sees Rich's essay as unapologetically subjective. In this way, both Schweickart and Rich are highlighting the importance of taking social and/or cultural context into account when positing a theory of reader response.

Through similar contexts, situations and experiences, Schweickart suggests that there is an affinity between women writers and readers. She sees a tradition linking women writers and readers together. The gender inscribed in the text, and the gender of the reader, are both crucial. The subjectivity of the woman reader is important. Schweickart sees the woman reader as reading the text as it was not meant to be read, reading against it, subverting it. As in Miller's theory of 'arachnologies', Schweickart sees the woman reader as approaching the text in a different manner from how a man would. Of course, we cannot say that this is always the case, but, in the case of fairy-tale rewritings, we can definitively say that women, in particular, have appropriated the genre. This is clearly evidenced by the sheer number of collections of rewritings by women that exist, in comparison to relatively few by men. So, we must accept from this evidence that since women rewrite fairy tales in such a prolific manner, they must read them in a similar manner, one which is

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[241] *Ibid*, p. 38.
[242] *Ibid,* p. 45.

markedly different to how men read fairy tales. Women must read tales in such a way that elicits a collective response in the form of rewriting.

The theories of reader-response and feminist criticism are somewhat similar and can shed some light on this phenomenon. Both theories agree with Stanley Fish's contention that

> […] the meaning of the text is mediated by the interpretive community in which the activity of reading is situated: the meaning of the text depends on the interpretive strategy one applies to it, and the choice of strategy is regulated (explicitly or implicitly) by the canons of acceptability that govern the interpretive community.[243]

However, the feminist reader is also aware that the androcentric canon is deeply etched on the minds of almost all readers, women and men. Hence, Schweickart sees a feminist reading as a *re-reading*; reading against a tradition of exclusion, reading in a different way.

As such, there is a dialogic relationship between the woman writer and the woman reader and Schweickart sees them as being engaged in an intimate conversation. Interestingly, she remarks that perhaps there is something distinctly female, not merely feminist, about this relationship. She points out that it has been suggested that while men define themselves through individuation, women define themselves in relation to relationships and affiliations.[244] It is this relationship between women writers that will be explored in the following chapters. Through a comparative analysis, and in light of the theories discussed in this chapter, I intend to uncover the motivation behind the re-appropriation of the fairy-tale genre, by women authors, in recent years. I suggest that this new vogue of fairy tale rewritings is the result of a conscious questioning of the very patriarchal values that resigned the fairy-tale genre and women authors to the margins of literary history in the first place. It is with a knowing irony that contemporary women authors now choose a genre that was one of the few means of expression women authors were restricted to in the past. They continue the lineage in order to highlight, not only the injustices of the past, but to recognise the many that still exist today.

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[243] *Ibid.* p. 50.
[244] *Ibid.* p. 54-55.

It is in the following chapters that I will employ this theory in investigating the links between a number of women writers of fairy tales from different social and cultural backgrounds and eras. Moreover, I will also explore the concept of the woman as reader *and* writer through tracing the history of a particular tale during two specific time periods. I will argue that the tales produced during these two time periods show similar traits that are direct results of their societal and cultural contexts. Hence, an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating the theories of reception, reader-response, intertextuality and feminist criticism, is necessary to conduct such an analysis.

CHAPTER 3

ORIGINS OF BEASTLY TALES

'Yes, my Beauty! GOBBLE YOU UP!'

Angela Carter,

'The Tiger's Bride'

3   Coupling in the Dark

In essence, Comparative Literature always revolves around the concept of the *other*. Otherness is a theme that permeates literature of all cultures and times and this is evident in fairy tales. From an early age we learn, through fairy tales, how to understand and accept otherness. In animal-bridegroom type tales, the notion of otherness is invariably linked to the themes of gender and sexuality, spanning from mythology to the tales of the twenty-first century. As outlined in the previous chapter, the theoretical framework to be applied in this thesis is a comparative approach incorporating the theories of feminist criticism, intertextuality and reception. As the theoretical framework includes a socio-historical approach which involves taking authors social contexts into account, the treatment of the themes of gender, sexuality and otherness – all being aspects of identity – by the various authors are of specific relevance because the representations of these particular themes will give an insight into the social context in which the tales were written. In examining the treatment of these themes by each author, we can trace the changes that have occurred over time and, in so doing, we can also trace changing ideologies with regard to gender roles and sexuality throughout these periods.

In this chapter I will examine the intertextual relationships and the reception of the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' (2AD approx.) by Apuleius and five subsequent French rewritings of the same tale type spanning from 1696 to 1756, namely Mme d'Aulnoy's *Serpentin Vert* (1698), Mlle Bernard's *Riquet à la Houppe* (1696), Charles Perrault's *Riquet à la Houppe* (1697), Mme de Villeneuve's *La Belle et La Bête* (1740) and Mme Leprince de Beaumont's *La Belle et La Bête* (1756). Although this thesis focuses on women writers Charles Perrault is included as he is the most famous fairy-tale author from seventeenth-century France and his version of *Riquet à la Houppe* demonstrates the differences between tales by women and men authors. These six tales, as mentioned earlier, are all categorised by Antti Aarne as folktale type AT425, the Search for the Lost Husband or Animal-bridegroom type tale.[245]

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[245] See Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, trans. and enlarged by Stith Thompson, (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981).

The analysis will be conducted thematically under the three headings of 'Gender', 'Sexuality' and 'Otherness'. These themes are of relevance to all fairy tales but are of particular importance as regards animal-bridegroom type tales because of the original function of this tale type. This kind of tale was told in order to prepare young women for entering marital life and their first sexual experience and is inherently linked to social norms regarding ideas surrounding gender roles and sexuality. What is more, the theme of otherness is also of specific importance in this tale type because of the recurring motifs of ugliness or beastliness and marginality. Often in this tale type, imagery of monstrosity is used to represent otherness as regards being outside society or in exile of some sort and, as such, being on the margin. In this way, the theme of otherness, as we will see demonstrated, is often intrinsically linked to the commentary on gender and sexuality that runs through the tales. Marginality as a theme, of course, is also of significance to all fairy tales due to their own position on the margins of literary discourse but it is of even more importance when looking at the tales from a feminist perspective. When tracing the history of this tale type it is apparent that women authors have rewritten this specific tale prolifically and this phenomenon demonstrates a link between women writers and the core themes that are addressed in animal-bridegroom type tales. For these reasons, this tale type has been chosen as the most fitting as regards the themes to be examined here and the theories to be employed.

Let us begin by examining the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' by Apuleius, which is acknowledged by Aarne and others as being the original inspiration behind all other animal-bridegroom tales and comparing it to Mme d'Aulnoy's transformation of the myth into a fairy tale.

3.1 Transforming Tales

3.1.1 Lucius Apuleius (c.125 – c.180)

The myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' is one of the best-known myths in the world. Apuleius' version, first appearing in the second century AD as part of his *Metamorphoses*, also known as *The Golden Ass*, has been reproduced in art and literature prolifically. Its themes are universal and this myth is the initial inspiration behind all the tales to be subsequently examined in this thesis. 'Cupid and Psyche' gave birth to a long lineage of tales that have evolved over the course of history. Tracing this lineage will reveal a tendency in recent rewritings to question the myth and the values at its core.

3.1.2 'Cupid and Psyche' (Second century AD)

As 'Cupid and Psyche' is the core myth behind subsequent versions, I will provide a detailed summary of its plot. In the myth, Psyche, the protagonist of the story, is so beautiful that she even surpasses the goddess Venus. Enraged with jealousy, Venus sends her son, Cupid to punish Psyche. However, Cupid is so captivated by her beauty that he falls in love with her and does not punish her. Psyche's parents grow anxious when she does not find a husband despite her great beauty so they go to see an oracle to seek advice. The oracle deems that Psyche will not marry a mortal man but a hideous serpent. Resigned to the fate of being a monster's bride Psyche, believing she awaits a horrendous fate, stays on the nearest mountain as the oracle has instructed. To her surprise, she is transported to a magnificent palace where she is waited on by invisible servants. Her groom, Cupid, who has forbidden her to look at him, comes only to her at night and has disappeared by morning. Psyche's jealous sisters, having realised that Psyche is indeed married to a god, convince her that her husband is a monstrous serpent who will surely devour her. Taking her cruel sisters' advice, Psyche hides a lamp and a knife in her bed and when Cupid is asleep, she sees him for the first time. She is overcome by his beauty and tries to kiss him, but accidentally spills a drop of lamp oil on him. He wakes and realises that she has betrayed him. Broken-hearted, Cupid flies away. Psyche, rushing after him, falls from a window. Following this, missing her lover, Psyche prays to the gods for help and eventually Venus sets impossible tasks for her to accomplish in order to win her husband back. First she must sort grains; an ant

takes pity on her and helps her complete the task. Angered, Venus sets a new task: Psyche must collect some golden wool. A river-god helps her by telling her to wait until the vicious golden sheep move across the hill to pick the wool off the branches. For her next task Psyche must obtain water from the river Styx that is guarded by serpents. An eagle helps her by retrieving the water for her. Finally, Venus, angered that Psyche has successfully completed the tasks, orders her to go to the underworld and ask for some of Proserpine's beauty, as she has lost some of hers in caring for her distressed son. Psyche, in a state of desperation, is about to throw herself off a tower to kill herself to get to the underworld when the tower speaks to her and tells her how to get there and back again alive. She follows his instructions and is given a box by Proserpine. However, when she leaves the underworld, Psyche, falling prey to temptation and curiosity again, cannot resist opening the box to take some of the beauty. When she opens it, however, it does not contain beauty. Psyche falls into a deep sleep. Cupid, seeing this and taking pity on his wife, flies down to help her and wakes her. Cupid then begs Jupiter to allow him and Psyche to be together. Jupiter agrees and Psyche drinks the ambrosia and is granted eternal life. 'Cupid and Psyche' then go on to have a daughter named Pleasure.

In one way, it is fitting that the myth appears in *The Golden Ass* as a tale told to a young bride who has been kidnapped on her wedding day. An old woman tells the story to a sad young girl in order to comfort her. The old-woman tale teller represents the female lineage of passing on womanly knowledge. On the other hand, however, the unjust treatment of the female characters in the tale is a depressing reminder of the fate that awaited many young women who were told the tale. As will be demonstrated, contemporary women authors are turning this ominous message on its head and rewriting a new and more optimistic ending for Psyche and her contemporaries.

3.1.3   Vilification and Vindication

The representation of gender roles in 'Cupid and Psyche' tends to be associated with the vilification of the female characters and the exoneration of the males. Psyche is the stereotype of feminine perfection: 'The loveliness of the youngest, however, was so perfect that human speech was too poor to describe or even praise it satisfactorily: [...] citizens and foreigners [...] were struck

dumb'.[246] This could be interpreted as a positive. However, even her perfect beauty becomes a burden and one of the reasons for her downfall as it is the cause of Venus' wrath:

> No one visited Paphos or Cnidos or even Cythera to see the goddess herself: her rites were abandoned, her temples disfigured, her couches trampled, her worship neglected: her statues were ungarlanded, her altars shamefully cold and empty of offerings. It was the girl to whom prayers were addressed [...].[247]

Something outside her control is the reason for her punishment and this is a theme that runs through the whole myth of 'Cupid and Psyche'. She is also held accountable for her curiosity, however, which is within her control. Curiosity, particularly female curiosity, is deemed a negative trait. This could also be the case in modern versions. However, as shall be demonstrated, in tales such as 'Skin So Green and Fine' by Wendy Wheeler for instance natural curiosity is celebrated.

Psyche is also vilified due to her status as unmarried woman: 'Psyche stayed at home an unmarried virgin mourning her abandoned and lonely state, sick in body and mind, hating this beauty of hers which had enchanted the whole world', for, although Psyche is adored, she is viewed 'as one admires a statue finished to perfection.'[248] Though she is perfect in her beauty, she cannot have a meaningful connection with people, and, therefore, cannot be loved. Her status as spinster denigrates her as other and, therefore, as unacceptable in society. The serpent husband that the oracle foresees represents the doomed destiny that awaits Psyche. If she cannot marry and produce offspring, she no longer has a function in society; she is worthless: 'Psyche was led forth, a living corpse, and in tears joined in, not her wedding procession, but her own funeral.'[249] The myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' was originally a tale to give solace to young brides embarking on married life. Paradoxical as it may seem, their fears may have been somewhat assuaged by comparing themselves to Psyche. Even if they feared or hated their husbands, at least they hoped that they would not meet the same fate as Psyche.

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[246] Apuleius, *The Golden* Ass, trans. by E.J. Kenney, (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 71.
[247] *Ibid.* p. 72.
[248] *Ibid.* p. 74.
[249] *Ibid.* p. 75.

As with all myths, fate is an important concept here. As regards Psyche, fate signifies the lack of control that she has over her own life. When she does take what little control she can, by deciding to look at Cupid, her disobedience is punished. She had been warned that 'she must never be induced by the evil advice of her sisters to discover what her husband looked like'.[250] Disobedience and, more precisely, curiosity are conveyed as negative traits. Obedience in a female is a virtue and, as we will see, this type of representation has permeated Beauty and the Beast tales for hundreds of years. Only in recent years is this previously accepted notion being challenged by authors such as Robin McKinley, Angela Carter and Tanith Lee, who will be discussed later.

What is more, Psyche is not only punished for her inability to restrain her curiosity but this lack of control is also linked to her alleged lack of intelligence. She is portrayed as 'poor Psyche, simple and childish creature', a 'simple-minded girl'.[251] As a parent would a child, Cupid scolds her: 'you see how yet again curiosity has been your undoing,'[252] reminding us of the eternal blame that rests with Eve for not having the fortitude to resist temptation. This curiosity which leads to a striving towards knowledge is seen as dangerous. Psyche's quest for knowledge is what leads to her ruin. Apuleius warns the reader against this: Psyche would have been better off if she had accepted her imposed state of ignorance. Here, Psyche's status of 'simple' is unjust. Her lack of knowledge is purely due to the arbitrary rules that Cupid has set down. Psyche is rebuked for her inability to control her urges but, as will be examined later, Cupid is never reproached for his unfair treatment of Psyche.

Psyche's intelligence is shown when she manages to outsmart her sisters in order to have them killed. However, here she is also portrayed as being capable of vengeful and cruel behaviour, like her sisters. In this manner, every female character in the myth is, at least to some extent, vilified. We see this clearly, not only in relation to Psyche and her sisters but also in the portrayal of Venus. The goddess is depicted as jealous and ruthless. Like the evil step-mother in fairy tales, Venus' rage is directed at her more beautiful daughter-in-

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[250] *Ibid.* p. 79-80.
[251] *Ibid.* p. 86.
[252] *Ibid.* p. 104.

law: 'she will rue the day, whoever she is, when she usurped my honours.'[253] Despite the fact that Psyche's beauty is beyond her control, Venus punishes her for it. In this way, Venus represents malicious feminine qualities that are also mirrored in the actions of the sisters. Venus is represented as evil and spiteful and Psyche's envious sisters are deemed 'she-wolves'.[254] This association of the feminine with evil is evident throughout the myth.

Female characters are greatly vilified by Apuleius. Venus is depicted as bitter due to her loss of beauty and youth. She is also depicted as anxious as regards her lessening fecundity. In the same manner that Psyche loses her value in society through her virginity and consequent lack of offspring, Venus is considered to lose this same worth as she ages. Her loss of fecundity and beauty are illustrated as negative attributes and the cause of her menace towards Psyche: 'I suppose you think, you odious good-for-nothing lecher, that you're the only one fit to breed and that I'm now too old to conceive?'[255] Not only is Venus portrayed as being jealous of Psyche's youth and beauty but she is also jealous of Cupid's, virility and freedom. Cupid can act as wantonly as he wishes without reprimand, but Venus, though she is a goddess, still has to adhere to an imposed model of femininity. Her anguish due to her loss of status as beautiful young woman is evident in her disgust at being labelled 'grandmother': 'What joy, to be called grandmother in the flower of my age and to hear the son of a vile slave styled Venus' grandson!'[256] It is clear that beauty and fecundity are represented as immensely important traits in the female characters of Apuleius' myth. Without these attributes female characters are deemed worthless and, what is more, they are punished if they cannot live up to this imposed ideal of perfection.

Conversely, male characters in the myth, despite their indiscretions, are always vindicated. Although Cupid is involved in the illicit relationship with Psyche, it is she who bears all the blame and Cupid is hardly even rebuked: 'Is it really a crime, for heaven's sake to have been so ready to give the glad eye to a nice girl?'[257] Even though Cupid knowingly enters into a forbidden

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[253] *Ibid.* p. 72-3.
[254] *Ibid.* p. 82.
[255] *Ibid.* p. 92.
[256] *Ibid.* p. 98.
[257] *Ibid.* p. 93.

relationship and Psyche has no choice at all, it is only Psyche who is punished. Cupid, because he is male and a God, and therefore of a higher social status than Psyche, receives no punishment.

In a similar manner, Jupiter excuses his own wanton sexual behaviour by claiming he has been hit by Cupid's arrows and, thus, could not control himself. He feigns innocence yet, in the next sentence, he asks Cupid to reward him with a 'lovely girl' as if the girl is an object to be bartered:

> [You] have constantly shot and wounded this breast of mine by which the behaviour of the elements and the movements of the heavenly bodies are regulated, defiling it repeatedly with lustful adventures on earth, […] changing my majestic features into the base shapes of snakes, of fire, of wild animals, of birds and of farmyard beasts […] if there is now any pre-eminently lovely girl on earth, you are bound to pay me back with her for this good turn.[258]

The phrase 'pay me back with her' demonstrates the misogyny that permeates 'Cupid and Psyche'. Women have no choices, no control and, if they do not fit into their expected roles they are cast aside as worthless, while the male characters in the myth are shown as justified in their actions. Though the male characters commit worse crimes than Psyche, their indiscretions are deemed acceptable. In this way, gender roles in 'Cupid and Psyche' are fixed and unfair. While the female characters are vilified, the males are vindicated in their actions. Natural curiosity is deemed a negative trait whilst Cupid's and Jupiter's philandering goes unpunished. In a similar manner, as will be discussed now, issues surrounding sexuality are portrayed differently with regard to male and female characters.

Fear of sexuality is a motif that pervades 'Cupid and Psyche'. Issues surrounding loss of virginity, unacceptable sexual behaviour and sexual awakenings are at the core of the myth and are still at the core of many rewritings albeit portrayed in a different manner. Fear of sexuality and sexual awakening are inherently linked in this myth because of their association with the sexual initiation of a young woman. In the myth Psyche represents the thoughts and fears of young women on entering marital life bearing in mind that Apuleius' version of the myth naturally reflects the sexual values and

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[258] *Ibid.* p. 104-5.

mores of his time. These values stem from an era when sexuality was not fully understood and, consequently, lack of knowledge and fear of the unknown are represented in the myth: 'all alone as she was and fearing for her virginity, Psyche quailed and trembled, dreading, more than any possible harm, the unknown. Now there entered her unknown husband; he had mounted the bed, made her his wife, and departed in haste before sunrise'.[259] The tone of the language used by Apuleius, according to modern values, is unmistakably misogynistic. Psyche has no control over her own sexuality for the most part in the myth and, as we will see, when she does finally gain some control, she is punished for it. Expressions such as 'slain virginity' further add to this sense of domination on Cupid's part and submission by Psyche. Psyche's helplessness heightens the reader's understanding of her fear and, although we are led to believe that she begins to enjoy the sexual encounters with her invisible husband – 'for though she could not see him, her hands and ears told her that he was there'[260] – there is still a sense that, because Psyche has no control or choice, she is a victim as opposed to a consenting participant.

As has been demonstrated in relation to Galen's theories, sexuality has a long-standing association with danger, and this is illustrated throughout the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' but, more specifically, here, we can see a clear association with female curiosity which, then, leads to danger: 'your womb, until now a child's, is carrying a child for us in its turn – who, if you hide our secret in silence, will be divine, but if you divulge it, he will be mortal'.[261] Though being mortal in itself is not dangerous, Cupid uses it as a threat. Firstly, Psyche is only allowed womanly status when she is impregnated by Cupid and, secondly, her female sexuality is perceived as a threat and something that is taboo. Again, she has no choice: she must obey Cupid or face degradation. Psyche, like Eve, must not submit to temptation.

Danger is associated with female sexuality and pregnancy again through the imagery of the serpent. Psyche's sisters warn her that, as soon as she is fattened up, her husband will devour her: 'as soon as the fullness of your womb brings your pregnancy to maturity and you are that much more rich and

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[259] *Ibid.* p.78.
[260] *Ibid.* p.79.
[261] *Ibid.* p. 83.

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enjoyable a prize, he will eat you up.' She is warned that she will be 'entombed in the entrails of a savage monster', and what is more, this has been caused by 'the loathsome and dangerous intimacy of clandestine love'.[262] Psyche, once more, is held responsible for her own downfall, the metaphor of being devoured by the hideous serpent symbolising the forbidden sexual relationship that she has taken part in. By becoming pregnant with an illegitimate child, Psyche has allowed herself to become a monster's prey or so her sisters would have her believe. Throughout, Psyche's sexuality is represented as dangerous and illicit. Despite this injustice, however, Psyche's miserable destiny is not questioned in the myth; the reader is expected to accept the embedded sexism and, in spite of the disregard Cupid shows for Psyche's wellbeing, she loves him: 'in one and the same body she loathed the monster and loved the husband'.[263] If we do not, however, accept Psyche's destiny, the myth becomes a tale about the unfairness that Psyche faces. She has no choice as to whom she marries; she is asked to accept the fact that she can never see her lover and, when she does succumb to natural temptation, she is cruelly punished according to the arbitrary whims of the gods.

As with her fecundity, Psyche's sexual awakening is depicted in an ambivalent manner. On the one hand, Psyche's sexual awakening is natural and necessary but, on the other hand, her sexual curiosity is still deemed troublesome. The lamp that Psyche uses to finally see her hidden lover represents the removal of blindness and the acquisition of knowledge, specifically sexual knowledge. She explores her own sexual desires and this is a natural rite of passage. However, when she finally acquires this knowledge, she is 'unnerved by the wonderful vision, [and is] no longer mistress of herself'. Psyche, 'curious as ever', can no longer restrain herself: 'Then ever more on fire with desire for Desire she hung over him gazing in distraction and devoured him with quick sensuous kisses'.[264] When Psyche does acknowledge her own desires, she lacks self-control and this is what consequently leads to her downfall. Like Eve, Psyche does not resist temptation and this is also linked to her stereotypical gender role as a beautiful but foolish girl. Her actions are

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[262] *Ibid.* p. 86.
[263] *Ibid.* p. 87.
[264] *Ibid.* p. 88.

deemed unwise and imprudent although her curiosity is natural and understandable. Her femininity becomes linked with irrationality in the myth. What is more when Psyche's indiscretion leads to a pregnancy that is deemed illegitimate, the 'bastard' child leads to her being branded a 'slut'.[265] Whereas her initial curiosity was accepted as natural, when Psyche crosses the boundary of acceptability, her sexuality is seen as intolerable. It seems that female sexuality is tolerable only when the female has no control over it. Imposed sexuality is acceptable but, when sexuality is a result of conscious desire, it becomes illicit.

Despite Psyche's curiosity being deemed dangerous and taboo; conversely, Cupid's sexual experimentation is scarcely reprimanded:

> [...] that winged son of [Venus], that most reckless of creatures, whose wicked behaviour flies in the face of public morals, who armed with torch and arrows roams at night through houses where he has no business, ruining marriages on every hand, committing heinous crimes with impunity, and never doing such a thing as a good deed.[266]

Although Cupid's sexual exploits are somewhat questioned, he is not castigated to the same extent as Psyche, despite the fact that he also takes part in the illicit relationship. Whereas Psyche's sexuality is associated with danger, Cupid's much more wanton behaviour is excused as the natural urges of a young man:

> [...] the hot-blooded impulses of his first youth must somehow be bridled: his name has been besmirched long enough in common report by adultery and all kinds of licentious behaviour. We must take away all opportunity for this and confine his youthful excess in the bonds of marriage.[267]

Male dominance and double standards are clear here. Though Cupid's own behaviour is much more 'licentious' than that of Psyche, because he is a man and a god, he does not have to answer for his behaviour. He is merely chided lightly and receives nothing like the cruel punishments that Psyche must endure.

Cupid's overt sexuality is mirrored in that of his mother, Venus. As goddess of love and sexuality, Venus is capable of using her own sexuality as power. She bribes men for information with the promise of kisses: 'by way of

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[265] *Ibid.* p. 97-8.
[266] *Ibid.* p. 73.
[267] *Ibid.* p. 105.

reward for his information he shall receive from Venus herself seven sweet kisses and an extra one deeply honeyed with the sweetness of her thrusting tongue'.[268] Unlike Psyche, Venus is in control of her sexuality, and more importantly has knowledge of sexuality; she understands its power and how to harness it. Nevertheless, it is for this reason that she is cast as the villain in the tale. Her overt sexuality is depicted as negative. Her femaleness is represented as being associated with her negative traits such as vanity and jealousy. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, it is her jealousy of Psyche's womanly beauty that ignites her passion for revenge at the start of the myth. Hence, whilst Cupid is exonerated of his irresponsible sexual behaviour, both Psyche and Venus are vilified and punished because of their sexual identities. In this way they can also both be considered as *others* because of their perceived unacceptable statuses.

The concept of otherness in 'Cupid and Psyche' is linked to sexuality, in particular to sexual deviances or unacceptability. Psyche, for instance, is denigrated because of the suggestion of her sexual relationship with a monster. The concept of bestiality, although only imagined in this case, is intolerable and, indeed, Venus attempts to exact revenge on Psyche by cursing her to fall in love with a monster. When the oracle predicts this, it leads to Psyche's exile: 'Let this girl be seized with a burning passion for the lowest of mankind, some creature cursed by Fortune in rank, in estate, in condition, someone so degraded that in all the world he can find no wretchedness to equal his own.'[269] The link between sexuality and animality evokes fear and disgust. This is a trend that pervaded Beauty and the Beast tales, and fairy tales in general, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the contemporary corpus to be discussed in the following chapter it will become evident that this particular notion is something which contemporary authors are striving to question and change.

Apuleius uses monstrous imagery to represent otherness, in particular, with regard to sexuality. Otherness, more specifically sexual otherness, is seen as negative in the myth. The phallic imagery of the serpent in the myth reminds the reader of this negativity. The animal-bridegroom incarnates monstrous

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[268] *Ibid.* p. 97.
[269] *Ibid.* p. 73.

sexuality and, through this, uncontrolled or deviant sexuality is negatively presented: 'an immense serpent, writhing its knotted coils, its bloody jaws dripping deadly poison, its maw gaping deep'.[270] The disturbing images of blood and the suggestion of being eaten serve to make a link between disgust and sexual intercourse.[271] In this way, Psyche is further cast into the realm of *other* because of her association with her serpent husband and an unacceptable sexual relationship.

However, ambivalence is also apparent in the myth, specifically with regard to the monster's sexuality because the monster is, in fact, Cupid, the most *beautiful* of all creatures. Cupid is 'the most soft and sweet of monsters'.[272] In this way, monstrosity is shown to be, as Marina Warner has described it, a condition in flux. How we define monstrosity is by nature relatively subjective and, thus, notions of monstrosity can be deemed fluid. The definition of monstrosity changes depending on historical and cultural contexts. What may be considered as monstrous to one person is 'normal' to the next. Hence, although Apuleius' myth vilifies Psyche for her association with the monstrous, it also reveals one of the core themes of Beauty and the Beast tales: appearances are not always what they seem.

Nevertheless, although Cupid is vindicated, Psyche is still an outcast in the myth. This is firstly due to her status of unmarried virgin and later again due to her illicit relationship and consequent illegitimate pregnancy. Whilst Cupid is not cast out from his social group of Gods, Psyche is disowned by her family. Because of their unequal sexes and statuses within the pantheon, the rules that govern acceptability are not the same for the two. It is notable that, in many recent rewritings of this tale type, both the Beast and Beauty must overcome their equal status of being *other*. In opposition to the injustice Psyche suffers, many authors, like Robin McKinley for instance, who will be discussed in the next chapter, play upon the concept of the two characters being connected by

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[270] *Ibid.* p. 85.

[271] I would argue that vampire tales, likewise, stem from the 'Cupid and Psyche' myth. Like vampires, Cupid is beautiful but, at the same time, he is a monster. The association with blood and being eaten represents deviance, particularly sexual deviance. Indeed, vampires are represented as creatures of the night that are associated with the erotic. This concept requires more research and could be an area of further investigation especially on account of the recent teen vampire explosion in literature and film, for example the Twilight series. Also, see Robin McKinley's novel *Sunshine* (2003) which is an interesting take on the vampire motif.

[272] Apuleius, p. 88.

otherness and therefore being equal. Whereas, in Apuleius' myth, otherness is viewed as an unwanted trait, in most contemporary versions of animal-bridegroom tales it is the contrary. Otherness, in many modern fairy tales, is represented as a virtue; not fitting in to the accepted standards of 'normality' is championed through the characters of both Beauty and the Beast, as in the work of Emma Donoghue for instance, as will be discussed later. This is a key reason, as I will argue, that many contemporary authors rewrite this type of tale. Women authors, particularly, question the unfair status of *other* that is imposed on Psyche and the injustice of her situation.

3.1.4   Rereading and Rewriting the Myth

In choosing to rewrite 'Cupid and Psyche' many women fairy-tale authors, throughout history to the present day, have endeavoured to question and redefine what is acceptable and just with regard to the representation of Psyche's treatment. When we reread 'Cupid and Psyche' from a feminist perspective, it is clear that the standards that apply to the two protagonists are unfair and unbalanced. As I will now demonstrate, the *conteuses* of seventeenth- and eighteenth- century France commented, in different ways, on this unfairness through their own renderings of the myth.

Women fairy-tale authors are connected through the fairy-tale lineage that they have collectively created. This is a lineage with a purpose: to right the wrongs of previous tales and to propose alternative endings. Many of the *conteuses* of the seventeenth century had a common agenda. For this reason, we can say that they form one interpretive community, to use Fish's term.[273] They read the texts in a similar manner; they interpreted the tales in the same way and, thus, rewrote the tales with a common ideal and objective. Subsequently the *conteuses* of the eighteenth century used the tales in a different way to promote their own changing ideologies. Three hundred years before their successors, who will be discussed in the next chapter, the *conteuses* started a tradition of righting wrongs within the context of their own social setting. In this manner, though centuries apart, the *conteuses* and contemporary Anglophone fairy-tale writers are part of the same interpretive community because of their related interpretive strategies. These interpretive communities

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[273] Fish, p. 167.

are what make up the lineage of fairy-tale rewritings by women that spans from the seventeenth century to today. Before discussing this in depth, however, let us examine how this lineage began. In order to do this, let us look at the rewritings which spawned from the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' that came about in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in France.

3.1.5   Mme Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy (c.1650-1705)

After the fairy tales of Charles Perrault, Mme d'Aulnoy's tales are the most widely printed in France and elsewhere. In spite of this, however, the fact remains that she is a relatively unknown figure outside of fairy-tale scholarship. In looking at d'Aulnoy's treatment of the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' in her fairy tale, *Serpentin Vert* (The Green Serpent), I will endeavour to understand the motivation behind the changes that d'Aulnoy made to the myth.

As the theoretical framework to be applied here involves taking the authors' social contexts into account as an influential factor on their work, it is pertinent to examine briefly each author's biography and any relevance this may have as regards their writing. Mme d'Aulnoy's scandalous life has inspired several romanticised biographies but some details still remain unverified. What we do know about her life for certain is that Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy was born into nobility around 1650 in Normandy and was the daughter of Monsieur le Jumel de Barneville and the Marquise de Gudane. Her father died when she was young and, following this, her mother, possibly motivated by financial reasons, married her off at fifteen to the Baron d'Aulnoy, a man of a lower social class, but who was very rich. Baron d'Aulnoy was around forty-five at the time of the marriage. His subsequent affairs with several men and women led to an extremely unhappy marriage for the young woman. Wishing to separate from her husband, Marie-Catherine, with the help of her mother, in a plot against the Baron, managed to have him accused of the crime of treason. However, under torture, her two false witnesses, one of whom was Monsieur de Courboyer, the lover of d'Aulnoy's mother, admitted having fabricated his claims. It is thought that the Marquise fled to Spain where she worked as a spy on behalf of her country. Mme d'Aulnoy, on the other hand, was sentenced to serve her penitence in a convent. It is said that, with the help of her friends and

her own ingenuity she managed to escape.[274] She later went on to set up her own salon on Rue Saint-Benoît, in Paris, where she became renowned among other fairy-tale authors for her wit and eloquence. She published many fairy tales during this time, one of which is *Serpentin Vert.*

3.1.6 *Serpentin Vert* **(The Green Serpent) (1698)**

D'Aulnoy's many *contes* include no less than ten occurrences of the animal-bridegroom theme.[275] It is a motif she returned to many times, as do many other female fairy-tale authors. Indeed, this is one of the main reasons for choosing this tale type as a focus for this thesis. What is more, d'Aulnoy's tales were quite lengthy in comparison to the folktales people were more familiar with before this time. Jacques Barchilon points out that her tales were, in many cases, more like novellas which were written from an aristocratic perspective[276], and this reflects d'Aulnoy's motivation for writing the tales. Rather than portray herself as an old crone story-teller, d'Aulnoy wished to create a space of expression whereby she could challenge notions of acceptability. In the following discussion of *Serpentin Vert*, I will examine how d'Aulnoy uses Apuleius' myth to convey her own message.

Whereas the 'Cupid and Psyche' myth is based on the love between two of the most beautiful people on earth, Mme d'Aulnoy reinvents the myth by inverting this theme, renaming the two protagonists Laideronnette, which literally means ugly young girl, and Serpentin Vert, a man who, due to a curse, has the appearance of a big green snake.[277] D'Aulnoy's tale begins with a feast to celebrate the birth of twin princesses. The King and Queen invite many fairies but forget to invite Magotine, an evil fairy, who is infuriated by this. She places a spell on one of the twins which destines her to become the ugliest woman in the world. The other fairies have time to save the other twin and so

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[274] Anne Defrance, *Les Contes de Fées et les nouvelles de Madame d'Aulnoy (1690-1698): L'Imaginaire feminine à rebours de la tradition* (Geneva : Librairie Droz, 1998), p. 14.

[275] See Jacques Barchilon, 'Adaptations of Folktales and Motifs in Madame d'Aulnoy's Contes: A Brief Survey of Influence and Diffusion', *Marvels & Tales*, 23.2 (2009) 353-64, for a discussion of the recurring motifs in d'Aulnoy's tales.

[276] *Ibid.* p. 355

[277] Mme d'Aulnoy was certainly influenced by Jean de La Fontaine's version of the 'Cupid and Psyche' myth, '*Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*' (1669), as she alludes directly to *un auteur à la mode* in her tale, which is almost certainly La Fontaine. He is an important contributor to the lineage of this type of tale. However, due to the parameters of this thesis, I am focusing on fairy-tale versions only, whereas La Fontaine's version is much longer.

the two girls are named Laideronnette and Bellotte.[278] Immediately Laideronnette starts to grow uglier by the moment. Years pass by and Laideronnette grows up intelligent but lonely. She lives alone in a tower so that she does not have to see anyone. One day, whilst walking, she comes across a green snake, Serpentin Vert. Though Serpentin Vert tries to talk to Laideronnette, she is terrified of him and flees. Following this, she accidentally gets swept out to sea. Serpentin Vert appears swimming alongside her boat, but she refuses his help because she finds him so repulsive. Laideronnette nearly drowns but manages to grab onto a piece of wood at the last moment and makes it ashore. When she gains consciousness she finds that she has been saved by Serpentin Vert. Laideronnette is horrified and when Serpentin Vert realises this, he leaves her and returns to the sea. Laideronnette falls asleep and when she wakes she finds that she has been transported to the magical kingdom of an unknown King. Although Serpentin Vert's identity as the invisible King is revealed to the reader, Laidronnette remains unaware that the King is the same Serpentin Vert that terrifies her. The invisible King visits Laideronnette at night, and is such a good companion over the years that she falls in love with him, and they get married. Serpentin Vert convinces his wife to wait seven years before looking at him. If not, the curse will start once again and he will have to endure a further seven years in the same state. Laideronnette compares her own marriage with that of 'Cupid and Psyche' and tries to resist falling prey to temptation like Psyche. However, like Psyche, she is convinced by her family that her husband must be a terrible monster and that she must look at him in secret during the night. When she discovers he is the same Serpentin Vert she once was so afraid of, she screams and wakes him. Serpentin Vert is heart-broken at Laideronnette's deception and flees. When Magotine hears of Serpentin Vert and Laideronnette's misfortune, she takes the opportunity to attack the kingdom. Laideronnette is taken to become Magotine's prisoner and servant. Magotine sets many difficult tasks for Laideronnette in order to torture her and threatens that if she is unable to carry them out, her husband will suffer. Serpentin Vert sends the *Protectrice* fairy to assist her. The final task that Magotine sets for Laideronnette is to find the 'waters of discernment'.

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[278] Bellotte is named so because she remains beautiful. The name literally means young beautiful girl.

Laideronnette decides to drink some of the water herself in order to become wiser. She also washes her face with the water and she regains her natural beauty. The *Protectrice* fairy then sends Laideronnette to an enchanted forest to hide for three years. After this time, Laideronnette returns to Magotine, who is enraged to find that Laideronnette is now beautiful. She tells her to go into Hades to retrieve the essence of long life from Proserpine. Laideronnette despairs as she believes the only way to get to Hades is to die. Once again, the *Protectrice* fairy helps Laideronnette by giving her a verse to recite. On saying the verse, Cupid appears and assists Laideronnette in getting to the underworld. On entering Hades, Laideronnette discovers that Serpentin Vert's original appearance has been restored and the two are reunited. Laideronnette collects the essence of long life from Proserpine who tries to tempt Laideronnette into taking some. Cupid reminds Laideronnette to avoid making the same mistake twice. He brings the couple back to Magotine, and endows Magotine with humanity, to the extent that she restores Serpentin Vert's kingdom and returns them there. In her moral at the end of the tale, d'Aulnoy references the dangers of curiosity.

Recognising the many changes that d'Aulnoy made to the myth, let us examine why d'Aulnoy transformed the tale in this manner. Did she consciously do this in order to highlight the role of women in seventeenth-century France, and, furthermore, can we say that the way she re-wrote this tale is a reflection of her social context? In examining the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' and Mme d'Aulnoy's re-writing *Serpentin Vert,* can we see evidence of her own interpretive community in the changes that she applies to the myth? I will tackle these questions throughout the following analysis of d'Aulnoy's tale.

3.1.7   Mme d'Aulnoy: Questioning the Myth's Morality

In Mme d'Aulnoy's rewriting of the 'Cupid and Psyche' myth, there is an evident move from mythology to social commentary. D'Aulnoy does this through the witty changes that she makes to the myth. The first obvious change is that of the protagonist's appearance: Laideronnette embodies the role of the Psyche character in this tale but, unlike Psyche, she does not fit into the expected gender role of a young woman because of her intense ugliness. Despite this difference, Laideronnette suffers the same unjust treatment as

Psyche. Mme d'Aulnoy, however, takes a step toward vindicating Laideronnette in endowing her with positive qualities such as pragmatism and intelligence. The first instance where this is apparent is during the scene where Laideronnette saves herself from drowning. D'Aulnoy humorously comments that mere philosophising will not save the princess: '*La pauvre princesse sentit que toute sa philosophie ne pouvait tenir contre un péril si évident. Elle trouva quelques morceaux de bois qu'elle crut prendre entre ses bras &, se sentant soulevée, elle arriva heureusement au pied de ce grand rocher.*'[279] ('The poor princess realized that mere philosophizing would not save her in such a catastrophe, and grabbed onto some pieces of the wreck, so she thought, for she felt herself buoyed in the water and fortunately reached the shore, coming to rest at the foot of a towering boulder.')[280] In allowing Laideronnette to take control and save herself, d'Aulnoy bestows on her a greater ability than Psyche from the tale's outset. In this way, it is clear to the reader that Laideronnette is not as weak or helpless as her predecessor. Nevertheless, she cannot be granted complete autonomy: she is still viewed in a negative light because of her unseemly appearance. Although she is intelligent, this does not compensate fully for Laideronnette's lack of conventional beauty. Indeed, there is a sense throughout the tale, that because d'Aulnoy manages to highlight this unfairness, she is questioning this type of thinking.

In the same way, d'Aulnoy also underlines the negative connotations that are linked to the concept of female curiosity. Therefore, although Laideronnette is depicted as more capable and wiser than Psyche, she is still unable to resist temptation. In presenting the reader with this paradox, d'Aulnoy highlights the contradictory nature of acknowledging women's intelligence or capabilities but still labelling them with the same stereotypes of naivety and foolishness. In this manner, Laideronnette is vindicated but cannot be exonerated fully. This is demonstrated by her naivety. Though she tries, she cannot hide her secret from her mother and sister:

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[279] Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, *Les Conte de Fées: édition du tricentenaire* (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1997), p. 531-32.
[280] Translation by Jack Zipes in *Beauties, Beasts, and Enchantment, Classic French Fairy Tales* (Kent: Crescent Moon Publishing, 2009 [1989]) p. 481. All subsequent translations of French tales in this chapter are also taken from this edition unless specified otherwise.

Elle lut & relut Psyché pour être en garde sur tout ce qu'elle devait répondre. Mais elle eut beau faire, elle s'égara en cent endroits: tantôt le roi était à l'armée, tantôt il était malade & de si mauvaise humeur qu'il ne voulait voir personne, tantôt il faisait un pélerinage, puis il était à la chasse ou à la pêche.[281]

(Over and over she read the story of Psyche to be completely on her guard regarding any questions that they might put to her and to make sure she would have the right answers. But the pains she took were all in vain - she made a hundred mistakes. Sometimes the King was with the army: sometimes he was ill and in no mood to see anyone: sometimes he was on pilgrimage and at others hunting or fishing.)[282]

Once again, however, d'Aulnoy attempts to endow Laideronnette with more fortitude than Psyche. In pleading her innocence to Magotine, Laideronnette simultaneously attempts to exonerate herself whilst also showing that she is not weak: '*Par quel crime t'avons-nous déplu, barbare Magotine? J'étais à peine au monde que ton infernale malédiction m'ôta ma beauté & me rendit affreuse*'.[283] ('What crime have we committed against you Magotine?' she exclaimed heatedly. 'No sooner was I born than your infernal curse robbed me of my beauty and made me horrible.')[284] Nonetheless, yet again, Laideronnette is unable to fully gain control over her own destiny due to the authority of Magotine and others in the tale. Indeed, even Laideronnette's own fairy god-mother reminds her of the blame that she must accept for her curiosity: '*le juste paiement de votre fatale curiosité: ne plaignez qu'à vous-même de l'état où Magotine vous réduit*'.[285] ('the just punishment for your fatal curiosity', the fairy said. 'Blame no one but yourself for the condition to which Magotine has reduced you').[286]What is more, not only is she held accountable for her own doomed destiny but she is also blamed for the unfortunate fate of Serpentin Vert: '*Vous mériteriez d'être tout le temps de votre vie privée de ses nouvelles, répondit la fée, car se peut-il rien de plus terrible que de réduire comme vous avez fait ce pauvre roi à recommencer sa pénitence?*'[287] ('You

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[281] D'Aulnoy, p. 542.
[282] Zipes, p. 488.
[283] D'Aulnoy, p. 549.
[284] Zipes, p. 492.
[285] D'Aulnoy, p. 549-50.
[286] Zipes, p. 493.
[287] D'Aulnoy, p. 551.

deserve never to hear any more about him for as long as you live', the fairy responded. 'Indeed, can anything be more terrible than having made him begin his penance all over again?')[288] Like Psyche, Laideronnette is punished for her curiosity. Though d'Aulnoy highlights the unjust situation in which Laideronnette is trapped and, in doing so, also highlights the unfair punishment of Psyche, she cannot vindicate either character completely. She does, however, provide us with a social commentary that underlines the unfair treatment of women in general in her own society. Indeed, the references to *pénitence* and later references to Eve, as we shall see, suggest a negative view of the Roman Catholic Church. D'Aulnoy spent part of her unhappy life in a convent and taking this into account her questioning of the church's negative view of women is understandable. In attempting to exonerate Psyche through Laideronnette, d'Aulnoy attempts to vindicate herself and her contemporaries in a society where a woman had to conform to extremely rigid parameters of acceptability with regard to fitting into a prescribed gender role. D'Aulnoy questions whether obedience and beauty should be the most important attributes that a woman could aspire to.

We can see this demonstrated in Laideronnette's final vindication. She chooses intelligence over beauty and is rewarded by the *Protéctrice* fairy for doing so:

> *Vous venez de faire une chose qui me plait infiniment. Vous saviez que cette eau pouvait embellir votre âme & votre personne. Je voulais voir lequel des deux aurait la préférence: enfin c'est votre âme qui l'a eue, je vous en loue, & cette action abrègera quatre ans de votre pénitence.*[289]
> (You've just done something that pleases me very much. You knew that this water could embellish your mind as well as your person. I wanted to see to which of the two you would prefer the most, and it was your mind. I praise you for it, and this act will shorten the term of your punishment by four years.)[290]

This scene, which occurs towards the end of the tale, conveys d'Aulnoy's moral message clearly. Intelligence should be held as a more important trait than beauty. Nevertheless, d'Aulnoy is also realistic in concluding the tale, as

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[288] Zipes, p. 494.
[289] D'Aulnoy, p. 551.
[290] Zipes, p. 494.

Laideronnette is endowed with both beauty and intelligence in the end. D'Aulnoy is not so idealistic as to suggest that beauty has no importance whatsoever but rather suggests that it should not be the only trait by which women are judged.

In a similar manner, d'Aulnoy also suggests that redemption is possible for the Venus character of the tale, the evil fairy, Magotine. Though she is '*vindicative*'[291], here we are given a reason for Magotine's bitterness which creates empathy for her. Whereas Venus' rage was the result of pure jealousy, d'Aulnoy shows us that Magotine has been treated unfairly in the past and her anger is justified to an extent:

> *Si vous aviez eu envie de m'avoir, répliqua la fée, vous m'auriez priée comme les autres. Il ne faut à votre cour que de jolies personnes, bien faites & bien magnifiques comme sont mes sœurs. Pour moi, je suis trop laide & trop vieille, mais avec cela, je n'ai pas moins de pouvoir qu'elles &, sans me vanter, j'en ai peut-être avantage.*[292]
>
> (If you had wished me to do so, the fairy replied, you would have sent an invitation to me as you did to the others, but you only want beauties with fine figures and fine dresses like my sisters here. As for me, I'm too ugly and old. Yet despite it all, I have just as much power as they. In fact, without boasting about it, I may even have more.)[293]

Magotine, like Venus, does not live up to the stereotypical feminine ideal because of her age and appearance. Her lack of youth and fecundity, alongside her ugliness, casts her outside the realms of acceptable femininity. However, in defending herself and stating that she has more power in comparison to the younger more beautiful fairies, Magotine highlights the unfairness of this type of attitude. What is more, d'Aulnoy endows her with humanity at the end of the tale and, thus, somewhat justifies her cruelty: '*Cependant sa présence inspira des sentiments si humains à la fée qu'encore qu'elle en ignorât la raison, elle reçut très bien ces illustres infortunés & faisant un effort de générosité surnaturelle, elle leur rendit le royaume de Pagodie*'.[294] ('His presence, however, inspired the fairy with such humane sentiments that she received

[291] D'Aulnoy, p. 545.
[292] *Ibid*. p. 526.
[293] Zipes, p. 477.
[294] D'Aulnoy, p. 560.

these illustrious unfortunates graciously, although she knew not why. With a supernatural effort of generosity she restored the kingdom of Pagodia to them'.)[295] However, if Magotine is defended, it is only because Amour (Cupid) grants her humanity. In this manner, she is not truly redeemed, because in reality her repentance is controlled by him. Redemption is possible for Magotine but it is only permitted when granted by Amour, a male god. Consequently, d'Aulnoy emphasises again the injustices faced by the female characters in the tale. As in the case of Laideronnette, Magotine is exonerated to a degree but never fully. Her status as ugly and old cast her outside the realms of acceptability as far as her role as a woman is concerned. In this manner, d'Aulnoy highlights that, in mythology, women are never fully vindicated. D'Aulnoy questions this thinking. She transmits the message to the lineage of women readers and writers that this ideology is something that needs to be put under scrutiny.

Likewise, d'Aulnoy also questions the notion of redemption and negative feminine attributes through the character of Bellotte. Bellotte, particularly, is depicted as a cruel character. Laideronnette, because of her ugliness, is perceived by her sister as unworthy and is treated in a dismissive manner: '*La princesse Bellotte lui donna pour présent de noces un vieux ruban qu'elle avait porté tout l'hiver à son manchon*'.[296] ('For coming to her wedding the Princess Bellotte gave her a gift of an old ribbon that she had worn all winter in a bow on her muff'.)[297] The disregard that Bellotte shows for her sister highlights upper-class society's hypocritical attitude. Indeed, Laideronnette is virtually disowned by her family because of her disfigurement. D'Aulnoy brings to light this shallowness and, in so doing, subversively critiques this way of thinking. However, d'Aulnoy, as in the case of Magotine, defends Bellotte to a degree. Whereas Psyche's sisters intentionally deceived Psyche into believing that her husband was a monster, Bellotte's warnings are genuine. Bellotte is sincerely trying to protect Laideronnette when convincing her that her husband is a monster: '*Quelle erreur! s'écria la reine Bellotte, l'on dit à Psyché qu'elle avait un monstre pour époux & elle trouva que c'était*

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[295] Zipes, p. 500.
[296] D'Aulnoy, p. 529.
[297] Zipes, p. 479.

l'Amour. Vous êtes entêtée que l'Amour est le votre, & assurément c'est un monstre.[298] ('What a delusion!' Queen Bellotte cried. 'They told Psyche that she had married a monster, and she discovered that it was Cupid. You're positive that Cupid is your husband, and yet it's certain he's a monster.')[299] Thus, once again, d'Aulnoy succeeds in somewhat vindicating a female character. Despite the cruelty that Bellotte shows to Laideronnette at the start of the tale, ultimately she does attempt to help her sister. Though her warnings are unfounded, the reader is convinced that Bellotte's motives are legitimate, unlike the sisters in Apuleius' myth.

In addressing the unfair treatment of the female characters in the tale, d'Aulnoy raises the issue of unfairness between the sexes and she further addresses this concern in her treatment of the male characters, Serpentin Vert and Amour. D'Aulnoy depicts the male characters as virtuous and caring. In stark contrast to Cupid's wanton sexuality, Serpentin Vert is timid, humble and polite: '*mon amour respectueux & craintif m'oblige à me cacher*'.[300] ('my feeling of respect and timidity oblige me to conceal myself.')[301] Also, Amour is represented as a kind character who helps Serpentin Vert and Laideronnette: '*l'Amour, qui se mêle de rendre quelquefois de bons offices aux malheureux, ayant prévu là-dessus tout ce qui était à prévoir, avait déjà ordonné que Serpentin vert deviendrait ce qu'il était avant sa pénitence*'.[302] ('Love, who sometimes employs himself by doing good deeds for the unfortunate, had foreseen all that was to be foreseen: he had already arranged that the green serpent become what he was before his punishment.')[303] In representing the male characters in this manner d'Aulnoy eradicates the misogynistic overtones that pervade Apuleius' myth. What is more, in absolving the female *and* male characters, d'Aulnoy creates a tale with a much fairer gender balance where redemption is possible for both sexes.

This redemption, in the case of the female characters in the tale, is sometimes ambiguous as we may still be tempted to be suspicious of Bellotte after the cruelty she shows towards her sister. Nevertheless, the changes that

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[298] D'Aulnoy, p. 543.
[299] Zipes, p. 489.
[300] D'Aulnoy, p. 538.
[301] Zipes, p. 486.
[302] D'Aulnoy, p. 559.
[303] Zipes, p. 499.

d'Aulnoy made to 'Cupid and Psyche' began a social commentary that grew into a dialogue between women authors and is still ongoing. What is notable is that the moral message as regards gender roles that d'Aulnoy suggests in *Serpentin Vert* has evolved and grown over time through the many rewritings that followed, for example Wendy Wheeler's 'Skin So Green And Fine', which will be discussed later.

Whilst questioning the gender roles in 'Cupid and Psyche', d'Aulnoy also transforms the myth from a tale about sexuality to a story that is based on morality. Although the theme of sexuality is still prominent in her version, d'Aulnoy brings to the fore issues of morality and ethics regarding relationships. By questioning Apuleius' myth, she launches a social commentary concerning the hypocrisy and unfairness towards women during her time. Indeed, when we take reception theory into account when examining d'Aulnoy's rewritings, it becomes clear that her aim is to re-imagine Apuleius' myth in order to represent her own values. In fact, as I will argue and demonstrate, this is the aim of all the rewritings to be discussed here. As mentioned previously, Jauss argues that there is always a reciprocal action between art and mankind and that this is the essence of the work. We cannot ignore the fact that the author's philosophy will be inherently embedded within their work and we can see this demonstrated in d'Aulnoy's rewriting. Her de-sexualisation of the myth and the addition of a more moral element reflect the restrictions imposed on her because of her cultural context. During this time anything that was deemed bawdy or licentious was not accepted and, what is more, as d'Aulnoy was a woman she was expected to show an element of *civilité* and refinement.

One feature of Apuleius' myth that d'Aulnoy retains is the imagery of invisibility and blindness. In order to maintain the concept of sexual awakening in her tale, d'Aulnoy does not remove this feature of the plot: Laideronnette, like Psyche, uses a lamp to discover Serpentin Vert's true appearance. D'Aulnoy thus alludes to Laideronnette's sexual awakening in a similar manner to Apuleius. Once again, we see the lamp representing the removal of naivety and the uncovering of sexual knowledge. However, the sexual imagery that d'Aulnoy uses is much tamer than that depicted in 'Cupid and Psyche'. We see evidence of this several times throughout the tale, for instance in how the

relationship between Laideronnette and Serpentin Vert is depicted:

'*L'amoureuse voix, assidue auprès d'elle, lui faisait sa cour dès qu'il était nuit, & la princesse se retirait de meilleure heure, pour avoir plus de temps à l'entretenir. Enfin elle consentait de prendre le roi invisible pour époux*'.[304] ('The enamored voice assiduously wooed her as soon as it turned dark, and the princess retired at an earlier hour in order to have more time to listen to it. Finally she consented to marry the invisible king.')[305] Although, Laideronnette's sexual desires are hinted at by d'Aulnoy, only when Laideronnette has married Serpentin Vert or 'the invisible King' as she knows him, are we allowed to openly acknowledge that a sexual relationship exists. Certainly, this is a direct consequence of d'Aulnoy's social context: overt sexual imagery would have been deemed licentious and, therefore, d'Aulnoy had no choice but to dilute the more sexualised scenes that appear in the myth. This is one aspect that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *conteuses* have in common. In fact, the tales produced in the eighteenth century were further de-sexualised because of changing values, especially regarding children. In this manner, this de-sexualisation together with the addition of pedagogical moral messages are an important feature of the *conteuses'* collective interpretive community, and, as will be demonstrated, it is precisely this aspect of the tale's history that contemporary authors are rebelling against and attempting to reverse.

Despite her slight de-sexualisation of the tale, d'Aulnoy does question the misogynistic attitudes than pervade 'Cupid and Psyche'. Whereas Cupid completely disregards Psyche's wellbeing, Serpentin Vert is caring and kind towards Laideronnette. In this manner, d'Aulnoy manages to provide the reader with an indirect commentary on the unbalanced nature of the sexual relationship between Cupid and Psyche. Notwithstanding, Laideronnette is still powerless in the tale, and this is a feature that d'Aulnoy also underlines. Like Psyche, Laideronnette has no control over her sexuality or her destiny. In an era where women were sold as commodities for marriage, a woman such as Laideronnette would have been deemed as worthless. In positioning Laideronnette as being just as powerless as Psyche, due to her ugliness,

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[304] D'Aulnoy, p. 541.
[305] Zipes, p. 487.

d'Aulnoy highlights the unjustness of both character's situations. What is more, by also presenting Serpentin Vert, a King, as an outcast because of his deformity, d'Aulnoy rebalances the power dynamic between Laideronnette and Serpentin Vert and positions them as equals in the tale. This alters the very unbalanced dynamic that is presented by Apuleius.

The hypocrisy of the unfair dynamic of Apuleius' myth is underscored throughout d'Aulnoy's rendering, especially through her commentary on the link between sexuality and curiosity that is evident in the myth. As in 'Cupid and Psyche', we are presented with revulsion mixed with desire on the part of Laideronnette: '*Elle l'aimait tendrement, mais elle abhorrait sa figure*'.[306] ('She loved him tenderly, but she abhorred his form.')[307] Here again, as in Apuleius, we see the ambiguity of simultaneous desire and revulsion. Although, unlike in Apuleius's myth, desire, in the case of d'Aulnoy's version, must be as a result of love, as desire outside of love would certainly have been unacceptable for a woman, in d'Aulnoy's time. Linked to this concept, is the notion of curiosity. Laideronnette, like Psyche, cannot resist her curiosity and she is punished for this: '*votre curiosité trop indiscrète vous coûte les larmes que vous répandez*'.[308] ('Your indiscreet curiosity has caused you these tears.')[309] Several times throughout *Serpentin Vert*, Laideronnette is reprimanded for her inability to resist temptation. Even l'Amour warns her once again, at the end of the tale, not to fall prey to the same lure: '*L'Amour, qui n'est pas novice, avertit la reine de se bien garder d'une curiosité qui lui serait encore fatale*'.[310] ('Love, who is no novice, warned the queen against indulging a curiosity that would again be fatal to her.')[311] Like Eve, Laideronnette is not forgiven for succumbing to natural curiosity and this is stressed by d'Aulnoy throughout the tale in order for the reader to empathise with Laideronnette.

Indeed, in d'Aulnoy's final *moralité* at the end of the tale, she references the first female mortal, Eve, who also gave into temptation, alongside Pandora and Psyche: '*Prenons-en à témoin la première mortelle: Sur elle on nous a*

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[306] D'Aulnoy, p. 543-4.
[307] Zipes, p. 489.
[308] D'Aulnoy, p. 546.
[309] Zipes, p. 491.
[310] D'Aulnoy, p. 560.
[311] Zipes, p. 499.

peint & Pandore & Psyché.[312] ('For witness the first created, From whom Pandora was designed, And Psyche imitated.')[313] This constant negative association between female sexuality and curiosity is similar to that conveyed in 'Cupid and Psyche', and, in fact, if we read d'Aulnoy's tale uncritically it would seem that she is espousing the same message as Apuleius and attributing blame to Laideronnette and womankind. However, if we read the tale as a subversive commentary on Apuleius' myth and on d'Aulnoy's own society in general, then the message highlights and critiques the unjust treatment shown to Laideronnette. Taking into account the removal of the misogynistic overtones from the tale, this would seem to be the case. Anne Defrance asserts that d'Aulnoy is reacting against the model of the myth which she sees as suggesting that a woman can only find salvation within an imposed model of patriarchal law, where men are monsters and women are slaves to their demands.[314] In rebelling against the myth and in subversively questioning the sexual norms of her day, as we will see, d'Aulnoy initiated a long lineage of other such subversive rewritings. This subversion is also apparent in d'Aulnoy's treatment of the theme of otherness.

Whereas otherness in Apuleius' myth is linked to sexuality, in d'Aulnoy's tale the theme is treated in such a way as to convey a question of morality concerning the cruel treatment of social outcasts and the hardships that come with not fitting into a prescribed model of social acceptability. Laideronnette is a social outcast from the beginning and even her family disown her. She is described as '*parfaite en laideur*'.[315] ([endowed with] 'perfect ugliness'.)[316] Through descriptions such as this, d'Aulnoy's sense of irony becomes apparent and the reader becomes aware of a satiric thread in the tale. All the way through d'Aulnoy subtly comments on the cruelty and lack of acceptance prevalent during her own time. Her reception of the tale naturally reflects the social issues of her time, especially those that directly affected her, such as the treatment of women. Likewise, as we shall see in the following chapter as regards modern versions of the same tale type, as rules of

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[312] D'Aulnoy, p. 560.
[313] Zipes, p. 500.
[314] Defrance, p. 247.
[315] D'Aulnoy, p. 527.
[316] Zipes, p. 478.

acceptability change over time, so do the adaptations of tales. What was unacceptable in d'Aulnoy's time is completely banal in the present day and, for this reason, contemporary authors have new and different social issues to address through their tales.

The main social problem that d'Aulnoy tackles in *Serpentin Vert* is the unfair treatment of her own sex and anyone that does not fit into the role of what is deemed to be acceptable. She plays with the concept of invisibility in order to highlight Laideronnette's unjust situation at the hands of her relatives. Because she is physically unacceptable and, thus, an outcast, she must be hidden:

> *Lorsqu'on vit Laideronnette, chacun prit un air chagrin, elle ne fut embrassée ni caressée par aucun de ses parents &, pour tout régal, on lui dit qu'elle était fort enlaidie & qu'on lui conseillait de ne pas paraître au bal, que cependant si elle avait envie de le voir, on pourrait lui ménager quelque petit trou pour le regarder.*[317]
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> (The moment they saw Laideronnette, their joy turned to distress. She was neither embraced nor hugged by any of her relatives. Indeed, the only thing they said to her was that she had grown a good deal uglier, and they advised her not to appear at the ball. 'However, if you wish to see it, we shall find some hole for you to peep through.')[318]

Laideronnette is treated as an outcast by her own family as they wish her not to appear in public, so much so that they deny her existence altogether. Due to her perceived abnormal status, as human but horrifically ugly, Laideronnette represents the *other*, and, hence, must be concealed and kept a secret. What is more, because Laideronnette is human but monstrous, she evokes fear by simultaneously being same and other, as Shildrick argues.[319] In being considered abject but part of a family at the same time, Laideronnette inspires fear and disgust in them. Her reappearance at this point in the tale also reminds them of the cruelty that they have already shown her. D'Aulnoy reinforces her moral message by reminding us that Laideronnette should not be judged by her own family in this way: '*elle connaissait avec une vive douleur qu'ils ne pouvaient la souffrir, qu'ainsi elle allait retourner dans son désert, où les*

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[317] D'Aulnoy, p. 528-9.
[318] Zipes, p. 479.
[319] Shildrick, p. 20.

arbres, les fleurs & les fontaines ne lui reprochaient point sa laideur lorsqu'elle s'en approchait'.[320] ('Painfully aware that they could not endure the sight of her, she told them that she would therefore return to the wilderness, where the trees, flowers, and springs she wandered among did not reproach her for her ugliness.')[321] In order for Laideronnette to find contentment, she must find a society in which she can exist as herself without persecution.

It is in the kingdom of Serpentin Vert that she manages to find this acceptance. Here, she is not judged solely on the basis of her appearance: '*il n'était plus question de laideur, de jupe zinzolin ni de ruban gras*'.[322] ('There was no longer talk of her ugliness, of zinzolin petticoats, or greasy ribbons.')[323] Indeed, the pagodines represent the voice of reason in the tale, pointing out the superficial and often ridiculous nature of society:

> *Comme il ne nous est pas permis de rire ni de parler dans le monde & que nous y voyons faire sans cesse des choses toutes risible & des sottises presque intolérable, l'envie d'en railler est si forte que nous en enflons, & c'est proprement une hydropisie de rire, dont nous guérisons dès que nous sommes ici.*[324]
>
> (Since we're not permitted to laugh or speak during our travels and are constantly witnessing all sorts of absurdities and the most intolerable follies, our inclination to laugh is so great that we swell up when we suppress it and cause what may properly be called risible dropsy. Then we cure ourselves as soon as we get home.)[325]

In using the pagodines to communicate her message, once again, Mme d'Aulnoy uses subversion to her advantage. Rather than state her views on the cruelty of society outright, she can use the pagodines to convey her message. She can criticise the society of which she is a member, but does not have to do so overtly. In this way, d'Aulnoy crafts a method of social commentary that became popular with other *conteuses* also. In a society where freedom of speech did not yet exist, caution had to be exercised when mocking or criticising the powerful. We can see this reflected in d'Aulnoy's realistic ending

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[320] D'Aulnoy, p. 529.
[321] Zipes, p. 479.
[322] D'Aulnoy, p. 536.
[323] Zipes, p. 484.
[324] D'Aulnoy, p. 537.
[325] Zipes, p. 485.

to the tale. In spite of d'Aulnoy's criticism of society's preoccupation with appearances, Laideronnette still must become beautiful in order for the tale to come to a credible conclusion. While she has gained the knowledge that intelligence is more important than outwardly appearances, she not only drinks the '*Eau de discrétion*' ('water of discretion'), but washes her face with it as well in order to become beautiful. In ending the tale in this manner, it could seem that d'Aulnoy is contradicting the message that ran throughout the rest of the tale but, reading the ending in light of d'Aulnoy's social context, it is apparent that she is merely being pragmatic. Despite her social commentary, she must concede that, in reality, appearances still matter, although we could argue that the tale's conclusion, in fact, demonstrates that true beauty is in the mind or, rather, should be.

However, this seems to be contradicted in d'Aulnoy's pragmatic portrayal of the relationship between the two protagonists. Though Laideronnette suffers injustices because of her perceived abnormality, she does not empathise with Serpentin Vert, though he suffers the very same fate as she: '*La mort me fait moins de peur que toi, [...] si tu cherches à me faire quelque plaisir, ne te montre jamais à mes yeux*'.[326] ('Death is less frightful to me than you are, [...] if you want to do me a kind favor, never let me set eyes on you again.')[327] Serpentin Vert must remind her of their similarities: '*Laideronnette, tu n'es pas seule malheureuse: vois mon horrible figure & sache que j'étais né encore plus beau que toi*'.[328] ('Laideronnette, you aren't the only unhappy creature. Look at my horrible form. And yet at birth I was even handsomer than you.')[329] Likewise, Laideronnette's fairy godmother must also reprimand her for her lack of sympathy towards Serpentin Vert: '*Apprends Laideronnette, qu'il ne faut point mépriser Serpentin vert & si ce n'était pas te dire une dureté, je t'assurerais qu'il est moins laid en son espèce que tu ne l'es en la tienne*'.[330] ('You had better learn, Laideronnette, that the green serpent is not to be despised. I don't mean to be harsh, but I assure you that he's less hideous in the

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326 D'Aulnoy, p. 531.
327 Zipes, p. 480.
328 D'Aulnoy, p. 529.
329 Zipes, p. 479.
330 D'Aulnoy, p. 531.

eyes of his species than you are in the eyes of yours.')[331] D'Aulnoy emphasises that even Laideronnette is not infallible and she is capable of the same cruelty that her family have shown to her. In this way, hypocrisy once again appears in the tale, this time in an unexpected manner. In presenting Laideronnette as an intelligent and pragmatic young woman who is not perfect, d'Aulnoy presents the reader with a believable protagonist who has realistic characteristics and faults. Though she is less foolish than Psyche, she is still capable of making errors in judgement. Ultimately, though, Laideronnette does come to accept Serpentin Vert in spite of his appearance and it is through the acquisition of this wisdom that she can then accept her own status as *other*. In this way, Serpentin Vert helps Laideronnette to accept her own otherness and in doing so is another voice of reason in the tale alongside the pagods: '*Vous me craindriez moins, si vous me connaissiez davantage: mais il est de la rigueur de ma destine d'effrayer tout le monde*'.[332] ('You'd fear me less if you knew me better, but it is my hard fate to terrify all those who see me.')[333] This feature of d'Aulnoy's tale has, indeed, become popular in contemporary animal-bridegroom rewritings. Often it is the creature that is most hideous who has the most humanity. In this way, fairy-tale authors have continued to question modern society's obsession with image. Though d'Aulnoy and modern fairy-tale authors are critiquing very different societies, superficiality is a common element of both. Indeed, it is this universality that makes animal-bridegroom type tales appealing to modern authors. Many of the themes that were pertinent in d'Aulnoy's time are still relevant today.

3.1.8   From Mythology to Social Commentary

On the one hand, Mme d'Aulnoy is certainly somewhat constrained in how she can express herself in her tales, as a woman of a certain social class. Also, taking into account her intriguing background, she probably wanted to avoid further scandal at this point in her life. In the toning down of the sexual references in the tale, such as the allusion to long discussions at night as opposed to Apuleius' more overtly referenced nightly sexual encounters, we see the moral codes of d'Aulnoy's time and place imprinted on the text. Though the

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[331] Zipes, p. 480.
[332] D'Aulnoy, p. 532.
[333] Zipes, p. 481.

reader is still aware of the sexual relationship between Laideronnette and Serpentin Vert, we are assured that, firstly, they are married and, secondly, any explicit references are rendered vague and ambiguous by d'Aulnoy. Notwithstanding, the sexual references are present in a subversive manner, and it is this tactic that d'Aulnoy uses throughout to relay her message.

Further to this, in the *moralité* or verse at the end of the tale, she refers to the fatal curiosity of Psyche and suggests that it is a struggle for the fairer sex to resist temptation. This could be read literally but it seems more an ironic observation that in Apuleius' myth and indeed, in mythology in general, it seems to always be the woman, however cursed by the gods, who is labelled as responsible for her own ruin. D'Aulnoy's tale is a wry take on the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche', whereby she crafts a critique of the prescribed gender roles enforced on women. By questioning perceived faults such as ugliness, d'Aulnoy underlines the unjust nature of how an unattractive woman can be cast as worthless. In this manner she rejects the notion of a woman as a commodity, and questions woman's place in her own society. She also questions the negativity that is associated with a woman who does not hide her sexual curiosity. In doing this, d'Aulnoy certainly forged a place for herself and the other *conteuses* as social commentators who subversively embedded relevant messages in their tales with regard to campaigning for the just representation and vindication of women. Anne E. Duggan points out that d'Aulnoy's tales were a space for expression, like metaphorical salons themselves. In this way, d'Aulnoy formed a means of transferring 'power from generation to generation of women'[334], which is still ongoing. Contemporary women authors now use the *conteuses*' tales as templates to create new spaces of expression.

Looking at the changes that d'Aulnoy makes to the tale, within the restrictions of her time, she transforms Apuleius's myth and gives us a social commentary on the place of love and marriage, and also on the place of women in her society. She inserts a kind of 'poetic justice' into the tale, righting wrongs done to Psyche and other women.[335] Hence, we can see, through the

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[334]Anne E. Duggan, 'Feminine Genealogy, Matriarchy, and Utopia in the Fairy Tale of Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy', *Neophilologus*, 82.2 (1998) 199-208, (p. 200).
[335] Barchilon, p. 358.

changes made by d'Aulnoy, that her reception of the tale is certainly influenced by her social and cultural background. Rewriting Apuleius's myth, for d'Aulnoy, is a method of questioning prevailing norms as regards gender and sexuality whereby she can promote her own values. In discussing her influence and diffusion, Jacques Barchilon asked in 2009 whether we will eventually recognise the vast influence that d'Aulnoy has had.[336] In the following analysis of tales, in this chapter and the next, I will trace d'Aulnoy's lineage and demonstrate that her tales certainly have influenced other female fairy-tale authors greatly from the seventeenth century to today and that the reception of her tales has an important role to play in this.

I will examine, in the following section, two tales that come from the same group (animal-bridegroom) as *Serpentin Vert*: Mlle Bernard's *Riquet à la Houppe* (Riquet with the Tuft) and Charles Perrault's version of the same tale, where we can see similar differences as those discussed in relation to Apuleius and d'Aulnoy.

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[336] *Ibid.*, p. 362.

3.2   One Tale, Two Messages

3.2.1   Mlle Catherine Bernard (1662 – 1712)

Like Mme d'Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard was a part of the salon fairy-tale circle.
She attended Mlle L'Héritier's salons.[337] Indeed, this is most likely where
Bernard came in contact with Charles Perrault and how the two came to write
versions of the same tale. She never married and, instead, decided to devote her
life to a literary career writing poems, novels and tragedies. Despite being a
relatively unknown literary figure nowadays, she was successful during her
time and is said to have been an influence on Voltaire.[338] Bernard's dark
version of this tale was published around the same time as Charles Perrault's.
However, Bernard is generally acknowledged to have written the tale first.
Jeanne Roche-Mazon asserts that her version of the tale was told in the court of
King Philippe of Spain II, for the amusement of Queen Elisabeth of France.[339]
As I will demonstrate, the tale, published at the very start of the first French
fairy-tale vogue, is one of the first animal-bridegroom type tales to subtly
question the vilification of the female character as dishonest or fickle, and no
doubt had an influence on the other *conteuses* who were also producing tales at
this time.

3.2.2   *Riquet à la Houppe* (Riquet with the Tuft) (1696)

In Catherine Bernard's version of *Riquet à la Houppe*, a wealthy man has a
daughter, Mama, who is intensely beautiful but so stupid that even her great
beauty cannot compensate for her lack of wits. Mama is a loner and social
outcast due to her idiocy. One day, Riquet à la Houppe, a man who is as
hideous as a monster, appears from underground and offers to endow her with
the gift of intelligence on the condition that she marry him in a year's time. As
Mama wishes that she could be intelligent, she agrees. She becomes bright and
engaging, and is no longer a social outcast. In fact, she falls in love with a
young man named Arada. Mama's life improves a great deal, but she dreads the
day that Riquet will return and ask her to marry him. One year to the day,

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[337] Mlle l'Héritier was Charles Perrault's niece and it is debated whether she influenced him or
the other way around. In all likelihood, they influenced each other as they were part of the same
social and literary circles.
[338] See Terri Windling, *Contes de Fées: The Literary Fairy Tales of France* www.endicott-
studio.com/rdrm/forconte.html [accessed 13/06/12].
[339] Jeanne Roche-Mazon, *Autour des Contes de Fées* (Paris: Didier, 1968), p. 61.

Riquet returns and asks Mama to marry him. He threatens that if she does not agree he will take away the intelligence that he gave her. The thought of returning to her former state seems so awful to Mama that she agrees to marry Riquet, despite the fact that she is in love with Arada and finds Riquet grotesque. Mama is miserable while living underground with Riquet and misses Arada. She cannot hide the hatred and revulsion that Riquet inspires in her. In order to ease her sadness she decides to meet Arada in secret. Her mood lifts and Mama becomes happy again due to her secret meetings with Arada. However, this causes Riquet to become suspicious. He conjures a new spell that dictates that Mama will only be intelligent at night and is an imbecile by day. Mama decides to trick Riquet by putting herbs under his nose at night that make him fall into a deep sleep so that she and Arada can enjoy secret nightly meetings. Disaster occurs when, one night, Riquet's servant finds the herbs and removes them. Riquet wakes, realises that Mama is missing and is furious. He finds her and Arada together. In order to punish Mama for her infidelity, Riquet touches Arada with his magic wand and he is transformed into his exact double so that Mama cannot distinguish the object of her love from the object of her hatred. Bernard ends the tale with the pessimistic conclusion that it does not matter in the end whether Mama can recognise her lover or not, because all lovers turn into husbands eventually. Though Mama remains intelligent, she is not permitted happiness. Due to the unknown origin of this tale, it has not enjoyed the same thorough analysis as many of Perrault's other tales, but it is generally acknowledged that it fits into the category of the animal-bridegroom tale due to the nature of the plot and the representation of the monstrous in the character of Riquet.

It is interesting to note the differences between Bernard's tale and Perrault's. Whereas in Perrault's tale, as we shall see, the young Princess is depicted as selfish in her indifference towards Riquet, Bernard paints the picture of a young woman who is unjustly forced into a situation that is out of her control. Perrault espouses the immateriality of appearances and the importance of love, while Bernard explores the more sinister issue of women being forced into loveless arranged marriages. These features will be outlined further throughout the analysis of both tales. Let us firstly examine the treatment of gender roles in Bernard's tale.

3.2.3   Reversal of the Animal-Bridegroom Tale

Gender roles, in Bernard's tale, are not as fixed as in some other tales of the same era and, by playing with perceived notions of femininity and masculinity, Bernard critiques the stereotypes that are traditionally applied to female characters in folk and fairy tales. Unlike the perfect heroine of many tales, Bernard's protagonist is so stupid that even her great beauty cannot compensate for her lack of intelligence. Whereas in most animal-bridegroom type tales, the heroine is perfect in almost every way, in *Riquet à la Houppe*, she does not correspond to the image of a proper young lady: '*[elle] était si stupide que la beauté même ne servait qu'à la rendre désagréable*'.[340] ('[she] was so stupid that her naturally beautiful features only served to make her appearance distasteful.')[341] In this way, this particular tale is, in fact, more realistic than most animal-bridegroom tales because none of the characters are perfect; they all have their good points and their weaknesses. Indeed, as we have just seen, this is prominent in d'Aulnoy's *Serpentin Vert* also. Bernard's pragmatic and balanced approach as regards acknowledging her characters' flaws can be seen repeated in the work of many of today's fairy-tale authors. As will be examined later, Robin McKinley, in particular, has developed this motif by choosing, like Bernard, to represent the heroine of the tale as physically unattractive or even as quite masculine in her appearance and characteristics.

Bernard further reverses the typical animal-bridegroom plot in her representation of the male protagonist. Whereas the male hero of most animal-bridegroom tales is beastly but honourable, in Mlle Bernard's tale Riquet is indeed ugly, but also quite cruel. He gives Mama, the female protagonist, an ultimatum which he thinly disguises as a choice: '*vous êtes encore libre et vous avez le choix de m'épouser ou de retomber dans votre premier état*'.[342] ('you're free to make a choice: marry me or return to your former condition.')[343] Although Riquet is aware of Mama's hatred for him, he nevertheless forces her to stay with him: '*Il avait trop d'esprit et il connaissait trop le dégout de Mama*

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[340] Mlle Bernard, 'Riquet à la Houppe' in *Si les fées m'étaient contées,* ed. by Francis Lacassin (Paris: Omnibus, 2003), pp. 275-9 (p. 275).
[341] Zipes, p. 95.
[342] Bernard, p. 276.
[343] Zipes, p. 97.

pour croire que l'habitude d'être à lui pût adoucir sa peine.[344] ('He had too much intelligence and knew Mama's repugnance for him too well to believe that she had become accustomed to being there and had become sweeter so suddenly.')[345] He is indifferent about Mama's unhappiness and is concerned only with his own desires. In highlighting this, Bernard reminds the reader of the unfair situation that Mama has been forced into and the unbalanced power relationship between Mama and Riquet. Mama must be submissive or face the punishment of returning to her former state and being regarded as an outcast once again.

Throughout the tale, Bernard provides the reader with a commentary on seventeenth-century French society, specifically the practice of families marrying their daughters off for financial or political gain. Frequently, through the voice of the narrator, Bernard empathises with Mama: '*Enfin, elle allait être à un mari qui, en ôtant à ce qu'elle aimait, lui aurait toujours été odieux, même quand il eût été aimable: mais, de plus, c'était un monstre*'.[346] ('In sum, by getting rid of the man she loved, she was going to marry a husband who would always be odious even when he was pleasant. Moreover, he was a monster.')[347] Bernard underlines Mama's unfortunate position as a commodity. Indeed, Mama reflects on her own worthlessness in the eyes of society when she concedes that if she is returned to her former state, Arada will surely no longer love her: '*l'idée de perdre son amant par le mépris qu'il aurait pour elle la toucha assez vivement pour la faire renoncer à lui*'.[348] ('The idea of losing her lover through the disdain he would show her provided such a powerful spur that she felt compelled to renounce him.')[349] We see the misogyny evident in 'Cupid and Psyche' reflected again when Riquet threatens Mama that if she does not stay with him, she will be returned to her father: '*je vous remettrai chez votre père*'.[350] ('I'll send you back to your father's house.')[351] If Mama refuses to stay with Riquet, her only other option is to return to live under the rule of another

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[344] Bernard, p. 278.
[345] Zipes, p. 99.
[346] Bernard, p. 277.
[347] Zipes, p. 98.
[348] Bernard, p. 277.
[349] Zipes, p. 98.
[350] Bernard, p. 277.
[351] Zipes, p. 97.

man. Bernard uncovers a dilemma that was very real for seventeenth-century French women. Autonomy was almost impossible, as without education, it was extremely difficult to earn a living and even then the choice of work was very limited. However, Bernard herself proved that this was possible as she never married and managed to support herself through her writing. Fairy tales, for the *conteuses*, were not only a means of expression but were, for some, also a means of escape from a type of life that they did not want. We can see Bernard's pursuit of independence reflected in the strong-willed character, Mama. Bernard's heroin is not weak and she does not submit to the will of Riquet. She does not wish to be controlled, although the pessimistic ending of the tale perhaps reflects the reality that women like the *conteuses* faced.

While many animal-bridegroom tales champion the importance of looking beyond appearances, Bernard's tale ponders Mama's situation in particular and the position of women in general, in seventeenth-century France. Bernard even references '*la haine*' that Mama harbours towards Riquet for controlling her. She is unable to gain control over her own destiny and this is a theme that recurs in almost all of the animal-bridegroom tales to be discussed here. The *conteuses* identified with this particular type of tale because of the inherent injustices represented in it. In rewriting the tale, Bernard and her contemporaries could make the tale their own and, in doing so, they could question the ideologies of the time. By portraying the unjust treatment of Mama, Bernard makes it clear that forcing young women into convenience marriages was pointless, the only results of which were unhappiness and infidelity. Her sympathy for women in this type of situation is clear from her portrayal of Mama, and we can see this again in the treatment of the theme of sexuality. In the same way that Mama has no control over her marital destiny in the tale, she also has little control over her sexual choices. When she does attempt to take control through her infidelity, it is viewed as negative and she is held responsible. Bernard, however, attempts to justify Mama's infidelity in the tale by highlighting the cruel treatment she endures at the hands of Riquet.

In order to do this, Bernard intertwines a commentary on sexual powerlessness, blame and danger in her tale in order to suggest that Mama's infidelity is justified in light of her helplessness. By highlighting the cruelty of

Mama's situation Bernard enables the reader to empathise with Mama and to exonerate her of her perceived crimes.

Lack of control is the first issue regarding sexuality that Bernard explores in her version of *Riquet à la Houppe*. Like Psyche, Mama has no real opportunities in the tale to make decisions for herself. Whilst reciting the verse in order to become intelligent, Mama states that she is ready to know how to love:

> *Toi qui peut tout aimer,*
>
> *Amour, si pour n'être plus bête,*
>
> *Il ne faut que savoir aimer,*
>
> *Me voila prête.*[352]
>
> ('Love can surely inspire me
>
> To help me shed stupidity.
>
> And teach me to care with sincerity
>
> If I have the right quality.')[353]

The verse could be read as a message regarding the ability of love to remedy people's faults. However, the verse is given to Mama by Riquet: the words are not her own. As such, from the very outset, Mama has no control over her choices as regards relationships and sexuality. She is forced to make various choices by being threatened and coerced by Riquet. When Mama does attempt to take control over these choices she is vilified and punished for it. For instance, she does attempt to take control of her own sexuality by orchestrating the secret meetings with Arada but, ultimately, she is unable to keep her secret and she is punished for her infidelity by Riquet. Mama is powerless to take control over her sexuality and is dominated by Riquet. She has to obey him or risk losing her intelligence. In this manner, Riquet has the power to control Mama and has the power to take away her capacity to even attempt to take control by taking away her capacity to think.

The theme of blame is found here as in Apuleius and d'Aulnoy. Mama's aversion towards Riquet only serves to remind him of his own monstrous appearance and, because of this, Riquet sees Mama as being the cause of his unhappiness. He does not acknowledge at any time, though, that he is likewise

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[352] Bernard, p. 275.
[353] Zipes, p. 96.

the cause of her sorrow: '*Cette aversion lui reprochait sans cesse sa difformité et lui faisait détester les femmes, le mariage et la curiosité*'.[354] ('This aversion was a constant reproach to his deformity and made him detest women, marriage and curiosity.')[355] Mama's sexual curiosity is referenced here but since it is directed at Arada rather than Riquet, this again only serves to remind Riquet that, though Mama exhibits desire, it will never be directed towards him. In this way, Mama's sexual curiosity becomes particularly dangerous in this tale because it leads to infidelity and her eventual demise. What is more, Mama constantly has to defend herself from blame throughout the tale, not only from Riquet but also from Arada. Despite having been forced into the marriage with Riquet, Mama still has to defend her fidelity to Arada: '*elle pensa qu'il fallait convaincre Arada par ses propres yeux qu'elle n'était pas inconstante*'.[356] ('she became convinced that she had to make Arada see with his own eyes that she was not unfaithful.')[357] Though Mama is faithful to Arada and helpless to change her situation, she still bears blame and must repent to both Riquet and Arada.

Once again, we see danger and sexuality linked. Here, Bernard associates these concepts with infidelity. When Riquet learns of Mama's unfaithfulness, he is furious: '*il chercha sa femme en furieux*'.[358] ([he] 'searched for his wife in a rage.')[359] The clandestine meetings between Arada and Mama must be hidden and take place underground at night. Here, Bernard alludes to the fact that infidelity, especially on a woman's part, was wholly unacceptable. The fact that Mama initiates the infidelity serves to highlight the association with danger and women's sexuality. It is something illicit that must be concealed or else Mama risks punishment. She is also depicted as cunning when she tricks Riquet and she is totally conscious in her decision to deceive him. Here is Mama's attempt, as mentioned above, to take control over her own sexuality: '*ces rendez-vous tacites continuèrent si longtemps que leur disgrâce ne servait qu'à leur faire goûter une nouvelle sorte de bonheur*'.[360] ('their

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[354] Bernard, p. 278
[355] Zipes, p. 98.
[356] Bernard, p. 278.
[357] Zipes, p. 98.
[358] Bernard, p. 279.
[359] Zipes, p. 100.
[360] Bernard, p. 279.

meetings continued for such a long time that their misfortune now enabled them to taste a new kind of happiness.')[361] Furthermore, Mama enjoys her secret trysts with Arada and feels no remorse for misleading Riquet. This is the only point in the tale when Mama experiences happiness and freedom, when she is not under the total dominance of Riquet.

Because of this plot-line, we could liken this tale to *Barbe Bleue* (Bluebeard). Like many contemporary rewritings of *Barbe Bleue*, Bernard shifts blame away from the girl and, rather, highlights the injustice of being trapped in a situation over which one has no control, thus justifying Mama's seeming unreliability. Though Mama wilfully deceives her husband, Bernard reminds the reader that Mama was forced to marry Riquet in the first place and that she, therefore, cannot be held accountable for her actions. In this way, Bernard reverses the traditional roles in animal-bridegroom tales.

We see another alteration of traditional roles in how both Riquet and Mama are outcasts in this tale, albeit for different reasons. Riquet, like all animal-bridegrooms is represented as *other* due to his monstrous physical appearance: '*[il était] un homme assez hideux pour paraître un monstre*'.[362] ('[he was] a man hideous enough to be a monster.')[363] However, unlike most animal-bridegroom characters Riquet's actions are as monstrous as his form. By representing Riquet in such a manner, Bernard justifies Mama's disgust. She is not superficial in her hatred of Riquet as he is not only hideous in his appearance but he is also a cruel, unlikeable character in general.

Mama is *other* because of her lack of intelligence. Though she is incredibly beautiful, her stupidity results in her being outcast. In fact, she is regarded as so abnormal that it is even thought that she lacks a soul. As discussed in regard to Shildrick and Kristeva, to label a person as soulless and therefore, lacking humanity is to cast them as abject and outside the realms of acceptability. Here, we see Bernard highlight the fact that Mama is heartlessly cast out of her own society. However, when Riquet endows her with the gift of intelligence, this changes: '*Les amants vinrent en foule: Mama ne fut plus*

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[361] Zipes, p. 99.
[362] Bernard, p. 275.
[363] Zipes, p. 95.

solitaire ni au bal ni à la promenade'.[364] ('Lovers came in droves. Mama was no longer alone at the balls or during promenades.')[365] Unfortunately for Mama, after she is granted this wish, she then has to live in exile, underground, with Riquet. Just as her freedom is gained, it is taken from her in another way. We can again interpret this as Mlle Bernard's commentary on women's place in society and their lack of control over their own lives. Mama represents the *conteuses* and women in general during Bernard's time. Indeed, many of them, such as d'Aulnoy, endured arranged marriages in a similar manner.

There is a strong moral message in this tale that is very different from the others in this corpus. In most animal-bridegroom type tales the moral message embedded in the tale is that appearances should not matter, and that we should not judge people solely based on how they look. It seems that Bernard, in her tale, wished to remind her readership that neither can we judge people solely on their level of intelligence or unfairly stereotype someone because of their gender. There are other important attributes that a person can possess, such as kindness and honesty. Riquet, in this tale, represents the antithesis of all these positive attributes. He is a spiteful character who will not allow Mama and Arada happiness. Bernard finishes her tale on an extremely pessimistic note whereby Riquet transforms Arada to look exactly like him so that Mama will never be able to tell who is her lover and who is her captor:

> *[…] il toucha l'amant d'une baguette qui le rendit d'une figure semblable à la sienne: et ayant fait plusieurs tours avec lui, Mama ne le distingua plus de son époux. Elle se vit deux maris au lieu d'un et ne sut jamais à qui adresser ses plaintes, de peur de prendre l'objet de sa haine pour l'objet de son amour.*[366]
>
> (He touched the lover with a wand that transformed his shape into one exactly like his own. And after looking back and forth and back and forth, Mama could no longer distinguish who her husband was. Thus she lived with two husbands instead of one, never knowing whom she should address her lamentations for fear of mistaking the object of her hatred for the object of her love.)[367]

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[364] Bernard, p. 276.
[365] Zipes, p. 96.
[366] Bernard, p. 279.
[367] Zipes, p. 100.

This ending is a twist on most animal-bridegroom tale endings. Where we would expect to see the beastly husband transformed back into human form, here he punishes another by giving him the same beastly appearance. Bernard's final wry line of the tale is markedly cynical. She remarks that, in the end, all lovers become husbands and, so, Riquet's curse does not matter in any case: '*Mais peut-être qu'elle n'y perdit guère: les amants à la longue deviennent des maris*'.[368] ('But perhaps she hardly lost anything there. In the long run lovers become husbands anyway.')[369]

Catherine Bernard's version of this tale is much more cynical than Charles Perrault's. It provides us with a scathing commentary on marriage practices and men's attitudes of the time. Whereas Perrault championed the role of love in marriage, Bernard was much more pragmatic in admitting that at that time love had, in fact, little to do with marriage. In taking a pragmatic approach in her tale's conclusion and vindicating Mama, despite her infidelity, Bernard underlined the unfair situation that many women in her day faced. We will see that in his version, while he was more idealistic as regards love's civilising power, Perrault was also less forgiving towards a girl who does not keep her word.

3.2.4   Vindication of Female Sexuality

Taking Mlle Catherine Bernard's social background into account, it becomes clear that writing tales for her was more than a mere past-time. By writing, she was able to express herself creatively and support herself financially. It is fitting, then, that we can see in her version of *Riquet à la Houppe*, a critique of marriage and of the patriarchal view that women must marry or spend their lives as miserable spinsters. We can see evidence of mutual influence and reception between Bernard and the other *conteuses*. Bernard surely influenced d'Aulnoy who went on to write a number of different animal-bridegroom fairy tales and likewise, d'Aulnoy's tales, being so well known at the time, must have been an influence on the writing of every other *conteuse* including Bernard. Indeed, Ruth B. Bottigheimer notes that both d'Aulnoy and Bernard among others were regular attendees at Mme de Lambert's elegant salon in

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[368] Bernard, p. 279.
[369] Zipes, p. 100.

Paris around 1692.[370] Thus, we can assert that d'Aulnoy and Bernard are members of the same interpretive community as other female fairy-tale authors from the time. Because of their common social context, their reception of the tale was similar and, what is more, their subsequent response, in the form of rewriting the tale, was also alike in that they seem to have a common agenda to promote within their tales. Indeed, as referred to previously, Jauss argues that we must acknowledge that literature does not exist in a vacuum.[371] Texts and authors will undoubtedly have an influence on each other and, it is clear that d'Aulnoy and Bernard must have been inspiration for each other. Both authors subversively question the unfair treatment of their female protagonists and, more broadly, they also query dominant patriarchal ideologies within society through the medium of their tales. This is evidenced in the portrayal of the female characters: in vindicating the actions of Laideronnette and Mama, respectively, d'Aulnoy and Bernard vindicate females in general and attempt to rescue women and their sexuality from the realm of the dangerous, the illicit, the forbidden, the *other*. What is more, d'Aulnoy and Bernard strove to vindicate themselves (d'Aulnoy from the scandals in her life and Bernard from her way of life being regarded as failure) and to position themselves as artists who could express ideas and opinions without oppression. In the following section on Charles Perrault's version of *Riquet à la Houppe*, I will examine the pertinent differences between his version and Bernard's, and I will argue that Perrault, because of the opposing moral messages embedded in his tale, cannot be considered a part of the same interpretive community as Bernard and the other *conteuses*. In addition, this contrast justifies the inclusion of only women fairy-tale authors in the contemporary corpus to be examined as part of this investigation.

3.2.5   Charles Perrault (1628 – 1703)

Charles Perrault was an important member of the upper class and was appointed First Secretary in the Department of Buildings and eventually became *Contrôleur Général de la Surintendance des Bâtiments*. He was architectural advisor to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's chief minister, and

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[370] Ruth B. Bottigheimer, 'Elevated Inceptions and Popular Outcomes: The *Contes* of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault' (Faro: Centro de Estudos Ataíde Oliveira, 2001), p. 2. < http://hdl.handle.net/10400.1/1434> [accessed 26 March 2013].
[371] Jauss, p. 23.

was responsible for conceptualising public monuments.[372] During this time he also established himself as a poet and gained an interest in literature[373]. In 1671, he was elected as a member of the *Académie Française* where he championed modern French writers with a 'progressive outlook'[374]. Through this he became involved in the famous *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. Perrault believed that France and Christianity could only progress if 'they incorporated pagan beliefs and folklore and developed a culture of enlightenment'.[375] He published a number of writings supporting the moderns against those who preferred to imitate the older classical style. Both Perrault and his niece L'Héritier argued that the literary fairy tale demonstrated the superiority and importance of indigenous French culture.[376]

Perrault published his collection of fairy tales, *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* in 1697. This collection included literary versions of *La Belle au bois dormant* (Sleeping Beauty), *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (Little Red Riding Hood), *Barbe Bleue* (Bluebeard), *Cendrillon* (Cinderella), *Le Petit Poucet* (Tom Thumb), *Riquet à la Houppe* (Riquet with the Tuft), *Le Chat Botté* (Puss in Boots) and *Les Fées* (The Fairies). According to Zipes, he 'transformed the stories to address social and political issues as well as the manners and mores of the upper classes'.[377] Perrault's tales have survived centuries and are still much loved around the world today. Zipes attributes Perrault's specific success to the fact that he was the greatest stylist. The fact that these tales are still so popular today is testament to the intransience of Perrault's writing and his talent 'which combined simplicity and artifice'.[378] As we will see, however, some of the moral messages embedded in Perrault's tales are questionable. As I will argue, Perrault's sex naturally sets him apart from the *conteuses*. He did not face the same challenges as the women fairy-tale authors of the seventeenth- and

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[372] Bottigheimer, p. 2.

[373] Jack Zipes, 'Charles Perrault' in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales – The Western Fairy Tale tradition from Medieval to Modern* ed. By Jack Zipes , (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 379-81 (p. 379).

[374] Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 402.

[375] Zipes, 2000, p. 179.

[376] Lewis Carl Seifert, 'France' in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales – The Western Fairy Tale tradition from Medieval to Modern* ed. By Jack Zipes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 174-87 (p. 177).

[377] Zipes, 2000, p. 180.

[378] Carpenter and Prichard, p. 403.

eighteenth- centuries and, therefore, his tales reflect his very different viewpoint.

3.2.6 *Riquet à la Houppe* (**Riquet with the Tuft**) (**1697**)

Among Perrault's *contes*, *Riquet à la Houppe* is the only tale that cannot be traced back to a popular origin, that is to say, to a folkloric origin. Jeanne Roche-Mazon contends that this particular tale has a literary and, moreover, aristocratic origin.[379] This certainly could be the reason behind the strict gender roles that we see portrayed in it. Under the reign of Louis XIV, gender roles were strictly enforced, especially in aristocratic society, and we can see this reflected in Perrault's *Riquet à la Houppe*. Perrault's tale is similar to Bernard's although, there are some important differences. The tale begins with a Queen giving birth to a son who is so ugly that his parents fear that he is not even human. To console them, a fairy assures them that, though he is ugly, he will be an extremely intelligent young man and will have the gift to endow the woman he loves with intelligence as well. Meanwhile, a neighbouring Queen gives birth to two daughters. The eldest is extremely beautiful but unintelligent whilst the youngest is intelligent but intensely ugly. To console the Queen, the same fairy who gave Riquet his gift, promises that the beautiful Princess will have the gift to render another person as beautiful as she is. As the years go by, both sisters grow stupider and uglier respectively. People would wish to spend time with the beautiful sister but, on realising her stupidity, they would gather round the intelligent sister to hear her speak. One day, lamenting her stupidity, the eldest Princess encounters Riquet à la Houppe. He tells her that he will endow her with the gift of intelligence, but she must agree to marry him in one year. The Princess agrees and at once becomes exceptionally intelligent. During the following year the Princess enjoys her new-found intelligence and meets many suitors. She completely forgets about the condition of the deal that she has made with Riquet. One year to the day, however, Riquet appears and asks her to marry him. The Princess attempts to reason with Riquet that she was so unintelligent when she agreed to the deal that she was not capable of making such a promise and should not be held accountable. Riquet assures the Princess that she has the ability to help him become handsome. The Princess makes a

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[379] Roche-Mazon, p. 61.

wish and, with that, Riquet becomes the most handsome man in the world. They marry and live happily ever after. At the end of the tale, we are told that it was the power of love alone that caused Riquet's metamorphosis and Perrault provides us with a *moralité* explaining that when we love someone, we are blind to their faults.

3.2.7 Reinforcing Stereotypes

Gender roles in *Riquet à la Houppe* are presented in a rather stereotypical manner. The beautiful princess is an imbecile and the ugly Princess is intelligent. What is remarkable about the description of the two Princesses is that neither is given a name. They are referred to only as the eldest and youngest or the beautiful Princess and the ugly Princess. This gives the impression, from the outset, that the Princesses are anonymous and unimportant. Perrault uses the Princesses to represent women in general so their individual identity is irrelevant. In this way, Perrault's tale really revolves around Riquet. As Elizabeth Wanning Harries also points out: 'the story begins and ends with Riquet: his birth, his plans, and his power'.[380] Therefore, the female characters in the tale take on an incidental role. They help guide the tale to its conclusion but, in essence, they are interchangeable and expendable, as we will see.

Reading the tale today, this type of stereotypical portrayal could be interpreted as ironic. However, taking into account Perrault's *moralité* at the end of the tale, it would seem that Perrault felt these stereotypes were valid and that they demonstrated the point he wished to make. By pointing out that people would crowd around the beautiful Princess to admire her but after a little while they would grow bored and move on to the intelligent Princess to hear her speak, Perrault reminds us that intelligence is a greater virtue than beauty and that appearances only matter for a short while, as personality is a more attractive trait:

> *D'abord on allait du côté de la plus belle pour la voir et pour l'admirer,*
> *mais bientôt après, on allait à celle qui avait le plus d'esprit, pour lui*
> *entendre dire mille choses agréables: et on était étonné qu'en moins d'un*

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[380] Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *Twice Upon a Time, Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 37.

quart d'heure l'ainée n'avait plus personne auprès d'elle, et que tout le monde s'était rangé autour de la cadette.[381]

(At first everyone gathered around the more beautiful girl to admire her, but soon left her for the more intelligent sister to listen to the thousand pleasant things she said. In less than a quarter of an hour, not a soul would be standing near the elder sister while everyone would be surrounding the younger.)[382]

However, he is also, perhaps inadvertently pointing out that neither sister fits into the ideal of what a woman was expected to be, both beautiful and charming. Neither sister is content with her own attributes: '*elle eût donné sans regret toute sa beauté pour avoir la moitié de l'esprit de sa sœur*'.[383] ('[she] would have willingly given up all her beauty for half the intelligence of her sister.')[384] Perrault would have us believe that intelligence is valued more highly than beauty although the ugly but intelligent sister is hardly mentioned at all after the start of the tale and the plot follows the quest of the beautiful sister in search of *esprit*. In this way, Perrault says one thing at the start of the tale but it is, perhaps not surprisingly, the beautiful Princess who marries in the end.

It is also noteworthy how male gender roles are depicted in Perrault's tale. Prince Riquet's ugliness, though seen as inconvenient, is not as much of a problem as the female ugliness in the tale. Though Riquet is the animal bride-groom character in the tale, Perrault reminds us more than once of his politeness and intelligence: he speaks to the Princess with '*tout le respect et toute la politesse imaginable*'.[385] ('all the respect and politeness imaginable.')[386] Contrary to this, the beautiful Princess, having been endowed with intelligence by Prince Riquet, is portrayed as scheming and dishonest. The depiction of this relationship gives us an insight into Perrault's views on marriage and women in general. Though he famously defended women, here, he depicts the relationship between husband and wife in a very clichéd manner. The wife is deceptive and ungrateful whilst the husband is the voice of intellect and reason. These characteristics are represented in a clear-cut manner in

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[381] Perrault, p. 182.
[382] Zipes, p. 53.
[383] Perrault, p. 182.
[384] Zipes, p. 53.
[385] Perrault, p. 183.
[386] Zipes, p. 53.

Perrault's tale. Having promised to marry Riquet in return for the gift of intelligence, the beautiful Princess proceeds to attempt to evade her commitment now that she has gotten what she wants, reasoning that the promise should no longer count as it was made when she was *une bête*, and incapable of understanding and, hence, making such a promise:

> '*Vous savez que, quand je n'étais qu'une bête, je ne pouvais néanmoins me résoudre à vous épouser: comment voulez-vous qu'ayant l'esprit que vous m'avez donné, qui me rend encore plus difficile en gens que je n'étais, je prenne aujourd'hui une résolution que je n'ai pu prendre dans ce temps-là ?*'[387]

> ('As you know, when I was no better than a fool, I could not decided whether I should marry you. Now that I have the intelligence that you've given me and that renders me much more difficult to please than before, how can you expect me to make a decision today that I couldn't make then?')[388]

However, Riquet, of course, is the model of honesty and dignity: '*Vous me voyez, dit-il, Madame, exact à tenir ma parole, et je ne doute point que vous ne veniez ici pour exécuter la vôtre, et me rendre, en me donnant la main, le plus heureux de tous les hommes.*'[389] ('As you can see, madam,' he said, 'I've kept my word to the minute, and I have no doubt but that you've come here to keep yours. By giving me your hand, you'll make me the happiest of men.')[390] Throughout Perrault's tale, men and women are depicted in a fixed, stereotypical fashion. Whilst men are represented as honest, gracious and virtuous, women are depicted as scheming, dishonest and greedy.

Although on the surface his tale seems to promote the unimportance of appearances and the superiority of intelligence, Perrault's plot does not reflect this. The ugly Princess, though she has the same characteristics as Riquet, is written out and does not appear again after the start of the tale. She is invalidated as a character because of her appearance, whereas Riquet manages to overcome this obstacle. The beautiful Princess is represented as scheming and only marries Riquet, in the end, because he is transformed into a handsome

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[387] Perrault, p. 186.
[388] Zipes, p. 55.
[389] Perrault, p. 185-6.
[390] Zipes, p. 55.

Prince. It would seem that the stereotypical gender roles in the tale reflect the views of the time and although Perrault writes as if he is questioning these mores, he, in fact, further reinforces them.

The treatment of sexuality in Perrault's tale also reinforces stereotypical binaries. The tale revolves around the issue of dominance and submission. Throughout the tale, as we have just seen, Perrault depicts Riquet as kind and virtuous and the Princess as scheming. These representations remind us of the misogynistic overtones that run through the tale and give us an insight into Perrault's attitudes towards women. This is evident, for instance, in how the marriage between the two protagonists is represented. Perrault portrays the marriage in a very different manner from Catherine Bernard. Whereas Bernard empathises with the plight of Mama, Perrault has no sympathy for the girl. According to his tale, the Princess made a promise and she must keep it. The fact that she does not want to marry Riquet becomes irrelevant in Perrault's tale. She is forced into submission and has no control over her sexual choices. Marriage for the Princess in Perrault's tale is an ordeal that must be endured as opposed to a life choice although it is not shown in this manner. Rather, the reader is expected to accept that this is tolerable.

We see the Princess gain some control in the tale in her ability to endow Riquet with the gift of beauty: '*Je souhaite de tout mon cœur que vous deveniez le Prince du monde le plus beau et le plus aimable*'.[391] ('I wish with all my heart that you may become the most charming and handsome prince in the world.')[392] In this way she has a choice in how she can view Riquet; she can choose to continue to see him as hideous or she can transform him into a handsome Prince. Despite this though, the Princess is still essentially powerless: she has no choice as regards who her partner is. Therefore, what is described as a choice is in actual fact the Princess's mere acceptance of her situation. This is apparent again when we are told that, in fact, love is responsible for Riquet's metamorphosis: because the Princess has fallen in love with him, his deformities are no longer perceptible to her:

> *Quelques-uns assurent que ce ne furent point les charmes de la Fée qui opérèrent, mais que l'amour seul fit cette Métamorphose. Ils disent que la*

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[391] Perrault, p. 187.
[392] Zipes, p. 56.

Princesse ayant fait réflexion sur la persévérance de son Amant, sur sa discrétion, et sur toutes les bonnes qualités de son âme et de son esprit, ne vit plus la difformité de son corps, ni la laideur de son visage, que sa bosse ne lui sembla plus que le bon air d'un homme qui fait le gros dos: et qu'au lieu que jusqu'alors elle l'avait vu boiter effroyablement, elle ne lui trouva plus qu'un certain air penché qui la charmait: ils disent encore que ses yeux, qui étaient louches, ne lui en parurent que plus brillants, que leur dérèglement passa dans son esprit pour la marque d'un violent excès d'amour, et qu'enfin son gros nez rouge eut pour elle quelque chose de Martial et d'Héroïque.[393]*

(There are some who assert that it was not the fairy's spell but love alone that caused this transformation. They say that the princess, having reflected on her lover's perseverance, prudence, and all the good qualities of his heart and mind, no longer saw the deformity of his body nor the ugliness of his features. His hunch appeared to her as nothing more than the effect of a man shrugging his shoulders. Likewise, his horrible limp appeared to be nothing more than a slight sway that charmed her. They also say that his eyes, which squinted, seemed to her only more brilliant for the proof they gave of the intensity of his love. Finally, his great red nose had something martial and heroic about it.)[394]

Yet, this again highlights her lack of control. The Princess has no choice but to marry Riquet and so, she has no other choice but to accept his deformities. Her delusion that Riquet's ugliness has disappeared is more so the result of her tolerance of a very unpleasant situation.

The patriarchal nuances are once more perceptible at the end of the tale. In the same way that the tale started, it ends centring on Riquet: '*Dès le lendemain les noces furent faites, ainsi que Riquet à la Houppe l'avait prévu, et selon les ordres qu'il en avait donnés longtemps auparavant*'.[395] ('The wedding took place the next morning, just as Riquet with the Tuft had planned it.')[396] His wishes and desires are fulfilled and this is deemed a satisfactory enough ending by Perrault and so the tale ends. The issue of the Princess's happiness, we are led to believe, has also been resolved as she has fallen in love with

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[393] Perrault, p. 187.
[394] Zipes, p. 56-7.
[395] Perrault, p. 187.
[396] Zipes, p. 57.

Riquet and they will live happily ever after. On re-reading the tale though, it is difficult to accept this. The Princess has again been denied control and has no choice in the marriage. In this way, although Perrault wishes to promote the idealistic message that love is blind, in reality, the tale is a reminder of the unbalanced values of the patriarchal society that existed in the seventeenth century. Whereas Bernard justified Mama's quest for sexual control, here, Perrault endorses obedience and resignation. Perrault only grants the Princess happiness in his tale when she submits to Riquet's wishes. Nowhere in the tale is her sexual curiosity referenced as it is in Bernard's version. By denying the Princess this capacity Perrault takes away her sexual control and places all the power in the hands of Riquet. Essentially, Perrault renders the Princess completely powerless and because of this her 'decision' to transform Riquet is, in fact, meaningless because it is not actually a choice. When we read the tale in this manner, Perrault's *moralité*, as we will see, also seems quite pointless.

One moral concern that is tackled is that of otherness or being outcast. Here, the theme of otherness revolves around the concept of not fitting into an idealised version of Prince and Princess or man and woman. The moral message that Perrault promotes throughout the tale is the unimportance of appearances and the fact that we love our partners unconditionally in spite of their flaws. However, whereas Riquet has the magical ability to tangibly alter the Princess and render her intelligent, she merely no longer sees his faults once she falls in love with him. Therefore, Riquet, in fact, does not need to change whereas the Princess does.

We are told at the start of the tale that Riquet's appearance is so disturbing that his parents are not sure that they have actually given birth to a human: '*[il était] si laid et si mal fait, qu'on douta longtemps s'il avait forme humaine*'.[397] ('[he was] so ugly and misshapen that for a long time everyone doubted if he was in fact human.')[398] Riquet's abnormal physical features are cause for his very humanity to be called into question. However, Perrault does assure us that he is a polite and gentle character. It seems that Riquet's positive attributes are enough to make the Princess fall in love with him and his physical features are no longer important: '*Riquet à la houppe parut à ses yeux l'homme*

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[397] *Ibid.* p. 181.
[398] Zipes, p. 52.

du monde le plus beau, le mieux fait et le plus aimable qu'elle eût jamais vu'.[399]
('Riquet with the Tuft appeared to her eyes as the most handsome, strapping, and charming man she had ever seen.')[400] Once Riquet is accepted, he is no longer considered *other*. This moral, if it stood alone in the tale, would seem acceptable if it were not for the contradictory treatment of the two Princesses in the story.

The nameless Princesses are outcasts due to their respective negative traits, namely, ugliness and stupidity. Neither female character fits into the prescribed gender norms of a young woman or a Princess and, because of this, neither can be happy. Though both girls have positive attributes, it is the negative that is highlighted: '*cette petite Princesse n'aurait point d'esprit, et qu'elle serait aussi stupide qu'elle était belle*'.[401] ('this little princess would be as stupid as she was beautiful.')[402] What is more, as these characters do not fit the ideal model of what they should be, they are not content in themselves: '*J'aimerais mieux, dit la Princesse, être aussi laide que vous et avoir de l'esprit, que d'avoir de la beauté comme j'en ai, et être bête autant que je suis*'.[403] ('I'd rather be as ugly as you and have intelligence,' said the princess, 'than be as beautiful and stupid as I am.')[404] Though the Princess states she would give up her beauty to be intelligent, in the end, she must have both for the tale to end as expected. What is more, as the unintelligent Princess is capable of recognising her own stupidity, this, in fact, indicates that she may not be as dim-witted as she is perceived to be. However, according to Perrault's tale she needs Riquet to help her to become intelligent. In this way, only Riquet's (a man's) endorsement can free the Princess from the realm of outcast and remove the negative association of otherness.

The other Princess, despite having the same affliction as Riquet, is anonymous and totally disappears from the tale by the end. While Riquet overcomes his status as *other* without too much difficulty, the other Princess is completely forgotten. She is left in the margins of the tale, remains anonymous and *other* and we never learn of her fate. By eradicating the other Princess from

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[399] *Ibid.* p. 187.
[400] Zipes, p. 56.
[401] Perrault, p. 181.
[402] Zipes, p. 52.
[403] Perrault, p. 183.
[404] Zipes, p. 53.

the tale, Perrault conveys the message that in order to succeed and overcome obstacles, a woman must marry. If she does not, her fate is unimportant. This seems somewhat contradictory to Perrault's *moralité*:

> *Ce que l'on voit dans cet écrit,*
>
> *Est moins un conte en l'air que la vérité même :*
>
> *Tout est beau dans ce que l'on aime,*
>
> *Tout ce qu'on aime a de l'esprit.*[405]
>
> (That which you see written down here
>
> Is not so fantastic because it's quite true:
>
> We find what we love is wondrously fair,
>
> In what we love we find intelligence, too.)[406]

It seems that although Perrault advocates the importance of love over any flaw, ugliness and stupidity are nevertheless eradicated from the tale. One Princess is transformed from *bête* to charming and clever and the other unattractive Princess disappears from the tale with no explanation. Therefore, even though Perrault championed women as the models of attractiveness and *civilité*, and defended them to Boileau who saw them as *coquettes* and spendthrifts, it would seem that, even for Perrault, there were still certain expectations that women had to live up to if they were to fit into society. Consequently, the only way to overcome outcast status in Perrault's tale was either to conform or to disappear.

3.2.8   A Moral Contradiction?

Though Perrault promoted the importance of love over all else, there are contradictory messages within the tale. Riquet manages to achieve happiness despite his affliction, yet the female character in the same position does not. Furthermore, the Princess that marries Riquet becomes intelligent but only because Riquet helps her to do so. In any case, if Perrault's *moralité* really rang true, could the protagonists not have stayed as they were and fallen in love and married without needing to be transformed? In this way the *moralité* seems unwittingly ironic in light of the tale's plot.

Because of his treatment of the female characters in his tale, it is my contention that we cannot group Perrault in the very specific interpretive community that makes up the *conteuses* who produced fairy tales at the end of

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[405] Perrault, p. 188.
[406] Zipes, p. 57.

the seventeenth century. On the contrary, their tales were a subversive reaction to the very notions that Perrault reinforces. For this reason, we can only group the *conteuses*, the female authors, together in light of their common interpretations and similar rewritings of this type of tale. The *conteurs*, the male fairy-tale authors, though from the same era cannot be placed in the same group due to their very different social context. Indeed, Elizabeth Wanning Harries comments:

> [...] the women who wrote tales in the 1690s presented themselves – both in their frontispieces [...] and in their stories themselves – as sophisticated writers rather as than simple peasant storytellers. They never identified themselves with 'nurses' or peasant women or 'Mother Goose': in fact, they tended to refer to themselves, in the salons and in their frontispieces, as sibyls or fairies. There was some element of class consciousness here, of course, but something much more important was also at work.[407]

The fact that the *conteuses* were not as enthusiastic as Perrault to associate their tales with the domestic image of Mother Goose gives us an insight into their differing attitudes. Whereas Perrault emphasised the domesticity and aboriginal nature of the tales, the *conteuses* distanced themselves from this association wishing to establish themselves as serious writers. Perrault, on the other hand, did not have this concern as he was already well respected, being a member of the *Académie Française*. With these different social contexts in mind, it becomes clear that the *conteuses* had a very different motive in writing the tales than the male authors of the same era. We can discern from this that Perrault's reception of the tale was very different from that of his female counterparts and this is represented through the different renderings of the tale. Indeed, Stanley Fish asserts that the text is not a stable entity; it is something which is ever evolving and will change depending on differing viewpoints.[408] This is demonstrated by these two diverse interpretations of *Riquet à la Houppe*. On the one hand, Bernard justifies her female protagonist's behaviour in light of her awful situation and, on the other hand, Perrault lays blame directly with his protagonist and has little sympathy for her, despite her predicament. One text can be interpreted in very different ways and this will naturally reflect the

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[407] Wanning Harries, p. 31-32.
[408] Fish, p. vii.

viewpoint of the author. How each text is subsequently received will, then, reflect the viewpoint of the reader. Thus, texts will be constantly re-interpreted in different manners, such as the tales that we see here.

In light of the differences outlined here between Perrault's tale and Bernard's version, only women authors will be included in the contemporary corpus in the following chapter. Though contemporary women's tales are written in a very different social atmosphere to those of the seventeenth century, I intend to demonstrate the remaining links that place these two groups of women fairy-tale writers in the same interpretive community. Before beginning the examination of the contemporary corpus, let us look at two versions of *La Belle et la Bête* that shed some light on the reasons behind the evolution of the fairy tale from adult entertainment to children's literature. In the following section, I will compare Mme de Villeneuve's version of *La Belle et la Bête* with that of Mme Leprince de Beaumont.

3.3   Two Versions of *La Belle et la Bête*

3.3.1   Mme de Villeneuve (c.1685 – 1755)

Mme Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve was born just as the first fairy-tale vogue in France was beginning. She would go on to be one of the most prominent names to feature in the second vogue. After an unhappy marriage to a military officer, she was left impoverished and turned to writing in order to make a living.[409] Her tale, *La Belle et la Bête*, appeared in her novel *La Jeune Amériquaine et les contes marins*, in 1740. This narrative tells the story of a young girl returning to her family home in Santo Domingo after finishing her studies in France. The stories are intertwined within the text as the characters on the boat take turns in entertaining each other. The two fairy tales that appear in this narrative are *Les Naïades* and *La Belle et la Bête*. The latter became Mme de Villeneuve's best-known tale and is the basis for Mme Leprince de Beaumont's version and the many others that have been produced since.

3.3.2   *La Belle et la Bête* (Beauty and the Beast) (1740)

Mme de Villeneuve's version of *La Belle et la Bête* is much longer than the version that is commonly known today. Her tale incorporates many sub-plots that have since disappeared. Interestingly, de Villeneuve provides us with an explanation of the events leading up to the beast's metamorphosis. The tale begins when a merchant who has six sons and six daughters has a reverse of fortune and is left destitute. The family move to their country house in an attempt to escape their poverty. During this time Belle is accepting of their misfortune. However, this only serves to frustrate her sisters further. Belle's father, a merchant, on hearing that one of his vessels may have arrived safely, sets out to recover his wealth. While five of his daughters ask for presents of clothes and jewels, Belle asks merely for a rose. When the merchant learns that his vessel has indeed arrived safely he is disappointed to learn that his partners, believing him to be dead, have already sold the merchandise at a mere fraction of its value. The merchant must return to his family with the unfortunate news that their financial situation has not improved. On his way home, the merchant becomes lost during a bad snow storm and stumbles upon a deserted castle.

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[409] Lewis Carl Seifert, '*Villeneuve, Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de*' in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales: The Western Fairy Tale Tradition from Medieval to Modern*, ed. by Jack Zipes, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 540.

Here, he finds a feast laid out for him although there does not seem to be anyone in the castle. The next morning, when leaving, he notices a beautiful rose bush in the garden. He takes a rose, thinking that at least he can bring Belle the gift she has asked for. The moment he plucks the rose, the Beast appears and accuses the merchant of theft. The terrified merchant explains that the rose is a gift for his daughter and, upon hearing this, the Beast tells the merchant that his daughter must come to the castle within a month. Belle, being a dutiful daughter agrees to go to the Beast's castle in order to save her father. When Belle arrives at the castle she feels as if she is the Beast's prey. Whilst in the castle, Belle dreams of a handsome young man. She does not realise that this is, in fact, the Beast in his true form. Over time, Belle falls in love with the unknown man and she also comes to care for the Beast. When Belle becomes home sick, the Beast allows her to return home for two months, although this may cause his death. When she is at home, she accidentally stays longer than the permitted time. When she has a dream that the Beast is dying, she realises her true feelings for him and quickly returns to the castle. She finds the Beast in the garden and promises that she will never leave him. That night her unknown lover comes to her in her dreams and assures her that she will be happy. When Belle agrees to marry the Beast, a fairy arrives with the queen, the Beast's mother. The queen must consent to the marriage: however, she is distraught to learn that her son's fiancée is merely a merchant's daughter and opposes the marriage. Her son implores her to allow the union. It is at this point in the tale that we learn the cause of the prince's transformation. A vengeful fairy punished the prince for refusing to marry her by transforming him into a hideous beast. In any case, the queen's objections are unnecessary as, at the end of the tale, we learn that Belle does, in fact, have royal blood. She is the daughter of the King and Queen of the Fortunate Island. Following this, the wedding ceremony takes place with her old and new family in attendance. Finally, we are told by de Villeneuve that the queen made sure that the story of Belle and the Beast was recorded and handed down throughout the ages.

3.3.3   Further Reinforcement of Stereotypes

Mme de Villeneuve's version of *La Belle et la Bête*, rather than question gender roles as the *conteuses* of the first vogue did, in fact, reinforces many of the

same stereotypes found in Perrault's tales. Once again, we see gender roles depicted in quite a fixed manner. The traditional characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity are represented in her characters. Belle is represented as physically beautiful but also wholesome, honest, caring, obedient: '*la plus jeune d'entre elles montra, dans leur commun malheur, plus de constance et de résolution.*'[410] ('The youngest girl, however, displayed greater perseverance and resolution in their common misfortune.')[411] While Belle's sisters lament their new-found poverty, Belle is the character who is obedient but courageous in her outlook. This attitude is presented by de Villeneuve as a positive attribute for a female.

What is more, Belle is not only beautiful and courageous, she is also intelligent. De Villeneuve tells us that she plays numerous instruments and reads, abilities that were deemed as appropriate for a young woman: '*Jouant très bien de plusieurs instruments, qu'elle accompagnait de sa voix*', '*Son grand gout pour la lecture*'.[412] ('she sang in a charming way and accompanied this by playing various instruments exceedingly well', 'Her great desire for learning'.)[413] In highlighting these accomplishments, de Villeneuve reminds us that Belle fits into the expected gender role of a young woman in the eighteenth century.

We can also see the concept of ideal femininity in Belle's docile behaviour. Not only is she compliant by going to the Beast's castle, but she has a submissive attitude towards the Beast as well: '*ma vie est en votre disposition, et je me soumets aveuglément à ce que vous ordonnerez de mon sort.*'[414] ('My life is in your hands, and I shall submit myself blindly to the fate that you've determined for me.')[415] This type of behaviour fits into the stereotypical ideal of femininity, complete compliance. Despite her exile being unjust, Belle accepts her fate. For de Villeneuve, this type of compliant attitude is seen as desired in a young woman and what is more, as important as beauty: '*de qui la vertu et le*

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[410] Mme de Villeneuve, '*La Belle et la bête'*, in *Si les fées m'étaient contées,* ed. by Francis Lacassin, (Paris: Omnibus, 2003), pp. 767-815 (p. 768).
[411] Zipes, p. 154.
[412] de Villeneuve, p. 769 & 785.
[413] Zipes, p. 154 & 171.
[414] de Villeneuve, p. 781.
[415] Zipes, p. 167.

courage égalent la beauté.[416] ('whose virtue and courage matched her beauty'.)[417]

Masculinity is also portrayed in a stereotypically positive way. Belle's '*braves frères*'[418] are fearless and offer to go in Belle's place to face the Beast. This detail serves to reinforce the typical representations of masculinity and femininity that we expect in fairy tales. Nevertheless, de Villeneuve does portray familial relationships in general in a more positive light than her predecessors. Whereas siblings and parents are often represented as cruel in fairy tales, here de Villeneuve depicts Belle's domestic situation as positive on the whole. Interestingly, this is a key feature in the rewritings of Robin McKinley, as we will see in the following chapter.

Although masculinity is represented as positive through Belle's brothers, when Belle is seen to exhibit characteristics that would traditionally be viewed as masculine, we are reminded that this is outside the realm of what would be accepted as normal. Belle's stoicism is seen by de Villeneuve as a masculine trait that would not normally be accepted as a female characteristic: '*Aussi sensible que ses sœurs aux révolutions qui venaient d'accabler sa famille, par une force d'esprit qui n'est pas ordinaire à son sexe, elle sut cacher sa douleur, et se mettre au-dessus de l'adversité.*'[419] ('She was just as sensitive about the reverse of fortune that had recently overwhelmed her family as any of her sisters, but through a strength of mind uncommon in her sex, she concealed her sorrow and rose above her misfortunes.')[420] Therefore, although many of the characters' gender roles are presented in a positive manner, we are reminded by de Villeneuve that characteristics such as bravery are really masculine traits. Male and female characters still must conform to certain parameters of acceptability.

However, although gender roles in the tale are represented in a conservative manner, Belle's sexual awakening is referenced, albeit delicately. Fear of sexuality is a running theme throughout 'Beauty and the Beast' tales. Although not exclusive to the animal-bridegroom tale type, often the metaphor

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[416] de Villeneuve, p. 807.
[417] Zipes, p. 193.
[418] de Villeneuve, p. 777.
[419] de Villeneuve, p. 769.
[420] Zipes, p. 155.

of being devoured appears as a representation of intercourse in this type of tale. References to sexuality mostly occur in a negative sense and this conveys the fear of the young woman that is traditionally present in animal-bridegroom tales. We can see that this metaphor is employed by de Villeneuve for these reasons. Belle's father adds to the young girl's fears with his own worries about the Beast's intentions: '*pour la voir sans doute dévorer à mes yeux.*'[421] ('[to] watch him, no doubt, devour her before my eyes.')[422] Belle also refers to herself as the Beast's prey: '*l'arrivée de sa proie*',[423] ('the arrival of his prey'),[424] confirming her fears of her encounter with the Beast. This theme of the Beast as hunter and Belle as prey is a metaphor that de Villeneuve returns to throughout the tale in order to highlight Belle's apprehension towards the Beast and her anxiety concerning her first sexual experience.

Because of her anxiety, Belle cannot fully acknowledge her own sexual desires at the start of the tale. De Villeneuve employs a dream motif in order to represent these unconscious desires throughout the tale. In her dreams, Belle meets an unknown lover whom she does not realise is the Beast in his true form. He promises her that: '*tous tes désirs seront remplis.*'[425] ('all your desires will be fulfilled.')[426] Belle enjoys the dreams: '*Que son sommeil fut agréable ! Elle eût désiré le prolonger*',[427] ('How pleasant her sleep was! She would have liked to have prolonged it'),[428] and begins to look forward to them as part of her nightly routine: '*Elle était dans l'impatience de goûter ce doux plaisir.*'[429] ('She was eager to enjoy this innocent pleasure.')[430] Recalling Bettelheim's interpretation as discussed earlier, we can interpret Belle's dreams as conveying that though she desires the Beast, she is not yet fully capable of acknowledging this because she cannot accept his monstrosity.

We can see Belle's fear and repulsion towards the Beast when she recoils as the thought of sleeping with him: '*Elle lui demanda sans détour si*

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[421] de Villeneuve, p. 776.
[422] Zipes, p. 161.
[423] de Villeneuve, p. 780.
[424] Zipes, p. 165.
[425] de Villeneuve, p. 784.
[426] Zipes, p. 169.
[427] de Villeneuve, p. 784.
[428] Zipes, p. 170.
[429] de Villeneuve, p. 799.
[430] Zipes, p. 185.

elle voulait la laisser coucher avec elle. A cette demande imprévue ses craintes se renouvelèrent.'[431] ('After a while he asked her bluntly if she would marry him. This unexpected request renewed her fears.')[432] Though her unknown lover and the Beast are, in fact, the same person, because of Belle's suppressed sexual curiosity, she is unable to acknowledge this fact. While she refers to her invisible lover as her '*amant*', she is disgusted by the Beast's appearance and cannot agree to marry him: '*Mais se résoudre à prendre pour époux un monstre horrible par sa figure [...] la chose ne lui paraissait pas possible.*'[433] ('but she found it impossible to consent to marry a horrid monster.')[434]

However, despite her revulsion towards the Beast, Belle's desires and curiosity with regard to her unknown lover grow stronger: '*Elle se pressa de se coucher.*'[435] ('she was in a hurry to go to bed.')[436] In stating that she wishes to free her unknown lover from her dreams, de Villeneuve references the fact that Belle, in fact, is overcoming her own sexual anxieties and is experiencing a sexual awakening: '*je voudrais à quelque prix que ce fût vous rendre la liberté, mais cette bonne volonté m'est inutile, tant que vous ne me fournirez pas le moyens de la mettre en pratique.*'[437] ('I'd risk anything to set you free, but my wish is useless so long as you refrain from providing me with the means to act upon it.')[438] She needs her lover to help her overcome her fears, yet, at the same time, the Beast also needs Belle to free him from the curse.

When Belle can start to overcome these fears she can accept her own sexuality and accept the Beast:

> *Les lumières s'éteignirent à l'instant. La Bête s'approchant fit appréhender à la Belle que du poids de son corps elle n'écrasât leur couche. Mais elle fut agréablement étonnée en sentant que ce monstre se mettait à ses côtés aussi légèrement qu'elle venait de le faire. Sa surprise fut bien plus grande, quand elle l'entendit ronfler presque aussitôt, et que*

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[431] de Villeneuve, p. 785.
[432] Zipes, p. 172. Interestingly, Zipes translates *coucher* (to sleep with) as 'marry'. It would seem that Zipes interprets de Villeneuve's choice of words as symbolic rather than literal.
[433] de Villeneuve, p. 798.
[434] Zipes, p. 184.
[435] de Villeneuve, p. 791.
[436] Zipes, p. 178.
[437] de Villeneuve, p. 790.
[438] Zipes, p. 176.

> *par sa tranquillité elle eut une preuve certaine qu'il dormait d'un profond sommeil.*[439]

> (The lights went out instantly. The Beast approaching made Belle fear that his weight would crush her. But, she was pleasantly surprised when she felt this monster lie down beside her as gently as she had just done. Her surprise was even greater when she heard him snoring soon after. She knew that he was sleeping soundly because of his air of tranquillity.)[440]

Instead of consummating her marriage with the Beast, she meets her unknown lover in her bed. Here de Villeneuve uses the same metaphor but, this time, Belle realises that the Beast is not actually a beast. She realises that the Beast and her unknown lover are the same person. Hence, she is finally acknowledging her sexual desires when they no longer seem disgusting or inappropriate: '*elle le baisa mille fois*'.[441] (she kissed him a thousand times.)[442]

In de Villeneuve's representation of sexuality we can see many links with the 'Cupid and Psyche' myth and the other tales discussed in this chapter. The darkness of Apuleius' myth and the more overt messages in tales such as d'Aulnoy's and Bernard's are replaced by the dream motif in de Villeneuve's tale which is a metaphor for Belle's sexual awakening. She uses this metaphor to explore fears surrounding sexuality and subsequently, the theme of sexual awakening. The dream motif was, of course, a means by which de Villeneuve could discuss matters of a sexual nature without being too explicit for her time. Although de Villeneuve's tale was aimed an adult audience, sexuality was still a taboo issue that had to be dealt with delicately and there is a definite move towards a more sanitised form of expression in this tale as opposed to the tales of the first vogue. Interestingly de Villeneuve seems to be the only *conteuse* that made use of the dream motif. As we will see, in Leprince de Beaumont's tale, the dream motif does not appear at all, perhaps seeming to her too explicit for her target audience of children.

Before discussing Leprince de Beaumont's tale, let us consider de Villeneuve's treatment of otherness in her version. We see different facets of

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[439] de Villeneuve, p. 805.

[440] Here, I have provided my own translation as this passage is omitted from Zipes's translation. There is no reference within the text as to why the passage is omitted but this demonstrates that, even today, fairy tales constantly evolve and change due to rewriting and translation.

[441] de Villeneuve, p. 807.

[442] Again, I have provided my own translation here as this small passage is also omitted from Zipes's translation.

this theme conveyed through the characters of both Belle and the Beast. Firstly, in de Villeneuve's tale, Belle's family are undergoing a process of exile as a result of their economic ruin: '*N'ayant aucune ressource, ils se confinèrent dans leur maison de campagne, située au milieu d'une forêt presque impraticable, et qui pouvait bien être le plus triste séjour de la terre.*'[443] ('Having no resources whatsoever, they secluded themselves in their country house, situated in the middle of an almost impenetrable forest. Indeed, it could well be considered the saddest abode in the world.')[444] This social and geographical exile is the catalyst for the events that follow and introduces the theme of otherness into the tale. Belle is already in exile before she ever meets the Beast.

Furthermore, Belle is exiled within her own family. Though cherished by her father, Belle is in the position of outcast as far as her sisters are concerned. Like Psyche, Belle's beauty becomes more of a burden than a blessing as it is the reason for her sisters' intense jealousy: '*sa beauté lui fit donner par excellence le nom de la Belle. Connue sous ce nom seul, en fallait-il davantage pour augmenter et la jalousie et la haine de ses sœurs ?*'[445] ('she was also so beautiful that she was called Beauty. Know by this name only, what more was needed to increase the envy and hatred of her sisters?')[446] Because of Belle's position as outcast, her sisters seize the opportunity to have her exiled further, reasoning that since she asked for the rose that caused the Beast's anger, she must pay the price: '*Il n'est pas juste, dirent-elles, que nous périssons d'une façon épouvantable pour une faute dont nous ne sommes pas coupables.*'[447] ('It's not just,' they said, 'that we should perish in such a frightful manner for a mistake that we didn't commit.')[448] Hence, Belle, being loyal and obedient (which we have already seen is promoted by de Villeneuve as a virtue) agrees to her exile: '*Je suis coupable de ce malheur: c'est à moi seule de le réparer. J'avoue qu'il serait injuste que vous souffrissiez de ma faute. […] Cette faute est faite : que je sois innocente ou coupable, il est juste*

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[443] de Villeneuve, p. 768.
[444] Zipes, p. 154.
[445] de Villeneuve, p. 769.
[446] Zipes, p. 155.
[447] de Villeneuve, p. 777.
[448] Zipes, p. 163.

que je l'expie.[449] ('I'm the cause of this misfortune. It's I alone who must rectify everything. I admit that it would be unjust to allow you to suffer for my mistake. [...] However, the mistake's been made. It doesn't matter whether I'm innocent or guilty. It's only fair that I should be the one to expiate it.')[450] In this way, there is a sense of resignation in the tale, with regard to exile. Belle accepts that this is something which must be endured and de Villeneuve depicts this resignation as a positive virtue in Belle. Unlike d'Aulnoy and Bernard, there is no sense of injustice or anger, only acceptance and stoicism.

Belle's exile exists in more than one way in de Villeneuve's tale. She is an outsider within her own family due to her difference from her sisters and, later, she is in exile with the Beast. We do, however, learn at the end of the tale that Belle is indeed a Princess and, as such, not biologically part of her family. This is an interesting part of the plot invented by de Villeneuve, which does not always appear in other similar tales. Belle is an outsider in her own family situation and, moreover, she is a character who does not 'fit in'. This is a motif that recurs in some contemporary tales, most notably in Tanith Lee's 'Beauty', which will be discussed in the following chapter.

This element of the plot also helps de Villeneuve to subtly question class differences in society. Belle's lineage is questioned by the queen. Being of a lower class than the prince, the relationship is seen as improper: '*Quoi! Vous n'êtes que la fille d'un marchand !*' ('What? You're only a merchant's daughter? ') The union is seen as '*une alliance [...] honteuse*'[451] ('an alliance so degrading.')[452] and, because of this, the queen objects to Belle marrying the prince. This plot line is unique to de Villeneuve's tale. It would seem that she wished to make the point that social status was given too much importance, whereas a person's character should be of more importance. The fairy, in this case, voices this opinion: '*pour moi je crois que ses vertus en font disparaître l'inégalité*'. ('For my part, I think that her virtues make up for that inequality.') Following this, we are once again reminded of Belle's virtue when she states:

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[449] de Villeneuve, p. 778.
[450] Zipes, p. 163.
[451] de Villeneuve, p. 808.
[452] Zipes, p. 194.

'*l'ambition n'a point eu de part à mes intentions*'.[453] ('ambition played no role in my thoughts.')[454] Even in the face of cruel rejection, Belle is gracious.

However, despite her apt portrayal of the brutality of class systems, de Villeneuve is not able to fully overcome this issue.[455] Belle is only fully accepted by the Queen when it is revealed that she does, in fact, have royal blood after all. While Mme de Villeneuve criticises class systems in the tale, it would still have seemed unacceptable to end the tale with a union between two people of such differing statuses, a sad testament to the power and influence that class structures had and still have on our collective psyche. In this way, de Villeneuve emphasises not only Belle's economic exile but her social exile as well due to her class difference.

Social exile is also evident in the treatment of the Beast's monstrosity. While Belle and the Beast are very different, both are exiled due to their appearances. The Beast's appearance represents his otherness. De Villeneuve highlights his monstrosity by describing his physicality: '*Un bruit effroyable, causé par le poids énorme de son corps, par le cliquetis terrible de ses écailles, et par des hurlements affreux, annonça son arrivée*'.[456] ('A frightful noise caused by his enormous bulk, the terrible clank of his scales, and an awful roaring, announced this arrival.')[457] What is more, the Beast cannot even refer to himself as human, reminding us of the link between monstrosity and lack of humanity: '*Je ne suis pas monseigneur, je suis la Bête*'.[458] ('I'm not 'my lord.' I am the Beast.')[459] This is also an expression of the Beast's pain. He is human in reality but is treated as a monster, something that is almost human but too different to be accepted.

When the Beast pleads with Belle to save him from his misery we are reminded that his otherness depends on how he is viewed:'*Il me faut quelqu'un pour réparer cette faute*'.[460] ('Someone must make up for this mistake.')[461] The

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[453] de Villeneuve, p. 809.

[454] Zipes, p. 195.

[455] For an enlightening discussion on class systems in France during the eighteenth century, see Sarah Maza, 'Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France', *The Journal of Modern History*, 69.2 (1997) 199-229.

[456] de Villeneuve, p. 780.

[457] Zipes, p. 166.

[458] de Villeneuve, p. 773.

[459] Zipes, p. 159.

[460] de Villeneuve, p. 774.

definition of monstrosity depends on how we view it, on what we accept and agree to be monstrous. In this way, Belle's love for the Beast, despite his monstrosity, renders his appearance ultimately unimportant. However, de Villeneuve reminds us that overcoming otherness and monstrosity can be an extremely difficult task. Even the Beast's alter-ego, the unknown lover, argues that the Beast is an unnatural creature, reflecting the Beast's own self-loathing: '*Quelqu'un perdrait-il à la destruction d'un être qui ne parait sur la terre que pour être en horreur à la nature entière?*'[462] ('Will anything be lost by the destruction of a creature who's the horror of all nature?')[463]

In due course, however, de Villeneuve redeems the Beast's value, through Belle's father who recognises the good in the Beast, despite his ugliness: '*Trouvant dans ce monstre une âme trop belle pour être logée dans un si vilain corps*'.[464] ('realizing that this monster's mind was too noble to be lodged in such a hideous body.')[465] Also, it is through the character of the father that de Villeneuve manages to convey her moral message of the importance of character over appearances:

> *Ainsi, lorsque la Bête te demandera si tu veux qu'elle couche avec toi, je te conseille de ne la pas refuser. Tu m'avoues en être tendrement aimée. Prends les mesures convenables pour que ton union soit éternelle. Il est plus avantageux d'avoir un mari d'un caractère aimable, que d'en avoir un qui n'ait que la bonne mine pour tout mérite. Combien de filles à qui l'on fait épouser des bêtes riches, mais plus bête que la Bête, qui ne l'est par la figure, et non par les sentiments et par les actions?*[466]
> (Therefore, the next time the Beast asks you to marry him, I advise you not to refuse. You've admitted that he loves you tenderly. Take the proper steps to make your union with him indissoluble. A pleasant husband is far preferable to one whose only merit is that he's handsome. How many girls are compelled to marry rich brutes - much more brutish than the Beast, who's only one in form and not in his feelings or his actions?)[467]

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[461] Zipes, p. 159.
[462] de Villeneuve, p. 795.
[463] Zipes, p. 182.
[464] de Villeneuve, p. 797.
[465] Zipes, p. 184.
[466] de Villeneuve, p. 798.
[467] Zipes, p. 184.

Here, de Villeneuve is certainly commenting on the politics of marriage in her time. We can imagine that they were not mere hypothetical '*bêtes riches*' that de Villeneuve was referring to. Thus, we see again, the *contes de fées* being used as a means of social commentary by which women could communicate with each other. Nevertheless, the overriding sense of resignation remains. Belle, though she finds freedom and manages to free the Beast, remains a dutiful young woman and can only be accepted when she fits a certain criteria. Though she does escape exile in one way, in another way, she is still trapped in a society where she had to prove her status in order to be permitted to marry the Prince.

3.3.4   Changing Attitudes of the Second Vogue

Although de Villeneuve questions prevailing attitudes concerning the over-importance that was given to social class and appearances, gender roles are not questioned in the same way as they were by the *conteuses* of the first vogue. Despite the exploration of sexual awakening through the device of the dream motif, there is still a depressing sense of inevitability and futility in her tale. Belle must still conform in the end and, in this way, de Villeneuve's tale does not display the same sense of anger and revolt evident in d'Aulnoy's and Bernard's tales. This is a notable feature in the tales produced by the *conteuses* of the second fairy-tale vogue. Their tales are less about rebellion and more about rules of acceptability. De Villeneuve does subtly question values of the time but in a much less aggressive manner than her predecessors. This trend is also even more evident in Mme Leprince de Beaumont's version which will be discussed next.

Nevertheless, de Villeneuve was aware that her version was part of a lineage:

> *La reine, mère du prince, n'oublia pas de faire inscrire cette histoire merveilleuse dans les archives de cet empire, et dans celui de l'île heureuse, pour la transmettre à la postérité. On en envoya des relations par tout l'univers, afin qu'il y fût éternellement parlé des aventures prodigieuses de la Belle et de la Bête.*[468]
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> (The prince's mother had this marvelous story recorded in the archives of her kingdom and in those of the Fortunate Island so that it might be

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[468] de Villeneuve, p. 815.

handed down to posterity. they also distributed copies throughout the universe so that the world at large would never cease talking about the wonderful adventures of Beauty and the Beast.)[469]

We can only assume that de Villeneuve had no idea how true this statement would be in the future. In writing the first tale to be entitled *La Belle et la Bête*, de Villeneuve created arguably one of the most famous and prolifically re-produced story of the last few hundred years.

Although de Villeneuve's tale is certainly part of the lineage of animal-bridegroom tales, we cannot say that she is part of the same interpretive community as the seventeenth-century *conteuses*. Though sharing many similar traits and overlapping ideals, her tale does not have as strong a political aim. Having a more optimistic outlook, de Villeneuve does not question the place of women in society but, rather, like Perrault reinforces traditional values. Once again, we see here that differences in the reception of a tale will result in divergent renderings. By acknowledging this, we must concede that social context has an important influence on how tales are received. De Villeneuve's different cultural background is reflected in her rewriting of the tale. Indeed, Marisa Linton notes that during the eighteenth century, 'French girls were [...] familiar with the Christian tradition. There they would find a different kind of feminine virtue, one achieved primarily through passive suffering. Its inspiration was the anguish of Madonna, the loving but submissive wife and mother; her sorrows would only be assuaged in heaven'.[470] De Villeneuve's text reflects this concept of virtue which was promoted in the 1700s and was directly related to how women were viewed in Catholicism.

Yet again, we see, as Fish asserts, that a text is ever evolving and, here, we see it reflecting the social change of de Villeneuve's time. In the following section I will discuss the reasons why Leprince de Beaumont is a member of the same interpretive community as de Villeneuve but cannot be grouped with d'Aulnoy or Bernard, because of the incompatible ideologies represented in their tales.

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[469] Zipes, p. 229.

[470] Marisa Linton, 'Virtue rewarded? Women and the Politics of Virtue in 18th-century France, Part I', *History of European Ideas*, 26.1 (2000) 35-49, (pp. 36-7).

3.3.5   Mme Leprince de Beaumont (1711 – 1780)

We can see many telling differences between de Villeneuve's version of the tale and Leprince de Beaumont's, which appeared in 1756. This was the first time that the tale was written specifically for children, appearing in *Le Magasin des Enfants*. Indeed, Leprince de Beaumont's version of the tale reflects the changing values of her time and her version of the tale was one of the first to be specifically directed at children. Leprince de Beaumont was educated in a convent school in Rouen and later became a teacher. She was an important figure with regard to the changing status of the fairy tale from adult to children's literature. This was probably due to changing attitudes towards childhood at the time. Indeed, the concept of childhood was a relatively new one and, with it came changing ideals about how children should be raised and educated. Before this time, little importance was given to the role of education in a child's life, especially young girls.[471] Leprince de Beaumont was a governess in England and her tale was aimed at young upper-class girls learning French. Her pedagogical aim is evident in the tale as is the influence of religion. It is a shorter, more sanitised version that carries a strong moral message concerning the importance of virtue over appearances.

3.3.6   *La Belle et la Bête* (1756)

Mme Leprince de Beaumont's version of *La Belle et la Bête* follows, for the most part, the plot of Mme de Villeneuve's tale. It is, however, a much more concise version and many of the elaborate sub-plots that de Villeneuve incorporated are no longer present in Leprince de Beaumont's version. Her version starts in much the same manner aside from the change in the number of children that the merchant has. Here, he has three daughters and three sons. As in de Villeneuve's tale, Belle is the youngest and most beautiful daughter which inspires jealousy in her sisters. The merchant loses his fortune and, following the same plot, finds himself in the Beast's castle where he takes a rose for Belle. Belle is similarly dutiful in Leprince de Beaumont's rendering of the tale and is stoic in her decision to sacrifice herself to the Beast in order to save her father. However, the dream sequences are absent in Leprince de Beaumont's version. In this simplified plot, Belle merely comes to love the Beast over time.

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[471] *Ibid.* p. 36.

As in de Villeneuve's version, Belle returns home for a short period of time and her jealous sisters conspire to make her late in her return to the castle. When she does finally manage to return to the Beast, she finds him dying. Belle agrees to marry the Beast and with that, he is transformed into a handsome, young man. The issues surrounding the differences in class are eradicated in this version and the story is a much simpler moral tale. Belle and the Beast live in perfect happiness, while Belle's scheming sisters are transformed into statues. Their punishment is to live permanently outside their sister's castle and to have to bear witness to her happiness forever. As will be discussed in the following analysis, Leprince de Beaumont does not leave the reader in any doubt of her message: virtue is important above all else.

3.3.7   Moral Messages

Gender roles in Leprince de Beaumont's tale are, as in de Villeneuve's, strictly enforced and somewhat stereotypical. The male characters are courageous and virtuous and the female characters range from being the representation of ideal docile femininity to being spiteful and jealous.

First, we are presented with Belle who, unsurprisingly, is the portrait of a perfect young woman. She is intelligent and beautiful: '*leur cadette qui employait la plus grande partie du temps à lire de bons livres*'.[472] ('their younger sister, who spent most of her time reading books.')[473] Such is her loyalty to her father, in particular, that she will not marry, despite offers, because she will not leave him alone in his poverty: '*Il y eut même plusieurs gentilshommes qui voulurent l'épouser, quoiqu'elle n'eût pas un sou : mais elle leur dit qu'elle ne pouvait se résoudre à abandonner son pauvre père dans son malheur*'.[474] ('Several gentlemen still wanted to marry her, despite the fact that she told them that she could not abandon her poor father in his distress.')[475] We see this conveyed again in the tale when Belle, resigning herself to the fate of going to live with the Beast, takes solace in the fact that at least, in death, she will save her father: '*je me trouve fort heureuse*, *puisqu'en mourant j'aurai la*

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[472] Mme Leprince de Beaumont, '*La Belle et la bête*', in *Si les fées m'étaient contées,* ed. by Francis Lacassin (Paris: Omnibus, 2003), pp. 955-65 (p. 955).
[473] Zipes, p. 233.
[474] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 956.
[475] Zipes, p. 234.

joie de sauver mon père et de lui prouver ma tendresse'.[476] ('I feel very

fortunate to be in a position to save my father and prove my affection for

him.')[477] We could interpret this as bravery on Belle's part; however, as she is

honour-bound, her decision to save her father is not entirely a choice but,

rather, her duty.

Belle's perfection is emphasised again when she is exculpated by

Leprince de Beaumont for asking for the rose in the first place, as we are told

that she only does this so as not to embarrass her two sisters by highlighting

their greed: '*mais elle ne voulait pas condamner, par son exemple, la conduite

de ses sœurs, qui auraient dit que c'était pour se distinguer qu'elle ne

demandait rien*'.[478] ('but she did not want to set an example that would

disparage her sisters, who would have said that she had requested nothing to

show how much better she was.')[479] Leprince de Beaumont presents us with a

protagonist who is almost *too* virtuous to be believable: '*je ne sais pas

mentir*'.[480] ('I don't know how to lie.')[481] The moralistic overtones are patent in

the tale, almost to the point of being overbearing. Leprince de Beaumont's

audience of young girls were certainly not going to be given any ambiguous

messages, the meaning of the tale is clear from the outset.

In contrast to Belle's character, her two sisters resemble those from the

'Cupid and Psyche' myth. We are told of their '*jalousie*' towards their sister,

which only serves to stress Belle's flawlessness once again. The sisters are

dishonest and scheming, unpleasant attributes for young ladies to possess: '*Ma

sœur, dit l'aînée, il me vient une pensée, tâchons de l'arrêter ici plus de huit

jours: sa sotte Bête se mettra en colère de ce qu'elle lui aura manqué de

parole, et peut-être qu'elle la dévorera*'.[482] ('Sister', said the oldest, 'I've just

had an idea, let's try to keep her here more than a week. That stupid beast will

become enraged when he finds out that she's broken her word and perhaps he'll

devour her.')[483] In the myth, and many other versions of the tale, Belle is

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[476] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 958.
[477] Zipes, p. 237.
[478] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 956.
[479] Zipes, p. 235.
[480] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 961.
[481] Zipes, p. 239.
[482] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 963.
[483] Zipes, p. 242.

culpable for abandoning the Beast, at least temporarily. In transferring blame for this to the sisters, Leprince de Beaumont leaves Belle's virtue intact. This, therefore, reinforces the image of perfection personified in the Belle character.

For any of Leprince de Beaumont's young students who may have contemplated disobedience the message is clear. As mentioned in the synopsis of the tale, the two sisters are turned into stone statues as punishment for their cruelty. The contrast between Belle's goodness and the malice of the sisters is clear-cut. With Leprince de Beaumont, there is no room for ambiguity or sympathy for two sisters who were forced to live in the shadow of their perfect sibling. In Leprince de Beaumont's tale, the message is that, to be a proper young lady, you must be everything that Belle is. Imperfection or human weakness is not an option.

We also see a contrast between Belle's sisters and brothers in the tale. Whereas her sisters are shown to be nasty and jealous, Belle's brothers are the representation of typical masculinity. They are protective and brave and try to save Belle. Also, Belle's father is caring and loving towards his children: '*S'il faut que je meure, j'aurai la consolation de laisser du pain à mes pauvres enfants*'.[484] ('If I must die, I shall still have the consolation of leaving my children with something to sustain themselves.')[485] All male characters in the tale, including the Beast, are virtuous. They are represented as courageous and honourable. Hence, we see positive masculine traits juxtaposed with negative female traits. The didactic element in Leprince de Beaumont's tale warns young ladies of the consequences of not behaving as they are expected to. Thus, her tale reinforces the ideal of feminine virtue that was popular during the eighteenth century whereas to represent male characters as anything but good would have been inappropriate as it would have conflicted with the predominant patriarchal mindset of the time.

Since Leprince de Beaumont was adapting her tale for an audience of children, virtually all of the sexual imagery that was present in de Villeneuve's version has been erased. The dream motif is absent in Leprince de Beaumont's version as are some other features, as we will see. It would seem that the idea of 'coupling in the dark' was deemed unsuitable by Leprince de Beaumont.

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[484] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 958.
[485] Zipes, p. 236.

Consequently, we are left with a much more subdued version of the tale. It is most likely for this reason that Leprince de Beaumont's tale is the version that is still best known today as, from that point in history, fairy tales have been regarded, for the most part, as solely children's literature. As I will argue, it is this sanitation of tales that fairy-tale authors, nowadays, are fighting to reverse, not only by addressing themselves to an older audience but, also in the way they rewrite the tales.

We can interpret some parts of Leprince de Beaumont's version as representative of sexuality for example the concept of being devoured: '*elle croyait fermement que la Bête la mangerait le soir*'.[486] ('[She was] convinced that the Beast was going to eat her that night.')[487] Indeed, this has been interpreted as a metaphor for the sexual act since the time of 'Cupid and Psyche'. Unsurprisingly though, Leprince de Beaumont does not play on the metaphor or develop it, like de Villeneuve does. Rather, it would seem, the only reason for its presence is that it is a central theme in the tale and the plot would not make sense without it.

We can see another change of this nature in the dialogue between Belle and the Beast. Whereas, in de Villeneuve's tale the Beast asks Belle if she will *coucher avec lui* (sleep with him), in Leprince de Beaumont's version the phrasing has been changed to: '*La Belle, voulez vous être ma femme?*'[488] ('Beauty, will you be my wife?')[489] There is no mention of the two sleeping together and the Beast's proposal becomes a much more virtuous one.

Although there are similarities between the two tales, at all times Leprince de Beaumont sanitises every image or phrase that could be construed as sexual. In both versions, Belle cannot accept the Beast's appearance and we can interpret this as her not being able to confront her own awakening sexuality: '*c'est bien dommage qu'elle soit si laide*'.[490] ('It's quite a shame [...] that he's so ugly.')[491] However, when Belle does finally acknowledge her desires towards the Beast, in Leprince de Beaumont's adaptation, she merely becomes '*accoutumée*' (accustomed) to his ugliness. Leprince de Beaumont

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[486] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 960.
[487] Zipes, p. 238.
[488] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 961.
[489] Zipes, p. 240.
[490] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 961.
[491] Zipes, p. 240.

erases all traces of passion from the tale. For her, what is important is being pragmatic in your choice of partner and getting over their ugliness. Although Belle does finally realise her feelings for the Beast, the desire and passion that we see in de Villeneuve's rendering of the tale have been removed.

When we consider that Mme Leprince de Beaumont's tale originated from the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche', the eradication of sexual imagery is notable. Whereas Apuleius' myth explores themes surrounding sexuality, Leprince de Beaumont's tale is practically desexualised in comparison. It is precisely this type of sanitising of fairy tales that, contemporary women fairy-tale authors are reacting against. By re-sexualising the tales they are attempting to reverse the process that relegated the tales to the (unfairly) marginalised sphere of children's literature. They are reinstating the imagery and myths that were always central to the original function of these tales. We will see many examples of this in the subsequent chapter.

As with the theme of sexuality, the theme of otherness is still present in Leprince de Beaumont's version. Still, it is not presented to the same extent as in de Villeneuve's version. The Beast is a monstrous figure: '*une bête si horrible*'.[492] ('a beast [...] so horrible.')[493] However, whereas in previous versions of the tale the Beast's appearance was described in detail, here we are just told that he is a Beast. We do not know the exact nature of his beastliness. Leprince de Beaumont may have removed the description as she felt it was unsuitable for children, but, interestingly, this is a motif that has been picked up on and developed by contemporary authors – Emma Donoghue and Tanith Lee for instance – with the introduction of a Beast character who is masked or hidden. In these tales, the authors play upon the fact that the most fearsome image is always the one that is in our own imagination.

One dialogue that is present in both de Villeneuve's tale and Leprince de Beaumont's is the first exchange between Belle's father and the Beast. When Belle's father respectfully addresses the Beast as *Monseigneur*, the Beast asserts that his name is '*la Bête*': '*Je ne m'appelle point Monseigneur, répondit le monstre, mais la Bête*'.[494] ('I'm not called 'lord' but Beast.')[495] This has

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[492] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 957.
[493] Zipes, p. 236.
[494] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 958.

become an iconic phrase that is synonymous with the Beauty and the Beast tale, mostly due to Jean Cocteau using it in his 1946 film *La Belle et la Bête*. Indeed, Cocteau acknowledges Mme Leprince de Beaumont's tale as his inspiration in the film credits. The Beast labelling himself with the title '*Bête*' shows us the level of his self-loathing. Even he is disgusted by his own monstrosity: '*Dites-moi, n'est-ce pas que vous me trouvez bien laid ?*'[496] ('Tell me, do you find me very ugly?')[497] In this manner, *la Bête* is the absolute representation of the *other*.

Leprince de Beaumont reminds us, once again, of Belle's virtue by showing us her willingness to sacrifice herself to save her father: '*Quoique je sois jeune, je ne suis pas fort attachée à la vie, et j'aime mieux être dévorée par ce monstre que de mourir du chagrin que me donnerait votre perte*'.[498] ('Even though I'm young, I'm not so strongly tied to life, and I'd rather be devoured by this monster than to die of the grief that your loss would cause me.')[499] Here, Leprince de Beaumont demonstrates Belle's absolute obedience and loyalty to her filial duty. However, when she states that she is willing to die, we could also interpret this as meaning that, perhaps, she is not completely happy in her current life. Is it merely loyalty that persuades her to go to the Beast or is there an underlying reason? This, again, is a possibility that contemporary writers, such as Angela Carter for instance, have drawn on and developed. Many women authors have interpreted Belle as also being *other* in her family situation and this becomes, in many tales, the motivation for her encounter with the Beast.

Leprince de Beaumont's tale is clearly one with a didactic and moral message as its aim. Here, Belle is the character who spells out Leprince de Beaumont's message: '*Il y a bien des hommes qui sont plus monstres que vous, dit la Belle, et je vous aime mieux, avec votre figure, que ceux qui, avec la figure d'homme, cachent un cœur faux, corrompu, ingrat.*'[500] ('There are many men who are more monstrous than you,' Beauty said, 'and I prefer you with your looks rather than those who have pleasing faces but conceal false,

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[495] Zipes, p. 236.
[496] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 961.
[497] Zipes, p. 239.
[498] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 959.
[499] Zipes, p. 237.
[500] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 961.

ungrateful, and corrupt hearts.')[501] Leprince de Beaumont's meaning is clear: a man can be unattractive and virtuous just as he can be handsome and dishonest. Ironically, though, after moralising about the unimportance of appearances, in the end, the Beast is transformed into a beautiful Prince, as handsome as Cupid himself: '*La Bête avait disparu, et elle ne vit plus à ses pieds qu'un prince plus beau que l'amour.*'[502] ('the Beast had disappeared, and at her feet was a prince more handsome than Eros himself.')[503] We can, as many do, interpret this as the image of the Beast merely changing in Belle's eyes, but many contemporary rewriters of the tale choose to leave the Beast as beast, rather than have him metamorphose into a man. Certainly, many viewers of Cocteau's film said later that they were almost disappointed when the Beast is transformed, as they had grown so fond of the *Bête* character.[504]

Throughout Leprince de Beaumont's tale the moral messages are apparent. In weighing up the importance of appearance versus virtue, Belle compares her sisters' husbands to the Beast, noting that though her sisters' husbands are handsome, they are vain and uncaring, whereas the Beast, though ugly, is kind and loving. Leprince de Beaumont makes her point clearly: respect is what a relationship should be founded on and love and physical attraction can follow. Belle is rewarded at the end of the tale and lives in '*un bonheur parfait*'[505] ('perfect happiness')[506] because the relationship between her and *la bête* is founded on virtue rather than lust. Leprince de Beaumont embeds the pedagogical message deeply in her version of the tale. Her students would have been in no doubt that it is important to look beyond appearances. Nevertheless, in sanitising the tale and removing the sexual references, Leprince de Beaumont also removed one of the most important psychological functions of this type of tale, which is to prepare young women to enter adulthood and embark on their first sexual relationship.

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[501] Zipes, p. 240.
[502] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 964.
[503] Zipes, p. 244.
[504] See 'Beauty and the Beast / La Belle et la Bête: Between Novel and Film', <http://culturalzeitgeist.blogspot.ie/2011/05/beauty-and-beast-la-belle-et-la-bete.html> [accessed 24/08/12].
[505] Leprince de Beaumont, p. 965.
[506] Zipes, p. 245.

3.3.8 The Evolution of *La Belle et la Bête*

As we have just seen, both Mme de Villeneuve and Mme Leprince de Beaumont present *La Belle et la Bête* in different manners. Whereas de Villeneuve's version shares some traits with her seventeenth-century predecessors, Leprince de Beaumont's ideals firmly reflect the changing ideals of the eighteenth century. Her version of *La Belle et la Bête* was not centred on questioning hypocrisy in society but was much more about embedding in young women a certain moral code. Nevertheless, we can consider these two authors as being part of the same interpretive community in one way as they both desexualised the tale and added a more moral dimension, though to different degrees. We can, therefore, assert that the *conteuses* of the seventeenth century are not part of the same interpretive community as those of the eighteenth century. This is due to the changing ideals at this time regarding childhood and what could be deemed as socially acceptable. The tale was transmitted due to the universality of its themes; however, the various interpretations of the tale all depend on its reception by different social and cultural groups. As Iser asserts, 'any successful transfer [...] depends on the extent to which [a] text can activate the individual reader's faculties of perceiving and processing'.[507] As I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, as society evolved, so did the various versions of the animal-bridegroom tale type. When we examine these versions, we can trace not only a lineage of women authors but, also, a lineage of social change.

The animal-bridegroom type tale still encompasses many universal themes that are pertinent to women in particular. Nevertheless, it seems almost ironic that, nowadays, in a world where women have more rights, that Leprince de Beaumont's tale – the most prudish of all the versions – is the edition that has survived and is the best known. The subversive commentary and wry observations of d'Aulnoy and her contemporaries somehow disappeared amongst the watered-down versions of fairy tales that were later targeted at children. There is, however, a sense of unrest amongst the women fairy-tale authors of the last forty years. They have returned, over the past few decades, to the older tales for inspiration and have rewritten them to reflect their own

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[507] Iser, p. 107.

ideologies and values. They may be fighting different political battles but they are fighting them, using the same tales.

3.4   From One Vogue to Another

Looking at these versions of *La Belle et la Bête,* we can trace the evolution of this type of tale through the two vogues of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France. Fairy tales started out as an adult genre with entertainment and subversion as their aim. We have seen this, for instance, in the tales of d'Aulnoy and Bernard. Male authors from that era also participated in the production of tales although I have argued here that there are notable differences in the tales produced by Perrault and the female authors of the time. In due course, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the tales evolved into a type of literature that was used as a didactic tool aimed at children. This is notable in the case of Mme Leprince de Beaumont. A tale that started out as a myth telling us of the wanton exploits of the god of love himself morphed over time into a much more ethical story with no references to sexuality whatsoever. The reception of the tale inherently differs depending on its social and cultural context, as I have argued, and we can see this demonstrated in the evolution of 'Cupid and Psyche' into Leprince de Beaumont's moral tale. Nonetheless, I will show in the next chapter that, despite this evolution, we can draw parallels between the seventeenth-century *conteuses* and modern women writers. Whilst fairy tales evolved over time into children's stories, it is precisely this type of evolution that women fairy-tale authors are now in the process of reversing. Presently, we are in the midst of another fairy-tale vogue that started a little over forty years ago when Angela Carter – probably the most celebrated modern fairy-tale author who will be discussed shortly – decided that perhaps it is not, in fact, necessary for the Beast to be transformed at all. Perhaps Beauty would rather be beast with him. In the following chapter the same themes of gender, sexuality and otherness will be examined in a corpus of contemporary tales by women authors. The aim, here, is to trace the further changes that have been made to the tale, draw relevant comparisons between the two groups of tales and authors and to ask why these types of changes have occurred and what their relevance is. In this manner, the aim of the next chapter is to prove that the seventeenth-century *conteuses* particularly (and not the eighteenth-century

authors) have a similar artistic and political aim as the authors included in the contemporary corpus and, because of this, we can compare the reception of the tales in the two eras and theoretically group them in the same interpretive community due to their similar social contexts, despite the fact that there is almost three hundred years between when the two groups of fairy tales were written.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFORMING TALES

'Writing new work based on existing sources allows the writer to delve deeper into the mysteries and meanings behind the origin material. You can have as many versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' or Little Red Riding Hood as you have writers retooling the story, and they all bring something of their own psyches to the table, which is fascinating to me.'

Wendy Wheeler

4 Comparative Analysis of Contemporary Tales

In this chapter, six contemporary fairy tales will be examined and compared, namely; 'The Tiger's Bride' from the collection *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) by Angela Carter, *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of 'Beauty and the Beast'* (1978) and *Rose Daughter* (1998) by Robin McKinley, 'The Tale of the Rose' from the collection *Kissing the Witch* (1997) by Emma Donoghue, 'Beauty' (1983) by Tanith Lee and, finally, 'Skin So Green and Fine' (1999) by Wendy Wheeler. As in the previous chapter, these tales will be analysed under the thematic headings of gender, sexuality and otherness.

As we shall see, in rereading the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche', as first recorded by Apuleius, and subsequent versions, and in rewriting Psyche's story, contemporary women writers are striving to invest her with power and to give her the authority to control her own destiny. This can be seen in many interesting ways in the rewritings that will be examined in this chapter. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, in Apuleius' narrative, Psyche must take all the blame whilst Cupid, who in fact was the cause of Psyche's downfall, receives no punishment at all. Psyche's sexual curiosity is associated with the negative and more specifically with sexual deviancy. The female characters are vilified while the males are vindicated. In rewriting the myth, women authors are attempting to rectify these unjust elements. In this manner, we can define the fairy-tale rewritings to be examined in this chapter, as feminist, as they do incorporate a political agenda.

As regards the representation of sexuality in this tale type, Wendy Wheeler notes that it is specifically erotic retellings that women fairy-tale authors commonly rewrite and that this is a means of asserting female sexuality: 'A lot of that is reclaiming women's sexual fantasies, redefining the erotic and making heroines their own sexual agents. By turning fairytale predators into sexual prey, for instance, these authors are overturning the patriarchal fantasies of what are supposed to be women's desires'.[508] In this way, Wheeler, like the other women authors included in this study, uses the fairy-tale specifically to subvert the patriarchal plots that are often associated with the genre. By transforming these plots, contemporary fairy-tale authors

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[508] Interview with Wendy Wheeler. See Appendix 2.

question male-dominated values and are able to offer a new fairy-tale heroine who is in control of her own sexuality and who will not be controlled or punished due to her curiosity. Indeed, transforming tales is a method for all fairy-tale authors to inscribe their own message within the tale; hidden within these seemingly harmless texts are strong political and moral messages. Just as the *conteuses* at the end of the seventeenth century used the *contes de fées* to question prevailing ideologies, nowadays, contemporary women authors are rebelling against the misogynistic stereotypes that became entrenched in tales, especially from the eighteenth to the twentieth century and, through the tales themselves, are overturning these perceptions. This is a trend that can be traced throughout the writings of all the authors to be examined in this chapter who are reworking fairy tales to embed new messages in them, to make them relevant for a modern audience by exploring modern issues.

The comparative approach adopted here incorporates intertextuality, feminist criticism, reception and reader response, taking the author's social and cultural contexts into account. It will also demonstrate the dialogic relationship that exists between the reader and the text within fairy tales. As mentioned earlier, literary meaning varies with every reader and over time. Changing ideologies are thus revealed in different readings of the text. Tales form an ever-evolving mosaic made up of a heteroglossia of voices from previous texts, as is visible in the many intertwined themes, motifs and plots that recur in the rewritings that make up this corpus. By conducting a dialogic comparison of these texts, we can piece together the evolution of values from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts to the present day.

As Jauss argues in his theory of reception, often an 'altered aesthetic attitude' causes writers to 'wilfully reach [...] back to reappropriate the past'.[509] This chapter will demonstrate how modern women authors indeed take possession of the tales of their predecessors in order to challenge and question stereotypical or closed-minded concepts regarding gender, sexuality and otherness that became entrenched in fairy tales over time. Nevertheless, this chapter will also demonstrate that contemporary women fairy-tale authors can be considered ideal readers, to use Jauss's term, of their predecessors' tales as

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[509] Jauss, p. 35.

they adhere to the codes and intentions of the *conteuses* insofar as they share a common goal of challenging prescribed notions and expressing moral messages through their tales.

As we shall see, modern authors subvert traditional tales in order to reflect how societal attitudes have broadened in the past three hundred years. Therefore, the fairy tales to be examined in this chapter continue the web of tales, as suggested by Nancy K. Miller, that the *conteuses* propagated previously. Like Arachne's web and Philomela's tapestry, tales for contemporary authors, as they already were for the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century *conteuses*, are weapons against patriarchal culture, as well as an inter-connected means of expression and communication, a way of challenging norms. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the threads are still being interlaced today.

Let us begin by examining the work of Angela Carter, who remains one of the best known and most influential collectors and rewriters of fairy tales of the past forty years.

4.1   Angela Carter (1940 – 1992)

English author Angela Carter is a world-renowned journalist and writer. Her vast writings include *Shadow Dance* (1966), *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), *Several Perceptions* (1968), *Heroes and Villains* (1969), *The Donkey Prince* (1970), *Miss Z* (1970), *Love* (1971), *Nights at the Circus* (1984), which was a winner of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, *Wise Children* (1991), and *Sea-Cat and Dragon King* which was released posthumously in 2000. Her collections include *Expletives Deleted* (1992) and *Burning Your Boats* (1995). Other nonfiction works include *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (1978), *Nothing Sacred* (1982) and *Images of Frida Kahlo* (1989).

Angela Carter worked extensively in the area of fairy tales, editing, translating and writing them. She edited the collections, *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* aka *The Old Wives' Fairy Tale Book* (1990) and *The Second Virago Book of Fairy Tales* aka *Strange Things Still Sometimes Happen: Fairy Tales From Around the World* (1992). She translated Charles Perrault's tales and published them in a volume entitled *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault* in 1977, which was re-published in 2008 with an introduction by fairy-tale scholar Jack Zipes. She produced another collection of translated tales in 1982, *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales*. In that collection she, again, translated Perrault's fairy tales alongside two by Leprince de Beaumont, one of which is 'Beauty and the Beast'.[510] The anthology which is to be discussed here is *The Bloody Chamber*, a collection of rewritten fairy tales, which was published in 1979. The collection contains rewritings of popular fairy tales such as 'Bluebeard', 'Snow White', 'Puss in Boots' and 'Little Red Riding Hood'. *The Bloody Chamber* was also awarded the Cheltenham Festival Literary Prize in the year of its publication.

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[510] The focus of this chapter is specifically rewritings as opposed to translations although rewriting and translation are both closely related forms of adaptation. Indeed, Carter's translation of Leprince de Beaumont's tale would be an enlightening area of investigation but is beyond the scope of this study. Also. it is worth noting that Carter rewrote Leprince de Beaumont's tale three years before she produced the translated version.

4.1.1 'The Tiger's Bride' (1979)

There are two retellings of 'Beauty and the Beast' in *The Bloody Chamber*: 'The Courtship of Mr Lyon' and 'The Tiger's Bride'. Here, I will focus on 'The Tiger's Bride' as it better demonstrates the themes in this thesis. The first-person narrator in 'The Tiger's Bride' starts by explaining how she has been lost to the Beast at cards by her father. Having been gambled away, like property, the young woman must go to the Beast's castle. There, she does not know what the Beast looks like because he wears a mask. He also reeks of perfume and she wonders what he can smell of that he needs to cover up so badly. His only request is to see her naked once. She cannot agree but offers to have sex with the Beast once if she can cover her head with a sheet. The Beast is hurt and insulted by her insinuation that she is like a prostitute and he her customer. When she is in the castle, she is given a life-size, wind-up doll that looks exactly like her. The doll is her servant and the narrator remarks that she, in fact, is like the doll because she is trapped and powerless. One day, whilst out riding, she realises that she is also like the horses and the Beast, as they are all considered soulless and worthless in the eyes of religion and society. The Beast shows himself in his true form to the girl; he is half-man, half-tiger. She, in return, shows herself naked to him. At the end of the tale, the narrator has her first sexual experience with the Beast and experiences a sexual epiphany. Following this, she undergoes a metamorphosis and transforms into a tiger. Carter was one of the first fairy-tale authors to modify the ending of 'Beauty and the Beast' in this manner and, as will be demonstrated, it is a trend that many women writers have adopted.

4.1.2 Overcoming Powerlessness and Voicelessness

In this tale, Angela Carter explores the powerless and voiceless nature that, in the past, was associated with the female gender. Through exploring the metaphor of the lifeless doll as a comparison with the narrator's demise, Carter shows the injustice that female characters in this type of tale are often subjected to. Also, the father is used as a contrast. He represents the patriarchal tyranny that the girl cannot escape from.

Roses are mentioned near the beginning of this tale, reminding us of the motif of the red rose that became popular after de Villeneuve's and Leprince de

Beaumont's tales: 'of all things, a bunch of his master's damned white roses as if a gift of flowers would reconcile a woman to any humiliation'.[511] With this reference, it becomes clear that Carter is critical of previous tales of this sort. She ridicules the idea that asking for a rose could warrant the punishment that Beauty receives in previous tales like de Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's. Also, unlike previous tales, this narrator will not be appeased with the gift of a mere rose. She is fully aware that her situation is unjust and she is not resigned to her fate. Indeed, the reader is aware of this from the very first line of the tale: 'My father lost me to The Beast at cards'.[512] The young woman is treated like her father's possession and this contributes to her feelings of powerlessness and voicelessness. Her only voice is through narrating the tale. Indeed, she leaves the reader under no illusion; it is her father's fault that she has ended up a prisoner to the Beast and, to her annoyance, she is powerless to voice her concerns: 'I watched with the furious cynicism peculiar to women whose circumstances force mutely to witness folly'.[513] Here, Carter references the history of women who had no voice and, indeed, the *conteuses* themselves whose tales were their only means of expression.

The doll in this tale serves as a representation of the narrator's situation. The mechanical imagery reflects the notion of a prescribed gender role and, in this case, being a woman:

> A knocking and clattering behind the door of the cupboard; the door swings open and out glides a soubrette from an operetta, with glossy, nut-brown curls, rosy cheeks, blue, rolling eyes; it takes me a moment to recognize her, in her little cap, her white stockings, her frilled petticoats. She carries a looking glass in one hand and a powder puff in the other and there is a musical box where her heart should be; she tinkles as she rolls towards me on her tiny wheels. 'Nothing human lives here', said the valet.[514]

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[511] Angela Carter, 'The Tiger's Bride', in *The Bloody Chamber* (London: Vintage, 1995 [1979]), pp. 51-67 (p. 55).
[512] *Ibid.* p. 51.
[513] *Ibid.* p. 52.
[514] *Ibid.* p. 59.

The doll is the narrator's 'double', 'a marvellous machine, the most delicately balanced system of cords and pulleys in the world'.[515] In this way, the doll represents a being who possesses outer beauty but has no heart or soul. Though the doll is perfectly beautiful, she has no capacity for rational or human thoughts and emotions. Indeed this is commented upon directly: 'That clockwork girl who powdered my cheeks for me; had I not been allotted only the same kind of imitative life amongst men that the doll-maker had given her?'[516] By using the character of the doll, Carter is commenting on the place of women in society in the past, voiceless objects of beauty afforded no power. This is again referenced in the tale by the narrator when she considers sending the doll back to her father in her place: 'I will dress her in my own clothes, wind her up, send her back to perform the part of my father's daughter'.[517] Her use of the phrase 'my father's daughter' is telling; in her father's eyes and in the view of society in general, she is not considered as a person but as an object or an appendage to be bought, sold and gambled with. Carter highlights this unjust situation in order to underline the unfair treatment of the heroine in previous tales of this type. It is fitting that she uses the medium of a fairy tale to express this message because the *conteuses* themselves, as already discussed, had little means of expression apart from the tales themselves. In this manner, Carter and the other authors to be discussed in this chapter reappropriate the very tales that often cast the heroine as a submissive figure in the past.

Carter's treatment of the father figure in this tale is interesting. There is a marked contrast between the narrator's powerlessness and her father's foolish omnipotence: 'his frenzy, my impassivity'.[518] Whereas in older tales, such as de Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's, the father is often portrayed as a foolish yet caring man, here, Carter makes him more beastly than the Beast himself. Numerous times throughout this tale, the reader is reminded of how careless this man has been with his daughter's fate: 'What a burden all those possessions must have been to him, because he laughs as if with glee as he

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[515] *Ibid.* p. 60.
[516] *Ibid.* p. 63.
[517] *Ibid.* p. 65.
[518] *Ibid.* p. 52.

beggars himself; he is in such a passion to donate all to The Beast'.[519] The narrator counts herself amongst her father's possessions as this is how she is treated. She is gambled with and lost like any other asset. Though voiceless in society, through her narration of the tale, the young woman manages to voice her anger at her father's recklessness: 'You must not think my father valued me at less than a king's ransom; but, at *no more* than a king's ransom. It was cold as hell in the parlour. And it seemed to me, child of the severe North, that it was not my flesh but, truly, my father's soul that was in peril'.[520] The narrator's words bring to mind Psyche's temptation and her subsequent demise although, in Carter's tale, it is the father's sin that causes his daughter's downfall. Thus, Carter shifts blame away from Beauty and onto her father. Indeed, this is a common trend amongst contemporary fairy-tale authors, as shall be demonstrated.

The narrator's father shows remorse later in the tale: 'I have lost my pearl, my pearl beyond price'. However, here, the Beast is the voice of reason. He reminds the father: 'If you are so careless of your treasures, you should expect them to be taken from you'.[521] Carter shifts blame once more here and, whilst blaming the father, exonerates the Beast. There is a contrast between the father's lack of humanity and the Beast's compassion despite his monstrous appearance: 'my father abandoned me to the wild beasts by his human carelessness'.[522] The reader is reminded of this contrast once more when the father receives his payment for his daughter from the Beast:

> [...] at first I thought he smiled at me. Then I saw he was smiling with pure gratification. He sat, I saw, in the parlour of our lodgings, at the very table where he had lost me, but now he was busily engaged in counting out a tremendous pile of banknotes. My father's circumstances had changed already; well-shaven, neatly barbered, smart new clothes. A frosted glass of sparkling wine sat convenient to his hand beside an ice bucket. The Beast had clearly paid cash on the nail for his glimpse of my

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[519] *Ibid.*

[520] *Ibid.* p. 54.

[521] *Ibid.* p. 55.

[522] *Ibid.* p. 63.

> bosom, and paid up promptly, as if it had not been a sight I might have died of showing.[523]

The father is so pleased with the money that he has received that he does not contemplate for a moment what his daughter may have had to go through to earn such a payment. Despite his earlier repentances, he still views his daughter as a commodity to be bartered. Indeed this is the subtext of much of Carter's tale. She exposes the injustice of being a woman during the period when these tales were written by the *conteuses*. Indeed, this is also conveyed through the mention of Beauty's mother who has also met with misfortune due to the same man: 'My mother did not blossom long; bartered for her dowry to such a feckless sprig of the Russian nobility that she soon died of his gaming, his whoring, his agonizing repentances'.[524] Here, Carter references a lineage of unfair treatment that women have had to endure and through her rewriting of 'Beauty and the Beast'; she challenges this inequality and presents an alternative perspective, one where the voiceless and powerless can reclaim control regardless of their gender.

Overall, as regards gender, Carter challenges the notions of powerlessness and voicelessness that were connected with women in previous tales and presents a strong heroine who succeeds in overcoming her tribulations. The doll in the tale reflects the narrator's incapacity and the fact that she is viewed as a being without capacity for thought and emotion. The father is exposed as more beastly than the Beast himself due to his selfishness and the mother, often not mentioned in this tale-type, is revealed to have succumbed to the maltreatment of her husband and society in general. However, the narrator overcomes the obstacles that her mother did not and, in a similar manner, Carter manages to present an alternative option for the heroine that was not possible for the *conteuses*. She overcomes the constraints of her gender by leaving humanity behind altogether and becoming animal where the limitations of gender do not apply.

By overcoming the limitations of her gender the narrator also breaks free from the sexual constraints that restricted her previously. The concepts of sexual initiation and sexual awakening are explored in the tale and, eventually,

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[523] *Ibid.* p. 65.
[524] *Ibid.* p. 52.

the narrator experiences a sexual epiphany when she experiences her first sexual encounter with the Beast. Through her descriptions of the narrator's sexual awakening and epiphany, Carter explores the realms of sexual pleasure and desire, specifically with regard to female pleasure and desire.

The sensual atmosphere is created from the beginning of the tale with words such as 'voluptuous' and 'luxury': 'Everything flowers; no harsh wind stirs the voluptuous air. The sun spills fruit for you. And the deathly, sensual lethargy of the sweet South infects the starved brain; it gasps: "Luxury! more luxury!"'[525]. The reference to fruit reminds the reader of fertility and, also of Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden. Indeed, Eve is later referenced directly by Carter, as shall be discussed. In contrast to this sensual atmosphere, however, Carter uses the image of a white rose, which becomes smeared in blood when she hands it to her father: 'When I break off a stem, I prick my finger and so he gets his rose all smeared with blood'.[526] The narrator's father has sold her virginity by selling her and so is responsible for her fears. With both these images, the reader is reminded that 'Beauty and the Beast' is always a tale that revolves around the theme of sexuality but also, it is a tale that deals with sexual initiation and fear.

The narrator is treated like a commodity and because of this she has no power over her sexual choices. The Beast's wish is to see the young woman naked:

> My master's sole desire is to see the pretty lady unclothed nude without her dress and that only for the one time after which she will be returned to her father undamaged with bankers' orders for the sum which he lost to my master at cards and also a number of fine presents such as furs, jewels and horses.[527]

More specifically, the Beast wants to see the young woman naked because she is a virgin: 'The sight of a young lady's skin that no man has seen before'.[528]. In a humiliating manner, the narrator is bargained for as though she is a precious ornament or work of art to be looked at. What is more, she is a highly valued commodity because of her 'undamaged' virginal status. By underlining this,

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[525] *Ibid.* p. 51.
[526] *Ibid.* p. 55.
[527] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[528] *Ibid.* p. 61.

Carter reminds us of the predicament that faces women, to be labelled either as promiscuous or virginal. Indeed, the narrator reflects on this herself: 'I wished I'd rolled in the hay with every lad on my father's farm, to disqualify myself from this humiliating bargain. That he should want so little was the reason why I could not give it; I did not need to speak for the Beast to understand me'.[529] As discussed earlier, Moi suggests that it is the positioning of women as abject beings, who are on the borderline, the frontier between man and chaos, which allows them to be vilified and venerated at the same time, cast as 'virgin' and 'whore' simultaneously, yet Moi sees neither of these portrayals as corresponding to any essential truth of women. Carter highlights this also within her tale; the narrator curses her virginity yet she would have also been punished had she actually 'rolled in the hay' with other men. Thus, she cannot escape the limitations her gender imposes on her either way. Therefore, the only power over her own sexuality that the narrator can claim is by stressing the injustice of her predicament:

> You may put me in a windowless room, sir, and I promise you I will pull my skirt up to my waist, ready for you. But there must be a sheet over my face, to hide it; though the sheet must be laid over me so lightly that it will not choke me. So I shall be covered completely from the waist upwards, and no lights. There you can visit me once, sir, and only the once. After that I must be driven directly to the city and deposited in the public square, in front of the church. If you wish to give me money, then I should be pleased to receive it. But I must stress that you should give me only the same amount of money that you would give to any other woman in such circumstances. However, if you choose not to give me a present, then that is your right.[530]

Patricia Duncker suggests that Carter's protagonist, rather than being strong, is actually a 'willing victim' and that 'Carter envisages women's sexuality simply as a strategic response to male arousal'. Duncker further argues that Carter has 'no conception of women's sexuality as autonomous desire'.[531] I would argue that the opposite is the case. By comparing herself to a prostitute, the narrator

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[529] *Ibid.*
[530] *Ibid.* p. 59.
[531] Patricia Duncker, 'Reimagining the Fairy Tales: Angela Carter's Bloody Chambers' in *Writing on The Wall: Selected Essays* (London, Pandora Press: 2002), pp. 66-83 (p. 74).

underlines the unpleasant way she has been bought and sold and passed from hand to hand. Carter, therefore, challenges patriarchal values rather than reinforces them. Indeed, the Beast's shame following the narrator's offer represents his acknowledgement that the narrator has, indeed, been treated like a possession, and not as a human being. By highlighting the unfair treatment of the narrator, Carter underscores the unfair treatment that women, including the *conteuses* themselves, have endured for centuries. Also, as shall be discussed later, Carter presents the protagonist, not as a victim but, as a woman who not only has autonomous desires but acts on them.

The theme of sexual initiation is also important in Carter's tale. The concept of female sexual curiosity is brought to the fore and Carter presents this is a positive manner: 'And what, I wondered, might be the exact nature of "his beastliness"?'[532] In this tale, the narrator's curiosity is represented as justified and natural. Carter exonerates the very curiosity that Apuleius condemned in his myth. The narrator recalls stories about tiger men from her childhood: 'He will gobble you up. Nursery fears made flesh and sinew; earliest and most archaic of fears. Fears of devourment'.[533] The reference to 'devourment' is a reminder of the long-standing association of the imagery of absorption and digestion with sexuality. Thus, Carter highlights the link between tales of sexual initiation and myth and legend. Also, she reminds the reader that tales like these are passed on from generation to generation and that they are used as didactic tools to convey, usually, moral messages:

> How I'd squeal in delighted terror, half believing her, half knowing that she teased me. And there were things I knew that I must not tell her. In our lost farmyard, where the giggling nursemaids initiated me into the mysteries of what the bull did to the cows, I heard about the waggoner's daughter. Hush, hush, don't let on to your nursie we said so; the waggoner's lass, hare-lipped, squint eyed, ugly as sin, who would have taken her? Yet, to her shame, her belly swelled amid the cruel mockery of the ostlers and her son was born of a bear, they whispered. Born with a full pelt and teeth; that proved it.[534]

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[532] Carter, p. 55.
[533] *Ibid.* p. 67.
[534] *Ibid.* p. 56.

The narrator's self-confessed 'delighted terror' hints at her anticipation of her own sexual initiation and she meditates on this herself in the tale: 'Old wives' tales, nursery fears! I knew well enough the reason for the trepidation I closely titillated with superstitious marvels of my childhood on the day my childhood ended. For now my own skin was my sole capital in the world and today I'd make my first investment'.[535] The narrator is aware that she is about to leave her childhood behind and be initiated into the adult world. The word 'titillated' suggests that though she fears this impending initiation, she is also looking forward to it. Indeed, this mixture of fear and fascination works so well in animal-bridegroom tales because it not only applies to the Beast but to the notion of sexuality in general and this is something that both the *conteuses*, such as de Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont, and contemporary authors, such as Carter, play upon.

When the narrator finally undergoes the beginning of her sexual initiation when she sees the Beast naked and he sees her unclothed, this fusion of fear and fascination remains:

> I therefore, shivering, now unfastened my jacket, to show him I would do him no harm. Yet I was clumsy and blushed a little, for no man had seen me naked and I was a proud girl. Pride it was, not shame, that thwarted my fingers so; and a certain trepidation lest this frail little article of human upholstery before him might not be, in itself, grand enough to satisfy his expectations of us, since those, for all I knew, might have grown infinite during the endless time he had been waiting.[536]

The narrator's 'shivering' hints at the anticipation of pleasure and the reference to satisfaction is also an evocation of the sexual initiation that is about to take place. The narrator feels that she is 'at liberty for the first time'[537] in her life. In this way, she is breaking free from the taboos that surround sexuality and she unapologetically enjoys her sexual initiation.

Following the narrator's sexual initiation, we see the theme of sexual awakening and acceptance come to the fore towards the end of the tale. Whilst removing her clothes, the narrator finds the transition difficult as she is

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[535] *Ibid.*
[536] *Ibid.* p. 64.
[537] *Ibid.*

unfamiliar with nakedness: 'I was unaccustomed to nakedness. I was so unused to my own skin that to take off all my clothes involved a kind of flaying'.[538] Here, Carter reminds the reader of the taboos that are associated with sexuality and the corporeal. Nakedness, though natural, feels very strange for the narrator. She finds it difficult to 'peel down to the cold white meat of contract' and, she notes that 'it is not natural for humankind to go naked, not since first we hid our loins with fig leaves'.[539] Carter references the shame that can be associated with sexuality, especially promiscuity, by reminding us of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The narrator, however, by entering into a relationship with the Beast, is freed because, in his world, the constraints of human society do not apply; nakedness is natural and there are no taboos surrounding sexuality. Because the Beast disrupts the norm, he allows the narrator to escape it.

It is this acceptance of sexuality that, then, leads the narrator to experience a sexual epiphany, with the Beast, in the final scene of the tale:

> A tremendous throbbing, as of the engine that makes the earth turn, filled the little room; he had begun to purr. The sweet thunder of this purr shook the old walls, made the shutters batter the windows until they burst apart and let in the white light of the snowy moon. Tiles came crashing down from the roof; I heard them fall into the courtyard far below. The reverberations of his purring rocked the foundations of the house, the walls began to dance. I thought: 'It will fall, everything will disintegrate'.[540]

Although it is the Beast who purrs, the choice of words, such as 'throbbing', 'thunder', and 'reverberations' suggests a sexual act between the narrator and the Beast. The narrator, here, experiences sexual pleasure for the first time. Carter overtly acknowledges female desire and pleasure in the tale which is something that the *conteuses* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were unable to do. She challenges traditional notions of unacceptability surrounding sexual pleasure by celebrating the narrator's sexual liberation. Indeed, here, the narrator revels in her sexual epiphany and is not represented as tainted or weak because she has succumbed to temptation like the farm-girl mentioned earlier in

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[538] *Ibid.* p. 66.
[539] *Ibid.*
[540] *Ibid.* p. 67.

the tale. On the contrary, the narrator's sexual initiation and awakening frees her as she takes responsibility for her own sexuality: 'And each stroke of his tongue ripped off skin after successive skin, all the skins of a life in the world, and left behind a nascent patina of shining hairs'.[541] Again, the final lines of the tale leave the reader in no doubt that Carter's tale is about sexual awakening. The sexual relationship between the narrator and the Beast is the key to the narrator's liberation from the constraints imposed on her by society. At the end of the tale, she has complete freedom and liberty to revel in her sexuality. Likewise, Carter had the freedom in writing her tale to express female desire and pleasure in such frank terms. Through her rewriting, she is breaking free from the taboos that the *conteuses* were constrained by and this is a trend that, as will be demonstrated, permeates all of the tales to be examined in this chapter. The narrator's final epiphany is, ultimately, represented by her transformation into a tiger. By turning the young woman into a Beast, Carter cements the idea that the narrator wishes to escape the constraints of her former way of life.

Indeed, it is the concept of breaking free that evokes the theme of otherness. The narrator, once trapped, is now free and, ironically, it is the process of becoming other (her metamorphosis) that frees her. The treatment of the theme of otherness in 'The Tiger's Bride' revolves around the issues of disguise and the unknown, the contrast between humanity and beastliness and the connection between women and animals as others, which is a notion that Carter plays upon heavily. In this tale, the Beast wears a disguise comprising a mask, a cloak, gloves and a wig. No part of his body or face can be seen apart from his eyes: 'the still mask that concealed all the features of The Beast but for the yellow eyes that strayed, now and then, from his unfurled hand towards myself'.[542] The disguise serves to heighten the narrator's sense of curiosity as imaginings of monstrosity are often worse than the reality. The Beast also wears a scent to mask his own animal odour and this also arouses her interest: 'He must bathe himself in scent, soak his shirts and underlinen in it; what can he smell of that needs so much camouflage?'[543] Here, Carter suggests that the

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[541] *Ibid.*
[542] *Ibid.* p. 52.
[543] *Ibid.* p. 53.

Beast's otherness is precisely the aspect that ignites the narrator's inquisitiveness, despite her initial fears. Again, we see the mingling of fear and fascination, as discussed earlier in relation to Margrit Shildrick, as a major factor in how otherness is treated in this tale-type. Indeed, it is the fact that the Beast's mask is *too* perfect that unnerves the young woman: 'The artificial masterpiece of his face appals me'.[544] The fact that the Beast wears a mask only serves as a reminder that something hideous must lie underneath it and this contrast between beastliness and humanity runs throughout the tale:

> There is a crude clumsiness about his outlines, that are on the ungainly, giant side; and he has an odd air of self-imposed restraint, as if fighting a battle with himself to remain upright when he would far rather drop down on all fours. He throws our human aspirations to the godlike sadly awry, poor fellow, only from a distance would you think The Beast not much different from any other man, although he wears a mask with a man's face painted most beautifully on it. Oh yes, a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect, uncanny.[545]

The Beast must fight to remain upright when it would be easier for him to walk on all fours and, in the same way, he must fight to hold on to his humanity when it might be easier to become totally animal-like. However, the Beast's sadness and shame are human attributes: 'The dropped tear caught upon his fur and shone'.[546] A human tear on the Beast's fur highlights the juxtaposition between human and animal and this is a theme that Carter uses to explore the contrast between the two states and in the end, as we shall see, Carter judges that being animal is sometimes a better state of being than human.

Like the contrast between animality and humanity, difference is also a theme that is innately connected to that of otherness. The narrator struggles to contemplate the great difference that exists between her and the Beast: 'it cannot be his face that looks like mine'.[547] Because of the strangeness of his appearance, she cannot reconcile his exterior with that of a being with compassion: 'Nothing about him reminded me of humanity'.[548] However, the

[544] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[545] *Ibid.* p. 53.
[546] *Ibid.* p. 61.
[547] *Ibid.* p. 56.
[548] *Ibid.* p. 64.

narrator understands that otherness and difference are relative terms, when a role reversal takes place in the tale. We witness the Beast's vulnerability when the narrator bares herself to him and he is more frightened of her: 'He was far more frightened of me than I was of him'.[549] By representing the Beast as vulnerable and the narrator as dominant, Carter switches the traditional roles in 'Beauty and the Beast' and challenges the notions of difference that are common in animal-bridegroom tales.

The connection between women and animals as others is a concept that Carter draws on extensively in 'The Tiger's Bride'. As discussed in the Critical Review, both Judith Butler and Julia Kristeva see the feminine as occupying a symbolic marginal position, something which is abject, on the borderline, the necessary frontier between man and chaos into which they also merge. So, women, animals and, therefore, beasts all fit, or are relegated into, this category of beings. Indeed, Shildrick also argues that the connection between women and animals lies in their common relegation to the sphere of other due to the fact that their bodies disrupt morphological expectations.[550] Carter, also, makes this connection between women and animals in her tale. Firstly, the narrator contemplates the place of horses within the hierarchy of humans and animals: 'I had always held a little towards Gulliver's opinion, that horses are better than we are, and, that day, I would have been glad to depart with him to the kingdom of horses, if I'd been given the chance'.[551] Here, the narrator is beginning to see the positive aspects of being animal and she dreams of a world where there are no societal constraints. She identifies with the horses in their bridles as 'beasts in bondage'[552] and she sees herself in this manner as well, as a captive. This becomes clear when the narrator considers the similarities between herself, the Beast, the Beast's valet and their three horses. They are all considered by society as others because of their differences:

> I was a young girl, a virgin, and therefore, men denied me rationality just
> as they denied it to all those who were not exactly like themselves, in all
> their unreason. If I could see not one single soul in that wilderness of
> desolation all around me, then the six of us – mounts and riders, both –

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[549] *Ibid.* p. 67.
[550] Shildrick, p. 3.
[551] Carter, p. 55.
[552] *Ibid.* p. 62.

could boast amongst us not one soul, either, since all the best religions in the world state categorically that not beast nor women were equipped with the flimsy, insubstantial things when the good Lord opened the gates of Eden and let Eve and her familiars tumble out. Understand, then, that though I would not say I privately engaged in metaphysical speculation as we rode through the reedy approaches to the river, I certainly meditated on the nature of my own state, how I had been bought and sold, passed from hand to hand.[553]

Here, Carter considers both women and animals as abject beings. In comparing herself to the Beast and the horses, the young woman acknowledges that she is also considered other because of her sex. She has been 'bought and sold' like an animal or a possession and she is treated more like a caged animal than a human being even by her father. Because she is a woman, she is treated as soulless by religion and society. By meditating on this fact, the narrator comes to identify with the Beast as she realises their situations are more alike than she first thought. Indeed, this mutual identification is a common trend in contemporary tales, as will be demonstrated in relation to the other tales discussed in this chapter.

The final reinforcement of this identification between the narrator and the Beast comes at the end of the tale, when the young woman transforms into a tiger. By becoming animal, she leaves the human world behind: 'I squatted on the wet straw and held out my hand. I was now within the field of force of his golden eyes. He growled at the back of his throat, lowered his head, sank on to his forepaws, snarled, showed me his red gullet, his yellow teeth. I never moved. He snuffed the air, as if to smell my fear; he could not'.[554] The narrator is no longer intimidated or afraid of the Beast's otherness. On the contrary, she accepts and admires it. The final line of the tale affirms Carter's message of the positive aspect of otherness: 'My earrings turned back to water and trickled down my shoulders; I shrugged the drops off my beautiful fur'.[555] The ending of the tale clarifies Carter's message about the lack of acceptance of difference. She portrays the marginalisation and powerlessness of women in a harsh light. When the narrator chooses to become a tiger rather than stay human, she

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[553] *Ibid.* p. 63.
[554] *Ibid.* p. 67.
[555] *Ibid.*

escapes her previous situation where she was treated as a possession. As an animal, she is no longer restricted by society's rules; she attains freedom. Carter's message ultimately revolves around exposing the injustices that women suffered in the past and in Carter's own time and challenging notions of difference and otherness and promoting them as positive attributes. This, as will be shown, permeates all the tales to be looked at in this chapter.

4.1.3 Breaking Free: Carter's Critique of Modern Society

Angela Carter, in this rewriting of 'Beauty and the Beast', highlights the powerlessness and voicelessness of heroines in this tale-type in the past, and gives the narrator the power to choose her own destiny and escape being treated as a possession. The doll in the tale represents women's powerlessness and, also, the narrator's father is exposed as being more beastly than the Beast himself. Sexual pleasure and female desire are acknowledged and played upon by Carter. It is underlined that the narrator is treated as a sexual object to be bought and sold. However, her sexual awakening and subsequent epiphany help her to overcome this status and to break free of the constraints that she was previously bound by because of her gender.

The connection between women and animals as abject beings is stressed within the tale. Their common status as *other* becomes a focal point and is a means by which Carter may comment upon injustices that women suffer in patriarchal society. The ultimate refusal of society's limitations on women is represented in the tale when the young woman not only turns her back on her prescribed gender role within society but refuses humanity altogether and becomes animal. This is a challenge to patriarchal society. By suggesting that animals actually have more humanity and compassion for each other than humans, Carter allows the reader to question his/her own perception of humanity and difference. Hence, Carter's tale is one of the first in a long line of contemporary rewritings that champion animality over humanity and, indeed, Carter is acknowledged by many contemporary authors, such as Wendy Wheeler, as a significant influence and the author who started the revival of fairy tales in the 1970s.[556] In the following section we will see how Robin

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[556] Interview with Wendy Wheeler. See Appendix 2.

McKinley rewrote this tale twice and the second time decided, like Carter, to allow Beauty to transform into a Beast.

4.2   Robin McKinley (1952-)

Robin McKinley is an award-winning fantasy and fairy-tale author. She has been the recipient of the Newbery Medal, the Newbery Honor, and the Mythopoeic Award for Adult Literature. While her novels are primarily aimed (by publishers) at a young adult audience, McKinley herself does not claim to be either a children's or an adult author exclusively. Her books are read by all age groups. McKinley hails from Maine in the United States, although she grew up as a 'Navy-brat' and, so, has lived all over the world. She demonstrates the strong connection between growing up reading fairy tales and, then rewriting them:

> Beauty and the Beast has been my favourite fairy-tale since I was about six; I still have the book I first read it in. When I wrote *Beauty*, I sat down, as I thought, to write a short story, and found I had more to say than I expected. I'd been going to that place in my head where my favourite fairy-tale lived for nearly twenty years; a lot had happened there in that time.[557]

McKinley wrote *Beauty* in 1978 and was then asked to rewrite the tale a second time, the result of which was the novel *Rose Daughter* (1998). She wrote her second version of 'Beauty and the Beast' during a time of transition in her life, when she was leaving Maine to move to Hampshire in the UK. By her own admission, this is a key reason behind the decision to rewrite the tale for a second time, as, by its nature, 'Beauty and the Beast' is a story about transition and transformation.[558]

Robin McKinley's two rewritings of 'Beauty and the Beast' follow de Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's versions quite closely. However, she embellishes the plot and adds many subplots, as we shall see. In an author's note at the start of her novel *Deerskin* (a rewriting of Perrault's *Peau d'âne* or Donkeyskin) McKinley references the 'bowdlerized state'[559] in which fairy tales often appear. What she is alluding to here is the 'watering down' of fairy tales that occurred from the eighteenth century onwards as was mentioned earlier in relation to de Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont. She is not only

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[557] Robin McKinley, 'The Story behind Rose Daughter', <www.robinmckinley.com/etc/essay_rosedaughter.php> [accessed 23 November 2010].
[558] *Ibid.*
[559] Robin McKinley, *Deerskin* (New York: Ace Books, 1994), Author's Note.

aware of the lineage of these types of tales but, more importantly, she wishes to counteract this process of sanitising that occurred over the years.[560] In her fairy-tale rewritings McKinley is revalorising a lost and misunderstood tradition and reclaiming a literary genre, which has been unfairly dismissed as unimportant or trivial, for a new generation.

4.2.1 *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* (1978)

The protagonist in this tale is named Honour and nicknamed Beauty. She shuns the social world of her sisters, Grace and Hope, and prefers the company of her horse, Greatheart. The tale follows a very similar plotline to that of Leprince de Beaumont's tale; Beauty's father is ruined and, consequently, the family must leave their luxurious lifestyle behind and embark upon a much more frugal style of living. Beauty is not perturbed by this as, in any case, she does not fit into the upper-class world in which she was reared. McKinley adds the characters of Beauty's brother-in-law, Ger, Hope's husband, with whom she has a platonic friendship and Melissa, a family friend, who becomes a mother figure to her. McKinley also adds the character of Robbie, Grace's fiancé, who is lost at sea on one of their father's ships. The family's new home is situated next to a magical forest which Beauty is warned not to enter. However, being the most curious in the family, Beauty is fascinated by the forest and is the only sister who is tempted to enter it. Whereas Grace and Hope learn to cook and clean the house, Beauty spends her time working outside with Ger, pulling tree stumps and doing jobs for her neighbours. Beauty's father, on hearing that his ships may have arrived safely, sets out on a journey to attempt to retrieve his lost fortune. Whilst on his expedition, he becomes lost in the forest one night and stumbles upon a castle where he encounters a ferocious Beast. In return for stealing a rose to give to Beauty, he must send one of his daughters to live with the Beast. Thus, Beauty's adventure begins. As Beauty spends time in the Beast's castle, she develops a relationship with him, despite her fears. By the end of the tale, she realises that she loves the Beast and the tale ends with a triple wedding; Beauty and the Beast, Melissa and Beauty's father and Grace

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[560] Robin McKinley was unavailable for interview and, therefore, despite researching her website and essays, I have been unable to ascertain what the exact influences for her version of 'Beauty and the Beast' were.

and Robbie, who has returned safely from sea. Here, we see McKinley make use mostly of Leprince de Beaumont's plot but, as we shall see, she embellishes the tale and adds her own message to it.

4.2.2   Challenging Stereotypes

Beauty's real name is Honour and her nickname is Beauty and she feels that the nickname is an ironic one as she sees herself as 'the plain one' in comparison to her sisters. The two sisters are unusual in the context of fairy tales as they are kind and loving towards Beauty, whereas, often in 'Beauty and the Beast' tales, sisters are portrayed as scheming and jealous. McKinley redeems the characters of the sisters and exonerates them of these vicious traits by offering their opposites: 'My sisters were too kind to refer to the increasing inappropriateness of my nickname.'[561] For the sisters, the nickname Beauty is not at all ironic but a sincere compliment to their beloved sister. Beauty is clearly too modest to feel that it is deserved, however, as she is completely unaware of her own attractiveness.

Her intelligence is also highlighted throughout the novel. She notes that people pity her because of her intelligence; as if it were a burden she must carry: 'Our governess had always remarked on my cleverness in a pitying tone of voice. But at least it was true. My intellectual abilities gave me a release, and an excuse. I shunned company because I preferred books; and the dreams I confided to my father were of becoming a scholar in good earnest, and going to University'.[562] Beauty uses her intelligence as a mechanism to distance herself from others. As intelligence was often deemed a masculine trait in the past, as we have seen in Perrault's *Riquet à la Houppe*, Beauty's academic abilities would have automatically rendered her different or not quite feminine enough. However, this gender ambiguity is something that McKinley subtly plays upon. Beauty indeed does not correspond to the conventional feminine standards in her mannerisms and personality, and being dissatisfied with her looks, she views herself as unattractive:

> I don't know what happened to me. As I grew older, my hair turned
> mousy, neither blond nor brown, and the baby curl fell out until all that

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[561] Robin McKinley, *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* (New York: Corgi Books, 2004 [1978]), p. 11.
[562] *Ibid.* p. 12.

was left was a stubborn refusal to co-operate with the curling iron; my eyes turned a muddy hazel. Worse, I didn't grow; I was thin, awkward, and undersized, with big long-fingered hands and huge feet. Worst of all, when I turned thirteen, my skin broke out in spots.[563]

From Beauty's unforgiving description of her appearance, it is clear that she views herself as not fitting into the ideal of femininity that her sisters represent. Her large hands and feet are associated with masculinity and, in this way, Beauty's gender is somewhat blurred in the tale. McKinley plays on this ambiguity to challenge the stereotypes that are traditionally found in this tale-type, and in the very name 'Beauty'.

As in many tales of this type, the protagonist has an affinity with animals, especially with her horse Greatheart. In fact, she feels more comfortable reading her Greek translations to Greatheart than at upper-class parties with her sisters. McKinley gives us a Beauty character, in keeping with the other contemporary versions to be discussed here, that is already in exile before she ever has to go to the Beast's castle. She is already uncomfortable in trying to fit in to the expected role of a well-to-do young woman so, when her father loses his fortune, the frugal lifestyle that is imposed upon the family suits Beauty more than their lavish lifestyle ever did: 'but I had never been afraid of hard work, I had no beauty to lose, nor would there be any wrench at parting from high society'.[564] With this remark, Beauty insinuates that, for some women, hard work would be extremely unpleasant, whereas she is courageous and strong. McKinley challenges the stereotype of the weak, frail woman and creates a tough heroine. What is more, when the time comes for Beauty to go to the Beast's castle, she accepts her fate pragmatically, stating: 'I'm the youngest – and the ugliest. The world isn't losing much in me'.[565] Whilst many fairy-tale heroines are strong, few are unattractive. By highlighting Beauty's lack of traditional femininity, McKinley underlines the fact that Beauty does not conform to a normative gender role. As she works outside with Ger rather than in the house with her sisters, Beauty comments that she is 'becoming more boy

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[563] *Ibid.* p. 10
[564] *Ibid.* p. 25.
[565] *Ibid.* p. 89.

than girl'[566] and that, because of this the townsfolk regard her as somewhat ambiguous. Nevertheless, they accept her and Beauty is not perturbed by people remarking on her lack of femininity. However, she notes that physical work has made her stronger and that she is aware that this is not a desirable quality: 'and I was also very strong, although this is not considered an important virtue in a woman'.[567] By highlighting this traditional view, McKinley challenges the gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity typical of many older tales.

Stubbornness and disobedience, also, traditionally viewed as male traits and therefore as negative attributes for a female, are important aspects of Beauty's character; she is the only girl in the family that will not automatically obey the rules: 'I was the only one who had any inclination that needed to be curtailed'.[568] Whereas the other sisters avoid the magical forest, Beauty is tempted more and more to venture into the woods. McKinley depicts Beauty as embodying many traits that would be traditionally viewed as masculine and the reader is aware that McKinley is portraying these as positives attributes. Though she does not conform to her sisters' levels of femininity, Beauty is not overly troubled by her gender, nor is her family who accept her as she is. Although Beauty comments at various points throughout the tale that she is not beautiful like her sisters and that there was 'an egregious, and deplorable, difference'[569] between them, these seem to be more practical observations than lamentations over her unattractiveness. On the whole, Beauty seems to be quite content with her lack of traditional feminine beauty and even proud of it. She is happy to be treated more like a man than a woman by the townsfolk whom she helps with manual labour: 'When Greatheart had hauled yet another malignant old stump out of the ground, and the two of us, plus the owner of the land and all his neighbours, were covered with dirt and splinters, I was clapped on the back and given mugs of small beer'.[570] Whereas her sisters are bowed to by the men of the town, Beauty is treated as though she was one of them. Thus, although her difference is noted, she is accepted as she is. Beauty's lack of womanliness, and unattractiveness even, are highlighted by McKinley as a

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[566] *Ibid.* p. 48.
[567] *Ibid.* p. 57.
[568] *Ibid.* p. 50.
[569] *Ibid.* p. 11.
[570] *Ibid.* p. 48.

positive aspects of her personality and, in this way, a non-normative gender-role is presented in an optimistic manner in the tale.

However, while she may accept her traits that are viewed as masculine by the townspeople, it is Beauty's femaleness that causes uneasiness. She avoids acknowledging her sex or her sexual maturation: 'overall I was on pretty good terms with myself. It helped that the only looking-glass in the house was in my sisters' room'.[571] While Beauty is proud of her strength and other masculine characteristics, she refuses to acknowledge that she is growing into a woman, which is a typical stage of adolescence and an important theme in all animal-bridegroom tales. This is what Beauty must come to accept. One way in which this is facilitated is through the character of the mother figure, the family friend, Melinda. Whereas normally in 'Beauty and the Beast' tales, the mother figure is absent, Melinda is introduced as a step-mother figure. Unlike most step-mother characters, Melinda is a wise, kind and loving woman. Fittingly, Melinda is known, in the tale, as a tale-teller who recounts stories about the magic forest. Melinda is the old-woman tale teller who passes on her wisdom to the younger girls in her family and, hence, helps Beauty along in her journey of self-acceptance. This is something that is also evident in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch*, which will be discussed later.

We see the final ambiguity as regards gender roles in the final lines of McKinley's tale. In a role reversal, during the marriage ceremony, Beauty must give a name to the transformed Beast, who has forgotten the name he used in his former life. He tells her: 'You will have to name me'.[572] Here, Beauty takes on the traditionally male responsibility of naming her spouse. The Beast becomes submissive and relies on his wife to name him, a normally patriarchal practice denoting dominance or ownership, but one, here, which is the expression of two people being on an equal par. Even if some masculine qualities seem to remain, at the end of the tale, Beauty accepts her femaleness, finally acknowledging that, by loving herself, she can, in fact, feel very beautiful. She sees herself differently at the end of the tale: 'her hair was a pale coppery red, and her eyes, strangest of all, weren't muddy hazel, but clear and

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[571] *Ibid.* p. 57.
[572] *Ibid.* p. 271.

amber, with flecks of green'.[573] As she has finally accepted her ambiguous gender, the two facets of her identity can co-exist, and she can still have a fulfilling relationship with her partner.

As we can see, McKinley presents us with complex and modern characters who are not one-dimensional or stereotypical. Through her subtle but powerful exploration of Beauty's gender, McKinley demonstrates that gender is always an ambiguous concept and that there are no absolutes when it comes to understanding it. Indeed, as discussed earlier in relation to Butler's work, to define 'gender' at all is a difficult task as it is a notion that is always in flux. McKinley promotes this ambiguity as a positive aspect in her tale. Even at the end, though she is beautiful, Beauty still does not fit into a prescribed gender role but happiness comes to her with the discovery that her gender allows for such variations.

Modern ideals of acceptance are reflected in this tale; McKinley challenges gender stereotypes by portraying Beauty as a character who does not possess stereotypically feminine traits. Through this portrayal, she promotes a message of tolerance as regards gender. McKinley's tale adds to the ever-growing web of contemporary tales that challenge closed-minded values. All the tales that make up this new network of stories carry on the tradition of tale-telling as a didactic method but also question the old-fashioned norms that became entrenched in the tales.

One important method that McKinley uses to challenge traditional norms is that of representing acknowledgement of female sexual desire and pleasure. As opposed to the euphemisms used by de Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont, McKinley overtly illustrates Beauty's sexual desire for the Beast and this, then, underscores the concept of sexual awakening typical of the tale. The sexual content of the tale, though not explicit, is clearly present. *Beauty* is categorised by the publisher as a 'young adult' novel but this does not constrain McKinley; the sexual references are still clear. As we shall see, McKinley, like her predecessors, challenges the notion of dangerous female sexuality in Apuleius and instead promotes a message of acceptance of female sexuality into her tale.

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[573] *Ibid.* p. 266.

In McKinley's tale Beauty is not completely comfortable with her sexuality or her role as a young woman. When she is kissed by her friend, Ferdy, at her sister's wedding the episode leaves her feeling uncomfortable and, although Ferdy then falls in love with her, she does her best to avoid him. 'It was the day of the wedding also that Ferdy kissed me, which was how I discovered that looking presentable had its drawbacks'.[574] For Beauty, looking attractive is not something that she strives for as this leads to undesirable attention. Because she is eighteen, she is on the threshold between childhood and adulthood and this causes her anxiety. Like many Beauty characters, she is uncomfortable with her awakening sexuality and she longs to remain in the familiar and safe realm of childhood as long as possible.

Yet, when she decides that it is she who must go to the Beast's castle, Beauty justifies her decision by stating, 'Well, I'm turned eighteen, I'm ready for an adventure'.[575] She has crossed over the threshold into adulthood, here, and there is a hint at the imminent loss of her innocence in her words. She knows that she is ready to explore a sexual relationship. Despite her previous hesitations, her determination, here, to go to the Beast perhaps tells us that it is not solely duty that is the reason for her departure but perhaps that her father's tales of the Beast have awoken her curiosity as well: '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'.[576] McKinley hints at this numerous times throughout the tale using the symbolic red rose as a metaphor: 'a great scarlet rose […] in full and perfect bloom'.[577] On the one hand, the rose is a symbol of love and innocence. Indeed, the rose has a cultural and historical significance in Christian iconography. It is traditionally associated with Christ's mother, the Virgin Mary, who is sometimes referred to as 'the Mystic Rose'. Because of this, the rose can be a symbol of purity.[578] Yet, on the other hand, it is also a symbol of awakening sexuality and defloration. The red colour symbolises blood and the loss of Beauty's virginity and the blooming of the petals reminds us of Beauty's

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[574] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[575] *Ibid.* p. 90.
[576] *Ibid.* p. 92.
[577] *Ibid.* p. 62.
[578] See Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols,* trans. by John Buchanan-Brown (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 813-14.

sexual maturation. Therefore, in one sense, these two different interpretations would seem to contradict each other but there is a symbolic overlap in that the rose, in both interpretations, has an association with the maternal and female fecundity.[579] In the scene where she is first handed the rose, Beauty takes it 'trembling'. The choice of word has connotations of fear but also of pleasure, the word 'trembling' denoting desire or orgasm. Beauty is afraid of the Beast, yet, the reader is aware that she will begin to feel attracted to him. Her fear reminds us of the origins of the tale; sexual maturation is always linked to fear and apprehension in animal-bridegroom tales, but it is also strongly connected with desire and pleasure and this is something that McKinley highlights in her version.

We can see many influences from de Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's tales in *Beauty*. For example, McKinley has preserved the dream motif from de Villeneuve's tale. McKinley's Beauty character also sees a handsome young man in her dreams although she finds him more perplexing than attractive. Interestingly, despite McKinley's overt references to sexual pleasure and desire, the dreams in McKinley's tale are, in fact, less sexualised than in de Villeneuve's but, again, we are reminded that this tale is aimed at young adults for the most part.[580] It is, perhaps, for this reason also that McKinley chose to use a version of Leprince de Beaumont's dialogue: 'Will you marry me?'[581] as opposed to de Villeneuve's 'Will you sleep with me?' Although she asserts that 'Beauty and the Beast' was always her favourite tale as a child, it is not clear exactly which version of the tale McKinley grew up reading. However, it is likely that she was either consciously or unconsciously influenced by many different adaptations of both. Often, we are familiar with different fairy tales but our learning of them has almost been unconscious. We know their plots and characters but do not remember exactly which version we

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[579] In Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, where the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' first appeared, roses are also present and are a symbol of rebirth. Lucius is told by Isis to eat a garland of roses in order to transform back into human form. See Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. by E.J Kenney (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 198.

[580] Incidentally, Evelyn M. Perry suggests that McKinley could have been an influence for Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, released in 1991. Indeed, many of McKinley's concepts, such as anthropomorphic furniture, appear in the Disney version also, but this idea had already appeared in Jean Cocteau's 1946 film adaptation too. See Evelyn M. Perry, *Robin McKinley, Girl Reader, Woman Writer* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2011), p. 65.

[581] McKinley, 2004, p. 134.

heard first. It is precisely this characteristic of the genre, as discussed earlier in relation to Jack Zipes's theory of fairy tales as memes, which allows them to evolve and continue being passed on.

We see the theme of sexuality explored further in McKinley's version in the development of the relationship between the Beast and Beauty. Though they develop a bond, Beauty can still not bring herself to accept her attraction towards him: 'the thought of marrying him remained horrible'.[582] Because she has not fully accepted her sexual maturation and her desire for the Beast, she cannot yet commit to a sexual relationship. McKinley plays on the metaphor of hunter and prey, which we have seen already in de Villeneuve's tale especially. The concept of being devoured is explored with the subtext reminding us that sexuality is always at the core of this tale; McKinley describes the Beast as 'insatiable' and Beauty as his 'dish'.[583] These images remind the reader of the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche'; the dread of being eaten by a monster was, indeed, what roused Psyche's fear and curiosity originally. As the relationship between the Beast and Beauty develops further, Beauty becomes more at ease. In an intimate act, she feeds the Beast cake with her hands: 'Come it won't hurt, and I pushed the morsel of cake between his teeth'.[584] Here we see sexual roles reversed by the symbolic penetration of the Beast by Beauty. There is an element of force present on Beauty's part; she persuades the Beast to let her take control and this reflects the fact that she is taking control of her sexuality and, more broadly, she is also taking control of the sexual relationship between them. Beauty becomes more dominant and powerful and the Beast becomes the partner in the relationship who is submissive and obeys. Also, because the Beast allows Beauty to be the dominant partner, a bond of trust is formed between the two characters. Later, the sexual imagery is reinforced in the description of the Beast cutting his hand on a glass during dinner:

> [...] darker drops were welling up from the tender web of flesh between thumb and index finger and running down his wrist and spotting the white lace; and dripping to the table between the dark clenched fingers.[585]

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[582] *Ibid.* p. 178.
[583] *Ibid.* p. 117.
[584] *Ibid.* p. 180.
[585] *Ibid.* p. 182.

The imagery of red blood reminds us again of the imagery of the red rose and once again, embeds the concept of loss of virginity and sexual discovery in the narrative. Here, however, in another role reversal it is the Beast's blood that stains the white lace, not Beauty's. We are reminded, again, that Beauty is taking control and that she has become the one who is more sexually dominant in the relationship.

Acceptance is highlighted by McKinley in the final part of the tale when Beauty acknowledges that the Beast is *her* Beast, and in a scene that is reminiscent of the ending of Cocteau's film, she is shocked by the appearance of a handsome young man in place of her Beast, hinting at the idea that it was the Beast who inspired her awakening sexuality and that Beauty may prefer her lover as Beast than as a handsome Prince. In this way, McKinley is also pointing out that, like gender, sexuality can be difficult to define. Even at her tale's conclusion, not all of Beauty's anxieties have completely disappeared. For this reason, McKinley's portrayal of a sexual relationship is much more realistic than what is normally written for young adults. Worry and anxiety are feelings that may persist; they do not completely disappear with a tale's 'Happy-ever-after' conclusion. Once again, we see McKinley portray ambiguity as natural and positive. As far as the themes of gender and sexuality are concerned, there is an apparent refusal on McKinley's part to give the reader an expected 'neat' happy ending.

As in many 'Beauty and the Beast' tales, the Beast's monstrosity is portrayed in an ambiguous manner and Beauty's own ambivalent self-image is connected to his monstrosity. He is continually described as animal-like and, as such, non-human: 'There was a roar like that of a wild animal, for certainly nothing human could make a noise like that'.[586] Yet, the Beast does not fit into the realm of animal either because he walks and talks like a man. Thus, the reader is reminded that anything non-human which can neither be categorised as animal is something that is abject and completely other, as discussed in the Critical Review in relation to Julia Kristeva. Even the Beast's castle is a reminder of the *other* that lives there: 'the castle looked like a crouching

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[586] *Ibid.* p. 82.

animal'.[587] Following de Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's respective narratives, the Beast wishes to be known only by that name: 'I am the Beast'.[588] McKinley portrays his self-hatred through the loathing of his own physical appearance and his constant anxiety as regards pleasing Beauty: 'Do you hate me then?'[589] He tries in vain to win her approval and acceptance and this self-consciousness reflects his awareness that he is viewed as a monster by Beauty.

McKinley makes use of the symbolism of the griffin in her rewriting, when the Beast gives Beauty a ring emblazoned with a creature, half-lion, half-eagle. Traditionally, the griffin is a symbol of strength, wisdom and salvation, embodying the terrestrial and celestial powers of both the lion and the eagle. In this manner, it can also represent the coming together of a being that is both human and divine.[590] However, though beautiful and strong, the griffin is a hybrid creature. Both Beauty and the Beast can identify with such a creature and with each other as both of them, though in different ways, are dual characters. The Beast is half-monster, half-man, as his metamorphosis proves and Beauty can be seen as half-man, half-woman because of her ambiguous gender and perceived unattractiveness. Through the positive imagery of the griffin, McKinley celebrates both characters' hybrid natures. She remarks humorously that should the Beast attempt to devour her, she will not make 'a delicate morsel'.[591] She identifies with the Beast's self-hatred as she also feels as though her body does not live up to societal expectations. Indeed, this is a pertinent issue to tackle in a book that is destined for young adults living in a society where there is immense pressure to be attractive and self-assured.

As discussed earlier in relation to Shildrick, the monster figure always embodies an intermingling of 'threat and promise'. It is something which is simultaneously 'abhorrent [and] enticing'.[592] Indeed, it is the fact that a monster is half-human that makes it all the more terrifying. We can see McKinley knowingly play on this in her descriptions of the Beast: 'He walked like a man, and was dressed like one, which made him the more horrible, as did an

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[587] *Ibid.* p. 76.
[588] *Ibid.* p. 129.
[589] *Ibid.*
[590] See Chevalier and Gheerbrant, p. 458.
[591] McKinley (2004), p. 117.
[592] Shildrick, p. 5.

articulate voice proceeding from such a countenance'.[593] Beauty also notices that '[...] what made his gaze so awful was that his eyes were human'.[594] The simultaneous repulsion and fascination that the Beast evokes is reflected in Beauty's simultaneous fears and desires.

Beauty's otherness is further portrayed when she realises she no longer *belongs* with her family. This is a theme on which, as we will see, quite a lot of contemporary rewritings of this tale type generally focus. The concept of exile and otherness as regards the Beauty character is often highlighted by authors, whereas, in the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century tales, the realm of other was depicted only as regards the Beast. Contemporary authors, it would seem, chose to make a connection based *precisely* on the mutual sense of otherness that the two protagonists possess and this is certainly the case in McKinley's writings.

Following the familiar plot, when Beauty finally declares her love for him, the Beast transforms into a striking man. Her initial reaction, however, is horror as her Beast has disappeared and she exclaims: 'I can't marry *you* […] Look at you. You should marry a queen or something, a duchess at least, not a dull drab little nothing like myself'.[595] Because her own insecurities persist, she feels that she is unworthy of such a beautiful person. However, it is hinted at that it may not be a simple case of self-consciousness here. The true reason for Beauty's shock could be that she is disappointed at the disappearance of the Beast. It was her Beast, not the handsome Prince that aroused her desire and, it is therefore understandable that she should prefer the Beast to the man. Certainly, acceptance of otherness is a common trait between the two protagonists. Both Beauty and the Beast must learn to accept their own and each others' physical attributes to find happiness at the end of the tale.

However, there is also a certain sense of disappointment surrounding the physical transformation of Beauty at the end of this tale. In a somewhat predictable conclusion, the dowdy, plain Beauty is transformed into a beautiful young woman. If one were to interpret this metamorphosis literally it might seem that McKinley is undoing the messages of acceptance that have been woven throughout the tale up until this point. However, it seems more fitting

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[593] McKinley, 2004, p. 83.
[594] *Ibid.* p. 131.
[595] *Ibid.* p. 265.

within the context of the rest of the tale to interpret this as Beauty discovering and accepting her beauty that was, indeed, present all along, a fact she was not able to recognise. McKinley paves the way with this rewriting for subsequent changes to be made to the traditional 'Beauty and the Beast' plot. It is important to mention at this point that McKinley's second rewriting, *Rose Daughter*, ends, as we shall see, in a very different manner. It would seem that she felt that more remained to be said as to whether Beauty or the Beast was in need of transformation at all. However, the fact that both characters, and not just the Beast, are transformed at the end of this tale is in itself already a significant change, denoting a feminist approach.

4.2.3   Championing Ambiguity

We can see in McKinley's *Beauty* some interesting modifications to Leprince de Beaumont's *La Belle et la Bête* especially concerning the juxtaposition of masculinity and femininity but, also, the challenging of these binaries. McKinley portrays male and female characters in a non-stereotypical and balanced manner and, in this way, she modernises the tale and makes it relevant to a more open-minded contemporary readership. She champions ambiguity in the sense that it is accepted in the tale; Beauty accepts the Beast in his quasi-human state and Beauty's ambiguous gender is accepted by her family and neighbours. Difference is not completely eradicated by the end, as it is in older tales of this type. Though both characters are transformed, there is a sense that this transformation is merely a matter of perception, the protagonists' way of looking at each other and at themselves, with new-found confidence and love. McKinley also explores Beauty's unwillingness to conform and her own identification with the Beast's monstrosity and loneliness. She inherits from the seventeenth-century *conteuses* many of the common elements in the tales, but her subtle changes, such as the challenging of gender stereotypes, give us an insight into her modern message which is one of tolerance and acceptance.

In this way, McKinley's reception and subsequent response to 'Beauty and the Beast', tells us a lot about her own views. She follows the same plot as de Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont for the most part and we can certainly see the influence of previous tales in her work. However, in the changes that she makes, we decipher her own morality rooted in the text. Her reception of

the tale is influenced by her social background; we can see this through the modernising that the tale has undergone and the removal of a clear-cut binary between masculinity and femininity. The evolution of ideas and changes in ideals is revealed in the dialogic relationship between McKinley and the original tale as reflected in the similarities as well as in the modernisations noticeable between her rewriting and the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century versions. Her tale thus fruitfully adds to the ever-evolving intertextual mosaic of fairy-tales.

The following section examines *Rose Daughter* and focuses on the pertinent changes inserted by McKinley. In writing the tale for a second time, the author added further elements to the on-going dialogue that permeates the web of tales.

4.2.4 *Rose Daughter* (1998)

Once again, in this version of 'Beauty and the Beast', McKinley follows, for the most part, a combination of the plotlines of de Villeneuve's and Leprince de Beaumont's tales. Here, the tale begins with Beauty recalling a dream she had of her dead mother when she was a child. She associates the smell of roses with her mother who was killed in a riding accident years before. The plot begins when Beauty's father is ruined and the family must move to a small cottage, named Rose Cottage, in the rural town of Longchance. Beauty is an avid gardener and has a special interest in roses, which, for unexplained reasons, can only be grown using magic as they are very rare and special. On the journey to attempt to retrieve his lost fortune, Beauty's father, as before, stumbles across a castle where he spends the night. In the morning, when he is leaving, he takes a rose to give to Beauty. The Beast is furious and orders the merchant to come back with her. He is specifically interested in her when he learns that she has an interest in roses. The metaphor of the rose is much more developed in this tale in comparison to McKinley's first version. The whole tale is punctuated by lavish descriptions of flowers, specifically red roses, which again represent Beauty's awakening sexuality.

As in *Beauty*, the two sisters are kind, although, they are also impatient and slightly spoiled: Lionheart, like her mother, is a fearless daredevil and the ironically named Jeweltongue is not only intelligent but also very outspoken.

The people of Longchance believe in a local legend that a curse will befall the area when three sisters live in Rose Cottage. However, as Lionheart, has disguised herself as a young man in order to get a job as a groom for the local lord, the neighbours are not aware that the prophecy is about to be fulfilled.

When Beauty is in the Beast's castle, she has a recurring dream. This is certainly a reference to the dream motif that is so prominent in de Villeneuve's tale. However, whereas Belle, in de Villeneuve's tale, dreamt of a beautiful lover, here, Beauty dreams of a monster that waits for her at the end of a long corridor. After staying with the Beast for a period of time, Beauty becomes homesick and she misses her family desperately. She is allowed to return home for a number of days on the condition that she returns to the Beast. When she does return and declares her love for the Beast, the scene of the transformation offers a new twist to the reader: Beauty is given a choice between returning the Beast to his human form or keeping him as the Beast she has known so far. If he returns to human form, his wealth and fortune will likewise be returned to him and Beauty and her family can return to their former wealth and status. If he remains a Beast, they will return to the village and the frugal life which her family has created there. Beauty chooses to allow the Beast to remain in his current form, as not only would he miss being strong and immune to the elements but, also, she has grown to love him as a Beast, and as a human, he would be a stranger to her. As will be demonstrated over the course of this chapter, this change is especially significant as it is one of the main trends that have become popular in modern rewritings of this tale type.

4.2.5   Challenging Binaries

McKinley, once again, presents characters who do not fit into conventional gender roles: she reintroduces a mother character and re-instates this female role, which is normally absent in animal-bridegroom tales. However, this maternal figure is not a conventional character; in fact, she displays mannish traits:

> When the youngest daughter was five years old, her mother died. She had bet one of her hunting friends she could leap a half-broken colt over a farm cart. She had lost the bet and broken her neck.[596]

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[596] Robin McKinley, *Rose Daughter* (New York: Ace Books, 1998) p. 5.

Beauty's mother is shown to have been more reckless than courageous, and possibly somewhat wild, traits traditionally acceptable in a man but intolerable in a woman. In this manner, the mother's gender role is non-normative in that she is not a sedate and careful mother. She could be labelled as irresponsible and careless as her death has orphaned her three daughters. Whilst the mother may seem careless, McKinley shows that she can still act as a role model, through the character of Lionheart, who is very like her. Whilst Lionheart's wild streak also leads her into trouble at times, her courage is commended in the tale when she saves the family by pretending to be a man in order to get a job. McKinley thus continues to promote a balanced view of gender and undermines stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Lionheart is constantly being scolded for her 'more dangerous adventures'.[597] McKinley plays on her masculine disguise: 'her hair was gone, chopped raggedly across the forehead and up the back of her head as if she had sawn at it with a pocket-knife'.[598] Lionheart overcomes the limitations her gender has imposed on her by living as a man. This is not a sacrifice in her eyes but a triumph. After her ruse has been successful, she exclaims proudly to her family: 'I have a job'.[599] Hair can represent male qualities such as strength and virility, as in the Old Testament myth of Samson, but, here, Lionheart manages to become more masculine by cutting off her hair. McKinley overturns male-female symbolism in much the same way as she overturns gender roles in her tales. The limitations of gender that Lionheart manages to overcome by posing as a man may also reflect the limitations of gender that the *conteuses* overcame by publishing their tales. McKinley's portrayal of gender is a reminder of the lineage that produced tales such as this one. Indeed, the inversion of myths is a demonstration of how contemporary authors add to the ever-developing dialogue that takes place within and through tales.

We see McKinley play with gender roles once again in the tale through Beauty. Although she is not the stereotypical fairy-tale heroine (she is more at home in her 'muddy haven in the garden'[600] than anywhere else) she still retains

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[597] *Ibid.* p. 9.
[598] *Ibid.* p. 41.
[599] *Ibid.* p. 42.
[600] *Ibid.* p. 9.

a sense of filial duty towards her father. She is determined to pay the price for the misfortune that she has brought upon her family by asking for a rose: 'it is I who will take up the fate *I* have earned'.[601] However, when she speaks of her fate, there is an underlying sense that she *wants* to possess this fate: 'this was her fate, [...] she had called its name and it had come to her, and she could do nothing now but own it'.[602] Whereas in 'Cupid and Psyche', and the other subsequent rewritings by the *conteuses,* destiny is thought of as a curse, here, in the language used, there is a feeling of urgency and of determination. Beauty wants to take charge of her own fate, even if it leads to death. In this way, Beauty, like Lionheart, is represented as embodying traits that were once thought of as masculine traits. Here, however, this bravery helps her overcome the obstacles that she faces and, in this manner, McKinley once again questions gender stereotypes.

The cruel and scheming sisters of 'Cupid and Psyche' and Leprince de Beaumont are replaced by caring ones. What is more, McKinley emphasises the bond between them. The hair symbol reappears to express the unbreakable bond between the three sisters. As Beauty leaves for the Beast's castle, Jeweltongue gives her a keepsake made of Lionheart's chopped-off hair. Throughout history, hair was believed to preserve an intimate connection with its owner even after it had been cut: 'It symbolized its owner's virtues by concentrating their qualities spiritually, and retained a 'sympathetic' link'.[603] (This concept led to the venerating of saints' hair in religious practice.) By underlining the bond that exists between Beauty and her sisters, McKinley redeems the female characters who, in mythology and folktales, were labelled as jealous and devious. She creates a relationship of genuine support between the women in the tale which, indeed, reflects the sisterhood of *conteuses* and contemporary authors whom communicate with each other through tales.

The final change concerns Beauty's father whom McKinley portrays as a kind person when many rewriters blame him for giving his daughter to the Beast in the first place. McKinley exonerates the sisters and the father, and in doing so, redeems familial relationships on the whole in the tale. In fact,

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[601] *Ibid.* p. 80.
[602] *Ibid.* p. 81.
[603] Chevalier and Gheerbrant, p. 459.

McKinley has said that the decency and good-heartedness of Beauty's family was something that she purposely decided to incorporate into both *Beauty* and *Rose Daughter*.[604] This reflects modern values and changing times. Compared to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the structure of the family unit is much more flexible today. In many instances the traditional nuclear family has been replaced by different types of families, for example, one-parent families or families with same-sex parents. McKinley's more balanced approach to the portrayal of Beauty's family allows the characters to incorporate both masculine and feminine as well as positive and negative attributes. In this way, she eliminates stereotypes and socially-constructed dichotomies.

McKinley also blurs binaries in her treatment of sexuality in *Rose Daughter*. The principal motifs that she makes use of in both her tales to explore the theme of sexuality are Beauty's dream and the imagery surrounding blood and roses, although the sexual symbolism is much more overt in *Rose Daughter*.

The dream motif that first appeared in de Villeneuve's tale appears on different occasions in McKinley's rewriting. However, the nature of the dream is quite different: whereas in de Villeneuve's dream sequences Belle met with her handsome lover, in this tale, Beauty dreams of a terrible monster that waits for her at the end of a corridor. Despite her fears, Beauty is determined to make it to the end of the corridor and find what lies there: 'And then she discovered she had never really tried to run away at all, that she was determined to follow the corridor to its end, to face the monster. And that was the most terrifying thing of all'.[605] Beauty is determined to discover what remains hidden, and in the process, her own sexuality. She is lured by a 'powerful and exciting'[606] scent and, rather than fleeing from the Beast, though she is afraid, she wants to find out what is in the darkness. As Beauty spends time in the castle, the dream changes and intensifies: 'She dreamt her old dream, but with the change that had come to it since she had spent her first night in the Beast's palace; she hurried down a long dim corridor, anxious to come to its end, for she was

[604] John Morgan, 'Interview with Robin McKinley',
<http://www.robinmckinley.com/etc/interview_bymorgan.php> [accessed 7 July 2012].
[605] McKinley, 1998, p. 6.
[606] *Ibid.* p. 56.

needed there'.[607] As her wish to reach the end of the corridor in the dream grows, so do her feelings for the Beast. McKinley uses the dream to represent Beauty's growing desire and sexual awareness. In her last dream, Beauty 'hurrie[s] along that corridor to comfort the lost unhappy creature there...'.[608] By the end of her time at the Beast's castle Beauty has realised that she is in need of the Beast as much as he is in need of her. He needs to be granted salvation by her while she needs him to help her discover herself.

In *Rose Daughter* McKinley also plays repeatedly on the sentiments of curiosity and fear, connected to sexuality. It is curiosity and fascination that lead Beauty to the Beast as revealed in her exclaiming, 'perhaps this is the garden I have yet to see?'[609] Because of the connection to sexuality, the imagery of roses and gardens is reminiscent of, not only of Psyche's curiosity but, also of Eve's. At the same time, the imagery of darkness reminds us of Psyche's enforced blindness and fear: 'he is dark, almost black, and he wears black clothing, and he walks very quietly – noiselessly; you will not know where he is until he is just beside you...'.[610] However, as in many of the contemporary tales to be discussed in this chapter, sexual curiosity is a positive attribute. It is related to a legitimate need for knowledge, generally acquired with education, something women were historically denied for fear that they might then demand more control over their lives. This explains why, whereas Psyche's curiosity was her downfall, Beauty's curiosity is her saving quality. From the outset, she is determined to discover what lies in the darkness, despite her fear. In discovering the Beast in the darkness, she is able to discover a part of her own identity and her sexual desire. This leads to her sexual awakening and self-acceptance.

The image of blood is used many times throughout the tale to symbolise the sexual connection between Beauty and the Beast. As mentioned earlier, blood has an important association with female sexuality, fecundity and, therefore, life. In another inversion by McKinley, it is the Beast who bleeds first in the tale: 'the palm had been pierced by one of the thorns, and three drops of blood fell softly to the crimson carpet, marking a dark stain like a three-

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[607] *Ibid.* p. 140.
[608] *Ibid*. p. 233.
[609] *Ibid.* p. 93.
[610] *Ibid.* p. 102.

petalled flower or the first unfurling of a rose-bud'.[611] The images of the red blood, red carpet and an opening red rose normally symbolise a young woman's first sexual encounter, but it is interesting that the blood, here, as it was in *Beauty*, is the male character's. Following this, McKinley portrays a very similar sequence involving Beauty: 'When she woke, she found blood on her pillow; she had bitten her lip in her sleep, and three drops had fallen on the pillow-slip, making a shape like a three-petalled flower or a rose-bud just unfurling'.[612] Since Beauty is waking from her dream and the scene takes place in her bed the same imagery, therefore, suggests a first sexual encounter. Indeed, Evelyn M. Perry sees the drops of blood as representing Beauty's 'readiness for the impending coming-of-age'.[613] Both scenes involving the blood of the two characters underline the sexual connection between Beauty and the Beast. Later, in an intimate act, the Beast puts ointment on Beauty's arms after she has been scratched by the rose bushes:

> [...] he stroked the arm all over, back and front, again and again, till the ointment disappeared. His fingers and palm felt like suede, and the warmth they left was not wholly that of friction. [...] Half in a trance, she turned and held her other arm out towards him, leaving him to unfasten the wrist catch before he drew more ointment deliciously over her skin.[614]

As in *Beauty*, McKinley explores the realm of sexual pleasure. Beauty's desire and her capacity for pleasure are expressed clearly here, something that was certainly not possible during the time of de Villeneuve or Leprince de Beaumont. The 'delicious' warmth of the Beast's caresses is a clear indication of sexual arousal and gratification.

The sexual imagery in *Rose Daughter* is more explicit than in *Beauty*. *Rose Daughter* is also a young-adult novel. However, writing this version twenty years later, McKinley possibly had more freedom to explore these themes in detail. She notes, in an essay that details the reasons behind her second 'Beauty and the Beast' rewriting, that she realised later that there 'was all that stuff about roses at the heart of it that I had done almost nothing

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[611] *Ibid.* p. 75.
[612] *Ibid.* p. 79.
[613] Evelyn M. Perry, p. 72.
[614] McKinley, 2004, p. 139.

with'.[615] Indeed, the unfurling rose image represents the very core of the 'Beauty and the Beast' story, representing sexual maturation and awakening. These themes, alongside desire and pleasure, are at the core of both McKinley's retellings of 'Beauty and the Beast'. By acknowledging female sexuality and desire, McKinley updates a traditional tale and makes it relevant for a modern audience. The reader is also reminded that the evolution of modern tales reflects the evolution of women's rights to express issues surrounding sexuality in their tales. Therefore, not only can we observe changes between the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tales and the contemporary rewritings but there are also modifications to be traced within the corpus of modern versions.

The concept of otherness, in this version, as in *Beauty*, is tied up specifically with the notion of being half-human, half-other which is, in turn, linked to sexuality. Indeed, as Shildrick points out, this is precisely the dichotomy that makes the monster both frightening and alluring: 'The extent to which we feel it is necessary to defend our investment in the sovereign self is a measure surely of an unacknowledged apprehension that is always too late: the other is already half us'.[616] The statue in Beauty's garden signals her fascination with something that is familiar, yet in flux: 'one day it would remind her of a dragon, the next day a chimera, the third day a salamander, the fourth day a unicorn...'.[617] When Beauty later encounters the Beast in person, she is drawn to him in the same way. Her feelings towards him are a mixture of enthralment and fear. This is also highlighted during Beauty's father's first encounter with the Beast: 'The merchant's first fumbling thought was that this Beast was rearing on his hind legs, but then he saw that his shape was not unlike a man's – only hugely, grotesquely, bigger than any man – and that he was dressed like a man'.[618] The Beast's quasi-human appearance is what endows him with an air of humanity but it is also what makes him even more fearsome. A wild animal is frightening in a familiar, 'normal' way, but a half-animal, half-human is something that cannot be accepted, something beyond the realms of normality and, therefore, totally incomprehensible and doubly frightening.

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[615] Robin McKinley, 'The Story behind Rose Daughter', <www.robinmckinley.com/etc/essay_rosedaughter.php> [accessed 23 November 2010].
[616] Shildrick, p. 46.
[617] McKinley, 2004, p. 47.
[618] *Ibid.* p. 71.

McKinley uses our natural fear of the monstrous and plays upon the Beast's hideous appearance. She especially focuses on the elements of the Beast's form that suggest being devoured: 'the jaw of a carnivore, the too-wide mouth, thin lips curled back in a snarl, the deadly gleam of teeth'.[619] The castle, too, suggests that Beauty will be consumed by the Beast: 'the open door looked like the mouth of a cave. Or of a Beast', and the Beast is described as a 'predator waiting for his prey'.[620] All of this imagery reminds us of the tale's origins in mythology. The concept of being eaten is linked to themes surrounding sexuality. Also, the imagery highlights the Beast's abject nature, his otherness. As the Beast is neither solely beast nor man, he cannot be defined, and, hence, is the representation of the absolute *other*.

However, whilst playing up this sense of *otherness*, McKinley also reminds us of the Beast's compassion. She restores humanity to the Beast even during moments in the tale when, traditionally, he is seen to have none. For example, during their first encounter, Beauty's father can sense the Beast's good nature despite his grotesque appearance:

> [...] the merchant was suddenly, unwelcomely shaken by an unmistakable flare of pity, for the Beast stood with his great shoulders and head bowed in a posture unfathomably sorrowful. If he had been a man, and even if that man had threatened his life but a moment before, the merchant would have put a hand on his shoulder.[621]

Subsequently, the Beast assures Beauty's father that he will not break his promise to leave Beauty unharmed. He assures her father, 'I am a man in this'.[622] It is his humaneness that allows him to make a promise and to be honourable. However, despite this, he also repeats the familiar line from Leprince de Beaumont's and de Villeneuve's tales, 'I am the Beast'.[623] Although he has humanity and human characteristics, he can never be accepted as completely human. Like deformed babies that were 'stifled' during the seventeenth century, it is the Beast's simultaneous familiarity *and* strangeness that makes him so awful in the eyes of others.

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[619] *Ibid.* p. 72.
[620] *Ibid.* p. 86&158.
[621] *Ibid.* p. 73.
[622] *Ibid.* p. 75.
[623] *Ibid.* p. 88.

As with most of the contemporary rewritings to be discussed in this chapter, Beauty here empathises with the Beast's otherness. In this case it is due to her experience of 'desolation'[624] provoked by the loneliness of leaving her family. Beauty's estrangement is apparently linked to McKinley's own feelings of exile in moving from the USA to England to marry the author Peter Dickinson. In writing about the reasons behind rewriting 'Beauty and the Beast' for a second time, the author admits that, although the idea was first suggested to her by friends, the fact that she was going through a process of transition at the time influenced her decision:

> I've never cried so much in my life, those three weeks last winter when we went back to Maine to say good-bye to my house. [...] My house was gone; America was no longer mine; I was a stranger in a strange land not just in England but now in America too.[625]

This helps in understanding how otherness is represented in this tale as the concept of exogamy and leaving the family home are important in all animal-bridegroom tales. The idea of leaving childhood behind and embarking on married life is an issue that has permeated myths and tales of this kind even before 'Cupid and Psyche'. Here, interestingly we see McKinley, herself, taking solace from this tale when she was going through this process. Not only did she read the tale but formed a personal response to it in the form of another rewriting.

The most significant difference between *Rose Daughter* and McKinley's first tale, *Beauty*, is the ending. There is no physical transformation and no handsome Prince at the end of this tale. As mentioned earlier, Beauty chooses the Beast:

> I would not change a – a hair on your head, except possibly to plait a few of them together, so as not wholly to obscure the collar and front of the wedding-suit Jeweltongue designs. But I – I think I will choose to believe that you would miss being able to see in the dark, and to be careless of the weather, and to walk as silently as sunlight.

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[624] *Ibid.* p. 95.
[625] Robin McKinley, 'The Story behind Rose Daughter', <www.robinmckinley.com/etc/essay_rosedaughter.php> [accessed 23 November 2010].

> Because I love my Beast, and I would miss him very much if he
> went away from me and left me with some handsome stranger.[626]

Twenty years after her first retelling of the tale, McKinley decided that the Beast's transformation was not necessary. It would seem that McKinley, in her own state of exile, felt that the Beast should not have to change at all. It is noteworthy that, in this version, Beauty chooses the Beast's fate. It is her responsibility to choose whether he will be transformed into a man or remain in his beastly form. She chooses for him to remain as he is because she sees the advantages of being beast over being human. This is a popular trend amongst fairy-tale rewritings, as we shall see in the other tales in this corpus. It is interesting that modern fairy-tale writers choose to highlight the positive aspects of being not completely-human and, therefore, different. The message that permeates modern retellings, such as McKinley's, is that otherness is a reality, rather than eradicating it, it should be embraced and understood. This modified ending reflects changing attitudes over time towards the issue of acceptance of difference, whether it be physical or cultural, a message typical of all of the tales to be examined in this chapter.

4.2.6   McKinley's Message of Acceptance

McKinley, in her two retellings of 'Beauty and the Beast', embeds a moral message of tolerance concerning gender roles, female sexuality and difference. She refutes the traditional gender stereotypes found in tales from the eighteenth century onwards, and creates two female protagonists who are not typically 'feminine' but who are accepted despite their perceived flaws, such as Honour's physical unattractiveness and tom-boyish nature. McKinley's characters, such as Lionheart, overcome the limitations of gender that are socially imposed on them and triumph in the end. Female curiosity, desire and sexuality are acknowledged in both tales. By exploring female desire and pleasure, McKinley acknowledges an aspect that was previously somewhat taboo, especially for the *conteuses* who were constrained by their social context. By modernising the tale, McKinley is able to remove these constraints and represent female sexuality in a more realistic manner. Finally, by changing the ending of *Rose Daughter*, McKinley added to the ever-growing trend in

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[626] McKinley, 1998, p. 287.

fairy-tale rewritings of advocating difference. By allowing the Beast to remain as he is, she not only promotes otherness as a positive attribute but also adds to the ongoing dialogue on difference that permeates modern retellings of tales of this type. McKinley's own versions thus form important new strands in our web of tales. The following section will investigate the similar changes that Emma Donoghue has made to this tale type in her rewriting, 'The Tale of the Rose'.

4.3   Emma Donoghue (1969-)

Emma Donoghue is an award-winning, Dublin born writer who lives in Canada. She has published a number of novels and books on literary history. Recently her novel *Room* (2010) was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Her collection of fairy tales, *Kissing the Witch*, was published in 1997 and comprises thirteen intertwined fairy tales. Here, I will focus on the retelling of 'Beauty and the Beast', entitled 'The Tale of the Rose'. *Kissing the Witch* was Donoghue's third book of fiction and first short fiction collection. By her own account, 'The Tale of the Rose' is based on Leprince de Beaumont's version of the tale and the other tales included in the collection are inspired by traditional European sources such as the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault and Hans Christian Andersen.[627] Interestingly, *The Tale of the Rose* is the only tale that is a rewriting of a woman author's work. Whilst *Kissing the Witch* was published for adults in the UK, it was published for young adults in the US. It was shortlisted for a James Tiptree Award and named an ALA Popular Paperback for Young Adults. Donoghue notes that *Kissing the Witch* is the easiest book that she has ever written, stating that it was 'a delight from start to finish'. [...] I can only attribute [this] to the fact that I took all its storylines from the ultimate plot-mistress, the Oral Tradition. Since I've been obsessed with fairytales (their repetitions and variations) since early childhood, it was deeply satisfying to try my hand at my own versions here'.[628] Donoghue asserts that the oral tradition has been an influential factor on her own writing of fairy-tales and it is interesting that she associates this tradition with a feminine 'mistress'. Furthermore, Donoghue notes that fairy tales need reworking 'because of their painfully patriarchal plots which still rule popular culture (sit and wait for your prince, for instance)'.[629] Because of this, Donoghue's collection of tales is a 'specifically feminist and lesbian project'[630] whereby she wanted to explore relationships between women in these old stories.

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[627] http://emmadonoghue.com/books/short-story-collections/kissing-the-witch.html [accessed 16 December 2012].
[628] *Ibid.*
[629] Interview with Emma Donoghue. See Appendix 1.
[630] *Ibid.*

4.3.1   'The Tale of the Rose' (1997)

The tales in *Kissing the Witch* are interlinked whereby the protagonist of each tale asks the subsequent narrator to tell their own story. Donoghue's version of 'Beauty and the Beast' is told through a first-person female voice and starts with an exchange between two women, one who has metamorphosed into a bird. The tale begins: 'Who were you before you took to the skies? And the bird said, Will I tell you my own story? It is a tale of a rose'.[631] The unnamed narrator's father sets out to retrieve his fortune and gets trapped in a snow storm. He finds a castle and is saved by a hooded beast. Upon leaving, he takes a single red rose to give to his daughter. When the beast accuses him of theft, the father promises him the first thing he sees when he returns home, hoping it will be a cat or a bird. Of course, it is his daughter. Being a dutiful daughter, the narrator agrees to go to the beast's castle in order to save her father.[632] The reader learns that a young queen, who previously lived in the castle, has either been exiled, imprisoned, or devoured by the hooded beast that now lives there, although none of these accounts can be ascertained. Some time after she has settled in the castle, the girl and the beast develop an amicable relationship and she has everything she could want. Yet, she cannot find a trace of the missing queen. Following the expected plot of this tale type, the girl is allowed to leave the castle for eight days and promises to return to the beast. She then returns home and nurses her sick father back to health. Her sisters try to convince her to stay as leaving would surely kill their father. However, true to her promise, the girl returns to the castle just in time to save the dying creature whom she finds sick and frost-bitten. As she removes the mask from the beast's face, she finally understands the key to the story. She learns that there was, indeed, once a queen and that she is, in fact, the beast. What comes to light is that the creature is neither beast nor man but, a woman.

Donoghue crafts a tale that challenges her readers' horizon of expectation: until the very end she lets them believe that the outcome will be the traditional transformation of the beast and marriage between a man and woman. By radically changing the conclusion of the tale, Donoghue argues that

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[631] Emma Donoghue, 'The Tale of the Rose' in *Kissing the Witch,* (London: Penguin, 1997), pp. 23-37, (p. 23).

[632] Unlike most versions of 'Beauty and the Beast', Donoghue writes the word 'beast' without a capital letter.

difference is merely a matter of perception and thus allows the reader to question their own preconceptions.

4.3.2　Imposed Identities and Surprising Sexualities

Jennifer Orme asserts that, in *Kissing the Witch*, Donoghue creates a 'complex narrative chain'[633] through the passing on of tales from one narrator to the next. Orme suggests that this represents that the tales are 'in process and never entirely closed'.[634] This 'multivocality'[635] reflects the oral tradition of fairy tales. The fact that Donoghue's multiple narrators are all women reinforces the image of the maternal tale-teller. What is more, Orme also sees this framing technique as creating a 'feeling of intimate reciprocity among narrator, narratee, and reader', which reflects the concept of a heteroglossia of women's voices coming together to form a web of tales. By creating a text within which women pass on tales to each other, Donoghue recreates the salon setting where the *conteuses* told each other tales.

In her rewriting of 'Beauty and the Beast', Donoghue focuses on the preconceptions that are connected with femininity and womanhood. She compares, as did her predecessors, the marginality of both the narrator and the Beast by representing them as others, both because of their gender and their sexuality. By referring to the narrator's femaleness as 'fate', we are immediately aware that, from the outset, Donoghue is presenting her as marginal because of her gender identity: 'it was my fate to be a woman'.[636] What is more, the narrator's value, by her own admission, depends on how she is viewed by the dominant male figure in her life, which is, as in previous cases, her father: 'I was beautiful, or so my father told me'.[637] Her worth is determined by her physical appearance and how this appearance is assessed by her father. We are not told explicitly how the narrator views her own self worth, but we get the sense that she feels marginalised and a major factor contributing to this sense of worthlessness is tied up with the prescribed ideals that come with being a woman, such as perfect femininity, beauty and a certain type of

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[633] Jennifer Orme, 'Mouth to Mouth: Queer Desires in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch'*, *Marvels & Tales*, 24.1 (2010), 116-130 (p. 120).
[634] *Ibid*. p. 118.
[635] *Ibid.*
[636] Donoghue, 1997, p. 27.
[637] *Ibid.*

etiquette. This, in turn, is connected to the narrator's feelings of restlessness. She explains: 'I had an appetite for magic, even then'.[638] This not only introduces the theme of being devoured which is linked to sexual awakening, as we shall see, but also that the narrator's marginalisation results in a desire to escape and leave her constricted identity behind. The words 'even then' in the sentence also hint at the fact that the narrator's appetite for adventure has grown since the time of the events that she is recounting. In this manner, the reader is aware, from the outset, that the protagonist is about to undergo a process of transition and transformation.

This is also explicitly shown in the narrator's description of her attitude differing from that of her sisters. Whilst her sisters are appalled at the thought of the manual labour resulting from their changed economic circumstances, the narrator is pragmatic in accepting her new duties: 'I tucked up my skirts and got on with it. It gave me a strange pleasure to see what my back could bend to, my arms could bear. It was not that I was better than my sisters, only that I could see further'.[639] The hint of masculinity in acceptance of physical work, which was also found in McKinley's protagonist, Honour, also suggests that the narrator needs and wants to escape the imposed conformity to feminine ideals she suffered in her former life. The contrast between her sisters' attitudes and her own reflects the contrast between acceptance of and rebellion against these ideals. Whilst her sisters adhere to the stereotypical notion of women being the 'weaker sex', in that they are not capable of manual work, the narrator feels imprisoned by such social expectations: 'The rose bushes held up their spiked fingers against the yellow sky, caging me in'.[640] While the narrator is forced to fit into a prescribed model of femininity and heterosexuality (although this is only completely clear at the end of the tale), she cannot come to terms with her own identity and, therefore, cannot attain freedom.

In order to reinforce her message as regards the need to escape imposed identities, Donoghue challenges normative perceptions of gender and sexuality in her rewriting. When the beast states, 'I am not a man',[641] readers,

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[638] *Ibid.*
[639] *Ibid.* p. 28.
[640] *Ibid.* p. 34.
[641] *Ibid.*

conditioned to expect the traditional outcome of heterosexual marriage in this tale type, remain unsuspecting as to the Beast's true identity as a woman, and since they also automatically associate monstrosity with masculinity, they expect the beast to be male. The fairy tale allows Donoghue to surprise her reader with an untraditional conclusion, thus also modernising the genre. Indeed, this is a trend in contemporary rewritings and an aspect that is common to all the tales in this chapter. Though Western societies have become progressively more accepting of homosexuality – with marriage or at least civil partnership for gay couples having recently been legalised in various constituencies, for instance – readers still do not automatically envisage the possibility of a female beast or a lesbian relationship in the story. Duncker, in her discussion of *The Bloody Chamber*, notes that this is an issue Angela Carter never tackled in her rewritings: '[Carter] could never imagine Cinderella in bed with the Fairy Godmother'.[642] Indeed, there is a notable absence of homosexual relationships in fairy-tale rewritings. This is possibly why readers do not expect the outcome of Donoghue's tale. By only revealing the Beast's identity at the very end of the tale she forces us to acknowledge our own preconceptions and, consequently, question them.

When the narrator finally takes control of her own identity by acknowledging her sexual preference, she breaks free and is capable of escaping the need to conform. When she returns to the beast's castle after visiting her family, she states: 'This time I asked no permission of anyone'.[643] By making decisions for herself, specifically concerning her relationship with the Beast, she can acknowledge her own gender and sexual identity. What is more, the Beast also manages to achieve this state of freedom when she unmasks herself and reveals her true identity. She, too, no longer needs to conceal her gender identity. Both characters, as we have also seen in McKinley's texts, break free of their socially-imposed gender identities. In this tale, as with McKinley's, acceptance of one and others' sexuality is a central theme.

Donoghue uses subtlety throughout the tale to her advantage, in that neither the protagonist's nor the beast's sexuality is revealed until the end of the

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[642] Duncker, p. 75.
[643] Donoghue, 1997, p. 35.

tale. The references to sex and sexuality are subversive for the most part and this enables her to surprise the reader with the conclusion of the tale. She suggests innocence and virginity with the image of white satin and, following this, she also suggests temptation and intoxication with the image of spilled red wine.[644] This is a common use of imagery in fairy tales to represent sexuality and the loss of virginity. Indeed, the imagery of red on white is also used by Carter and McKinley. In this way, Donoghue plays with a familiar motif to bring previous versions of the tale to the reader's mind in order to better explore the theme of sexuality that is always associated with animal-bridegroom tales. Intimacy is also delicately hinted at throughout the tale: 'The beast liked to watch me eat. I had never noticed myself eating before; each time I swallowed, I blushed'.[645] Donoghue uses the image of eating to develop the first expression of sexual desires in both the narrator and the beast. Images digestion and absorption are intrinsic components of the tale of 'Beauty and the Beast', and remind us of Beauty's fears of being eaten but also her dread of her first sexual encounter with the Beast. Furthermore, absorption can symbolise, in fairy tales, the death of an old self before the rebirth of a new self and, for this reason, the animal-bridegroom tale type is particularly fitting as a template for a story about accepting one's sexuality.

Acknowledgement of sexual desires is a theme that Donoghue develops as regards the narrator: 'Do you come consenting? I did, I was sick to my stomach, but I did'.[646] The word 'consenting' highlights the idea that the narrator assumes her sexual choices and her desires leading to the establishment of her relationship with the beast. However, she must acknowledge these desires before she can uncover the beast's true identity and allow herself to accept her own sexuality. Donoghue uses the unmasking of the beast to represent this quest for sexual identity and acknowledgement: 'I had everything I could want except the key to the story'.[647] The narrator figures accepting her own homosexuality as learning to read a new language: 'This was a strange story, one I would have to learn a new language to read, a language I could not

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[644] *Ibid.* p. 32.
[645] *Ibid.*
[646] *Ibid.* p. 31.
[647] *Ibid.* p. 32.

learn except by trying to read the story'.[648] The beast helps her discover her sexuality as they develop their physical relationship. The new language that Donoghue refers to here is, in fact, her own rewriting of the traditional 'Beauty and the Beast' tale, a rewriting which suggests new possibilities and the breaking down of rigid norms regarding sexuality that for centuries were archetypal of 'Beauty and the Beast' type tales. Orme comments: 'The queer moment of discovery of the woman behind the mask disrupts Beauty's reading of her own desires and leads her to try to continue to unmask other normative discourses she has never before questioned'.[649] Not only is the reader's horizon of expectations challenged by the outcome of the tale, but the narrator herself is unaware of her own sexuality up to a point.

As the tale continues, the reader is alerted to the fact that the narrator is fascinated by the beast's difference: 'The more hideous my imaginings, the more my own face seemed to glow'.[650] Here, Donoghue, like McKinley, portrays the beast's difference as giving the protagonist pleasure and this pleasure is no longer inferred but explicitly uttered. Donoghue, like Carter and McKinley creates a version of 'Beauty and the Beast' where monstrosity and otherness are promoted as positive aspects rather than as negative ones. However, the reader is not fully aware of this message until the beast's true form is revealed at the end. Whilst sexuality is to the fore throughout, the sentiments of the narrator towards the beast are ambiguous: 'You have never felt my touch. Do you still shrink from it? I did. The beast knew it'.[651] Fear and fascination, revulsion and desire are opposite yet complementary sentiments with which Donoghue plays in order to address the preconceived notions inherent in fairy-tale love stories. Ultimately, in this tale, the beast's otherness is viewed as attractive and it is her very difference that inspires the narrator's sexual desire. In this tale, no final metamorphosis is needed; in making the beast sexually acceptable, Donoghue creates a framework, alongside her contemporaries, that requires no transformation, merely open-mindedness.

Donoghue further promotes open-mindedness by promoting acceptance of one's identity. The narrator describes her own image in the mirror as 'a face

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[648] *Ibid.* p. 36.
[649] Orme, p. 125.
[650] Donoghue, 1997, p. 33.
[651] *Ibid.* p. 34.

with nothing written on it'.[652] Because she has not yet uncovered her own sexual identity, the protagonist represents something that is hidden or trapped. This sense of being trapped is played upon especially at the start of the tale when the narrator acknowledges her 'appetite for magic'.[653] This 'appetite' symbolises the young woman's desire to escape her former life. It is suggested that her identity as daughter and sister is a false one and, in this way, the narrator is marginalised and misunderstood. When she is exiled due to her father's actions, there is a sense that, though the exile is imposed, it is also a form of breaking free.

The narrator and the beast's common marginal statuses are reflected by one another. In wrestling with the issue of accepting the beast, the narrator is also learning to accept her own sexual identity: 'I imagined a different deformity for every layer of black cloth'.[654] While she still imagines the beast as a monster, she is, in fact, regarding herself as a monster also: 'You have never seen my face. Do you still picture me as a monster? I did. The beast knew it'.[655] When she can finally come to terms with her own awakening sexual desires, she can also accept the beast's true identity: 'I was washing my old self away; by midsummer I was almost ready'.[656] Here, the narrator is referencing her readiness to grow up, to be an adult and to have a sexual relationship, thus acknowledging her true self. In this manner, throughout the whole tale, the Beast represents the narrator's own fears and prejudices. Her failure at first to accept the Beast is a reflection of her failure to accept herself as society wants her to be. Indeed, the Beast, in a way, is the narrator's alter-ego. The moment the Beast unmasks herself is also the moment she shows her true face by coming to terms with her sexual identity.

This self-acceptance is also mirrored in Donoghue's treatment of otherness. By presenting the narrator's predicament as a form of escape, Donoghue manages to turn otherness into a positive trait:

> Now, you may tell me that I should have felt betrayed, but I was shaking
> with excitement. I should have felt like a possession, but for the first time

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[652] *Ibid.* p. 27
[653] *Ibid.*
[654] *Ibid.* p. 31.
[655] *Ibid.* p. 33.
[656] *Ibid.* p. 28.

> in my life I seemed to own myself. I went as a hostage, but it seemed as if
> I was riding into battle.[657]

The narrator's 'shaking with excitement' represents her desire caused by the Beast's otherness. When the Beast's true identity is unveiled, we understand that Donoghue's tale is really a tale about the triumph of difference over the prescribed norms that are usual in this tale type. Donoghue plays on the wording used in the tale: 'I must tell you before you go: I am not a man'.[658] On hearing this, the girl imagines trolls, ogres and goblins. Donoghue emphasises the presumption of otherness and the failure to acknowledge the obvious alternative to being 'a man':

> It took me days to learn that there was nothing monstrous about this
> woman who had lived alone in a castle, setting all her suitors riddles they
> could make no sense of, refusing to do the things queens are supposed to
> do, until the day when, knowing no one who could see her true face, she
> made a mask and from then on showed her face to no one.[659]

Indeed, the 'she' in this sentence could represent either the narrator or the Beast as they both have undergone a period of suppression. Also, the reference to 'refusal' to do certain things that one is supposed to do reminds us of the narrator's unhappiness at the start of the tale. She is free when she acknowledges her own sexuality. The reader then understands that Donoghue's message is that the notion of sexuality is 'infinitely various'.[660] In physically and metaphorically unmasking the beast, the narrator is finally capable of removing her own invisible mask and she is able to affirm her own identity:

> And as the years flowed by, some villagers told travellers of a beast and a
> beauty who lived in the castle and could be seen walking on the
> battlements, and others told of two beauties, and others, of two beasts.[661]

It is fitting that the reader never knows which version of the ending is true. Our reception of the tale will be affected by social, historical and cultural factors and it is precisely because of these factors that the evolution and proliferation of fairy tales continues.

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[657] *Ibid.* p. 30.
[658] *Ibid.* p. 34.
[659] *Ibid.*
[660] *Ibid.* p. 37.
[661] *Ibid.*

In this tale, our prejudices and preconceptions concerning sexuality are challenged and, ultimately, Donoghue successfully exposes them as false. The fact that she uses fairy tales to expose these prejudices is all the more apt considering the strict gender norms that traditional fairy tales promote. The borderlines that surround sex and sexuality are blurred and questions are raised as regards the concepts of beauty and beastliness. By removing the expected conclusion from the plot, Donoghue eliminates the binaries that permeate traditional tales. She allows our preconceptions to build throughout the tale only to completely topple them by the end. In doing so, her tale requires looking beyond the obvious initial impression and allowing these borderlines to be distorted.

4.3.3   Donoghue's Reception of *La Belle et la Bête*

Donoghue asserts that although she does not consider fairy tales to be a more gendered genre than any other, in the case of *Kissing the Witch*, she did make a conscious effort to explore the connection between women authors of fairy tales.[662] Therefore, Donoghue sees her own fairy tales as a form of response to previous fairy tales and, consequently, we must consider them as such. In this case, Donoghue retells 'Beauty and the Beast' in order to question our preconceived notions around sexuality that are embedded in this particular tale type. What is more, Donoghue uses the reader's horizon of expectations to create a sense of anticipation of a familiar outcome. Because the reader is already familiar with the tale, the twist in the conclusion comes as a complete surprise. Indeed, this is a common goal of rewriters. They challenge traditional tales and transform them in order to make them relevant for a new readership, thereby expanding the web of tales that already exists, each new tale being a new thread. In this way, we can conclude that, first, Donoghue's interpretation of the tale is influenced by her own previous readings and experiences of the world and, second, that her reception of the tale is a direct response in the form of rewriting. We can then interpret, from her rewriting, the messages that she embeds in the tale: escaping imposed identities and acceptance of otherness in the form of homosexuality. This, in turn, will have a bearing on the future

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[662] Interview with Emma Donoghue, See Appendix 1.

reception of such tales and elicit additional responses in the form of new rewritings.

4.4 Tanith Lee (1947 -)

Tanith Lee is an English author, born in London. She has published children's novels, a children's picture book and short story collections. *The Birthgrave*, her first adult fantasy novel, was published by DAW books in 1975. She has won or been nominated for a variety of awards, including the World Fantasy Award, the August Derleth Award and the Nebula. She has also written two episodes of the BBC science-fiction series *Blake's 7*. Her compilation of fairy-tale rewritings, *Red as Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer*, which she also illustrated, was published in 1983. She has also published other fairy-tale retellings in Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow's compilation series *Snow White, Blood Red*, as has Wendy Wheeler, also to be examined in this chapter.

4.4.1 'Beauty' (1983)

'Beauty' is the last tale in a group of short stories which make up Lee's collection of tales, *Red as Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer*. Each tale is set during different periods throughout history and in different places, for example Europe, Asia and Scandinavia. 'Beauty' is set somewhere on earth in the future. This tale has a similar storyline to the general 'Beauty and the Beast' plot and Lee also adds some overt references to the 'Cupid and Psyche' myth. For example, the protagonist, Estár, is named after a star which means the same as the Greek word 'psyche'. The tale begins when a green rose is delivered to Estár's father. The rose means that he will have to give up one of his children to the alien community who have inhabited earth for a number of decades. Exactly where these young exiled people go, however, is a mystery, as is how they live when they get there. Estár, despite her fears, goes to live in the alien compound which has been constructed on earth. The aliens hide their true appearance beneath cloaks and masks. Estár meets with one particular alien, with whom she can communicate telepathically and develops a relationship. On a visit home, she talks with her sisters about her fears. They convince her that she must see the alien's true form to know whether she can love him. On her return, she asks to see his true form and he obliges. She is frightened, not by his ugliness, but this time, on the contrary, by his intense beauty. Estár returns home again and is devastated. Finally, she realises that she does love the alien and she wishes to return to him. Finally, Estár discovers that she is, in fact, also

an alien who was implanted into her mother's womb after a miscarriage, due to the sterility of the alien race. The aliens had evolved to perfection, so much so, that their genes took this to be their peak and rendered them sterile. Upon learning this, Estár realises why she never fit in on earth. She decides to stay with the alien and, gradually, she loses touch with her family. They fear that she is dead whilst Estár feels pity for them because she knows happiness that they will never experience.

Tanith Lee, in this rewriting, maintains the core message of sexual awakening and acceptance that is common to all animal-bridegroom tales but also inserts a new message by creating a utopian liberal society where familiar taboos have been eradicated.

4.4.2   Utopian Liberation

In this tale, Tanith Lee recalls the gender roles of the fairy-tale heroines of the past. The narrator claims that Estár is 'ill-named for a distant planet, meaning the same as the Greek word *psyche*'.[663] The reader is reminded that this tale is yet another rewriting of the well-known myth. However, the fact that Estár is ill-named indicates that she is not like Psyche. Lee's heroine is forthright and brave and is not resigned to her fate. Nevertheless, she does prefer the fashion and traditions of an 'archaic' way of life. In this way, Lee is reminding us that, although fairy-tale heroines may have evolved from the helpless women that they were once depicted as, we still appropriate tales to take lessons from them and pass them on, even if the lessons have been somewhat modified: 'She liked archaic terms, fashions, music, art, attitudes. They had always solaced her, and sometimes given her weapons against her own culture which she had not seemed to fit'.[664] The weapons referenced here include fairy tales which are a means of questioning norms, whether cultural or gender related. By alluding to the very tales that often depicted women in a position of submission, Lee shows that she belongs to the community of readers and women fairy-tale authors who have been subverting traditional mores.

Whilst questioning conventional perceptions, Lee creates a future world where even the social norms of our time no longer exist. The family unit, as we

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[663] Tanith Lee, 'Beauty', in *Red as Blood or Tales from the Sisters Grimmer* (New York: DAW Books Inc., 1983), pp. 149-86 (p. 149).
[664] *Ibid.* p. 161.

know it, is no longer necessary as most children are created scientifically with no need for a mother and a father. Estár is Levin's 'only born child', that is to say, who was born naturally, whereas his other two daughters, Lyra and Joya were 'made with the particles of unknown women in crystal tubes'.[665] What is more, Lyra is white and Joya is black; race is not an issue in the world that Lee creates and gender roles simply do not apply anymore. People have relationships with whomever they want. Lee creates, in a way, a utopian society where people are not constricted by gender issues.

Interestingly, whilst many mother figures in fairy tales are the epitome of maternal kindness, the mother character here is irresponsible as she nearly causes Estár's death before she is even born:

> [...] she had almost never *been* born, her mother's frenetic life-style having brought on the preliminaries of an accidental abortion – the child had been saved, and had continued to grow inside the woman's womb to a well coordinated seventh-month term.[666]

This role reversal, from the usual animal-bridegroom tales where the father is often to blame for Beauty's misfortune, is reminiscent of McKinley's own approach. Here, Estár's mother is exposed as careless as she later abandons her child and leaves her to be raised by her father. Conversely, the father is caring. He tells Estár: 'don't you know that I chose you – not because I consider you expendable – but because I love you the best?'[667] Levin is a kind man and his behaviour reflects modern changes in society. He can be seen as a new father figure. Again, similarly to McKinley, Lee offers a balanced representation of the family unit, and while mothers can be 'false female guides', as we shall see in the next section in relation to Wendy Wheeler, paternal characters reflect the changes that feminism has brought to the traditional roles, such as bread-winner or authoritative head of the family.

The sisters in 'Beauty' represent wisdom. As in many of the other contemporary tales in this corpus, such as McKinley's *Beauty*, female characters are absolved of their perceived negative traits such as being scheming and cruel. Here, in contrast to the jealous sisters in 'Cupid and Psyche', Estár's sisters are kind and they give her constructive advice:

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[665] *Ibid.* p. 141.
[666] *Ibid.* p. 153.
[667] *Ibid.* p. 154.

> 'No, none of us have been debating it when you were out of the room,' said Joya. 'But we do know. Estár, listen to me, there's truly nothing wrong in feeling emotion for this – for him, or even wanting him sexually [...] There is only one obstacle. In your case, not culture or species. You know what it is. The way they look. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, Estár. But this is the root of all your trouble, isn't it?'[668]

By presenting Joya as genuine Lee not only vindicates femininity but also feminine curiosity. Joya encourages Estár to be curious and not to accept lack of knowledge. Joya points out that 'Some humans are ugly. They can still be loved, loving'.[669] In this way, Joya is the feminine voice of reason and she represents a sisterhood, like the sisterhood of *conteuses*. She passes on knowledge to her sister, unlike the cruel sisters depicted in 'Cupid and Psyche' and other versions of 'Beauty and the Beast'. This is a reflection of the purpose of fairy tales, in particular animal-bridegroom tales; to assure people, specifically young women, and pass on knowledge. In this manner, femininity is vindicated by Lee, as we have already seen in the tales of Carter, McKinley and Donoghue. Indeed, this type of exoneration through fairy tales is one of the traits that bind these authors together as a community of readers and writers.

The female protagonist, Estár, is a mixture of the traditional fairy-tale heroine and a contemporary one. She is old-fashioned and likes 'archaic' things. She calls her father 'Papa' which we are told that 'she had adopted from some book', and she 'wore by choice the clothing of reborn history'.[670] These details remind us that we are reading a tale that has been told in many different ways before and, furthermore, the recalling of an old tradition is a metaphor for rewriting itself in that it is the act of reappropriating and revalorising something from the past. When contemporary authors rewrite tales, they recall an old tradition and are rebirthing history in order to make it live on. Estár, however, is a modern female character; she is not weak; though she is afraid. She is also angry: 'she was sickened from fear and rage'.[671] Estár is not resigned to her status of powerlessness: 'But her anger puzzled her. Was it the lack of

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[668] *Ibid.* p. 171-72.
[669] *Ibid.* p. 172.
[670] *Ibid.* p. 150&57.
[671] *Ibid.* p. 157.

choice?'[672] She seeks autonomy as many contemporary fairy-tale heroines do and a way of expressing her true self: 'But she could not convey *herself* to others'.[673] There is a link between Estár's wish and the reappropriation of tales by women who had no autonomy as fairy tales were the *conteuses'* only means of expression. This link allows us to consider the rewriting of fairy tales as a continuous search for a means of expression, from the tales of the seventeenth century to today. Rewriting heroines as strong women who are not resigned to a fate of submission is a platform for modern fairy-tale authors to express a new message.

Lee, like her contemporary female fairy-tale authors, eliminates the obstacles in her character's way. She creates a future where taboos of all kinds have been removed. For instance, the fact that Joya has 'two admirers, one male, one female' is hardly commented upon.[674] All the characters are free to have sexual relationships with whomever they choose and they are not chastised or exiled because of their choices. Lee's utopian future is a world of total acceptance. Yet, the aliens are the only beings who are not accepted; they are still 'different'. In this way, Lee reminds us that our fear of the other is innate; we cannot help but fear what we cannot see or understand no matter how evolved we become.

This liberal attitude towards sexual matters touches family concerns, as demonstrated when Levin half-jokingly remarks that his daughter should really let her son's father know that he has a child:

> She did not know who had fathered the child, which would be a son, nor did she care, had not bothered with the tests to discover. He had chided her gently, since the father had every right to know, and Joya laughed: 'Later. For now he's only mine'.[675]

Lee belongs to a generation of feminists who have fought for the family unit to evolve in women's favour. Here, Joya relishes the fact that she has complete control over her sexual choices and over her maternity. She represents not only, as did Donoghue, an evolution in homo-heterosexual views, but also the

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[672] *Ibid.* p. 158.
[673] *Ibid.*
[674] *Ibid.* p. 152.
[675] *Ibid.*

acceptance nowadays of woman deciding to become single mothers, without being marginalised for their choices.

Joya's very free approach to her sexuality contrasts with that of Estár. Whilst the majority of characters in the tale speak freely of sexual matters, Estár is the only one who is awkward about it. Whilst Estár's father has no issue in discussing his daughter's relationship with the alien, Estár becomes embarrassed:

> There was an embarrassment quite suddenly apparent in her. Her gestures became angular and her sentences dislocated. 'You're asking me if I'd be willing to be his lover?' 'I'm asking if you are in love with him'.[676]

In this way, Estár represents societal taboos concerning sexuality. The father's frankness represents the liberal society that Lee creates in the tale, how our societies *should* be. For Estár, the thought of having a relationship with the alien, let alone discussing it, is 'unthinkable'.[677] Despite the openness demonstrated by her family, loving a perceived monster still remains an aberration. Fear of what is different remains.

In time, however, Estár does come to realise and acknowledge her desire for the alien which is represented in the tale by 'the flowering of her creativity, her happiness'.[678] In essence, this rewriting tackles the issue of sexual awakening, as do nearly all animal-bridegroom tales. Although Lee reinvents this tale, she retains the story's core meaning. As Estár comes to understand that the alien is not so different from herself, she learns intimacy and acceptance: 'How close they were, then, if he could speak to her in such a way'.[679] Also, referencing 'Cupid and Psyche' and Mme de Villeneuve, we see intimacy develop between Estár and the alien through a dream motif: 'Yes, for weeks her sleep had been full of dreams of him, incoherent but sexual dreams, dreams of desire. And yet he was a shadow. She dreamed of coupling in the dark, blind, unseeing'.[680] She is coming to terms with her own sexuality and her sexual desire for the alien. When she sees the alien as he 'truly' is, her fear

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[676] *Ibid.* p. 169.
[677] *Ibid.* p. 171.
[678] *Ibid.* p. 166.
[679] *Ibid.* p. 173.
[680] *Ibid.* p. 174.

disappears.[681] The alien is no longer an unknown entity and, although she is frightened by the strength of her feelings for him, she comes to accept him completely. By creating a world of utopian sexual liberation, Tanith Lee modernises the tale of 'Beauty and the Beast' in order to make it relevant to a new modern readership. She challenges traditional notions of sexuality as a taboo and presents it as something natural and positive.

Likewise, Lee does not present Estár's status of 'other' as wholly negative. She is described as an 'unrested turbulent spirit'.[682] Her father feels a 'peculiar fear' concerning her.[683] From the start of the tale, we know that Estár is an outsider, loved by her family, but an outsider nonetheless. When Levin chooses Estár as the daughter who must be exiled, she is less than shocked and in fact, quite accepting, despite her fears: 'I see it must be me. *They* are your daughters. I'm only your guest'.[684] Whereas she sees that her sisters have attachments to this world, children and lovers, Estár feels she has the least to lose and, thus, it must be her who goes. Like Psyche, Estár is resigned to her fate, a trait often displayed in Beauty characters.

Levin tells Estár that it is because he loves her best that he has chosen her to go. We are told that the chosen child was usually 'whichever of the household was best suited to be sent, could most easily be spared, was most likely to find the prospect challenging or acceptable, or, endurable'.[685] Levin knows that the detachment that Estár feels from the world around her means that the prospect of leaving for an alien place will, perhaps, be not only endurable for her but preferable.

Yet, the young people who are exiled are not prisoners; they are free to visit their families and correspond. However, as time goes by and as they are immersed into a different culture, letters and visits become less and less frequent: 'They melted into the alien culture and were gone. The last glimpses of their faces were always burdened and sad, as if against advice they had opened some forbidden door and some terrible secret had overwhelmed

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[681] *Ibid.* p. 175.
[682] *Ibid.* p 149.
[683] *Ibid.*
[684] *Ibid.* p. 153.
[685] *Ibid.* p. 155-6.

them'.[686]Rather than a sudden exile, it is a gradual ceasing of communication that creates dread in the families who receive the ominous green rose. They dread that this cutting of communication could be their children's own choice rather than a constraint.

The prospect of leaving home is frightening for Estár but not as daunting as it would be for her sisters as she has not yet found her 'raison d'Estár'. She reasons 'what did it matter after all if she were exiled?'[687] She feels so disconnected from her own world that she is merely trading one exile for another. Estár does not feel she is losing her humanity as others may have felt. Conversely, she feels as though she is losing 'her own chance at becoming human',[688] as if she had not yet achieved this but was waiting for it to happen. When she reaches the alien community she is not surprised that she does not feel any more an outsider here than she did previously in her own home: 'Naturally, inevitably, she did not really feel uneasy here. As she had bitterly foreseen, she was no more un-at-home in the alien's domicile than in her father's'.[689]

Often in animal-bridegroom type tales, it is the presumption of otherness that causes fear. It is the unknown that we imagine to be monstrous. In Lee's tale it is presumed that it is 'shame' that obliges the aliens to hide their true form. Every so often a sighting is reported of 'pelted, hairy skin', 'gauntleted over-fingered hands' and 'brilliant eyes empty of white'.[690] Reminding us of Shildrick's insights into our fascination with the monstrous, Lee tells us that 'their very likeness made their difference the more appalling, their loathsomeness more unbearable'.[691] It is the fact that they are *not* so unlike humans that makes them impossible to accept. The mystery surrounding the aliens' true likeness is sustained through the aliens own vetting of what Earth learns of them. Their appearance is only described and never actually witnessed. In this way, the myth of their hideousness can continue; it is only the fact that their monstrousness is in the imagination that makes it unacceptable.

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[686] *Ibid.* p. 156.
[687] *Ibid.* p. 158.
[688] *Ibid.*
[689] *Ibid.* p. 161.
[690] *Ibid.* p. 156.
[691] *Ibid.*

The alien explains to Estár, 'You are afraid of the *idea* of the answer, not the answer itself'.[692]

Even when Estár is taken to live with an alien companion, she sees her captor as a 'beast', invading her privacy through mind-reading and denying her freedom.[693] Lee reminds us frequently throughout the tale that we are in a rewriting of 'Beauty and the Beast' or 'Cupid and Psyche'. Even though the male protagonist is an alien, not a half-human, half-animal being, it is the fact that he is an '*other*' that renders him a beast, not his species or appearance. In this way, Estár has a paradoxical outlook on love; whereas she remarked during her old life with her family that we always love what is 'unlike, incompatible',[694] it takes her some time before she can accept this as regards the alien. Once again, to echo Shildrick, there is an inherent connection between our fear and fascination with the *other*. Indeed, without the element of fear, the fascination could not be sustained.

Despite her anguish, Estár starts to build a relationship with the disguised alien. He understands the dislocation she felt in her old life. Despite loving her family, she never felt she was at home. The alien remarks: 'Home is a word which has no meaning for you, Estár Levina. This is as much your home as the house of your father'.[695] Unusually for animal-bridegroom tales, Estár considers the possible fears of the alien, she wonders if he experiences the same fears as she does. She empathises with him and shows compassion. As she comes to accept the alien, she identifies with his strangeness. Indeed, she comes to realise that, in his home, he is the 'indigenous thing',[696] and she is the alien. The tables are turned; otherness is always predicated on different viewpoints.

When Estár is finally shown the alien's true form, the truth is the opposite of what she expected. He is indeed a lion-like being with fur like velvet and skin 'flawless as a beast's skin so often was'.[697] However, Estár now sees the alien as 'utterly and dreadfully beautiful'.[698] Her fear of his

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[692] *Ibid.* p. 165.
[693] *Ibid.* p. 163.
[694] *Ibid.* p. 170.
[695] *Ibid.* p. 163.
[696] *Ibid.* p. 175.
[697] *Ibid.* p. 180.

[698] *Ibid.*

hideousness is replaced by a feeling of inferiority. Previously she had sheltered herself in the presumption of her own superiority: 'To fear to gaze at their ugliness, that was a safe and sensible premise. To fear their grandeur and their marvel – that smacked of other emotions less wise or good'.[699] Whereas she had managed to come to terms with the idea of giving herself sexually to a beast, she had not even considered that the alien being might be much more beautiful than any human: 'To condescend to give herself to one physically her inferior, that might be acceptable. But not to offer herself to the lightning-bolt, the solar flame'.[700] Estár is left contemplating her own possible ugliness in the alien's eyes. However, the alien sees beauty in their differences, in their *otherness*: 'I find you beautiful, strangely, alienly lovely'.[701]

As Estár realises that the estrangement she felt from her family was very real, and that she is in fact the same species as the alien, born on Earth as a solution to the alien race's sterility, she understands the sadness that she felt while with her family. Though she loved them, she was not the same as them. The text describes one of the exiled children in the following way: 'It was alien, and it pined away among the people of its womb-mother. Brought back to its true kind, then, and only then, it prospered and was happy and became great'.[702] Thus, Estár finds herself reborn, and although she and the alien do not look the same, they know they are the same. She has been freed from artificial ties and, although her family mourn for her, the sadness they see in her now is for them, for the secret she can never reveal to them. For, although we love what is unlike, incompatible, it is the likeness in the *other* that both frightens and fascinates, as it reveals the unknown in oneself. In this tale, like Carter, McKinley and Donoghue in theirs, Lee promotes difference as a positive aspect and reinforces a common trend in contemporary female fairy-tale rewritings.

4.4.3   Tanith Lee's Creative Vision

Lee, like the other modern authors, proposes a fairy-tale heroine who is not weak, but exceptionally strong. This enables her to question the gender stereotypes in traditional fairy tales. Also, as we have seen, Lee creates a future world where sexual taboos have been removed. In creating this fictional space,

[699] *Ibid.* p. 181.
[700] *Ibid.*
[701] *Ibid.* p. 185.
[702] *Ibid.* p. 183.

Lee envisions a real future world where all expressions of sexuality are completely accepted and openly expressed. Finally, she also questions the negative connotations of difference and inverts this type of thinking so as to convey the positive aspects of otherness. In considering Lee's reception of the tale, one can see that she draws on older versions such as 'Cupid and Psyche'. This is clear from the references to Psyche's name in the tale and the similar plot to *La Belle et la Bête*. As with all contemporary fairy-tale retellings, Lee's tale contributes to an ongoing lineage of tales which together make up a web of tales. Her modernised tale challenges many of the traditional concepts that became embedded in tales from the eighteenth century as do all the tales in this chapter. In this way, Lee is one voice in an ongoing dialogue in contemporary tales by women using the very medium that their predecessors were confined to in order to create a new open-minded vision and means of expression. I will return to this notion in the conclusion of this chapter but, beforehand, I will examine Wendy Wheeler's tale 'Skin So Green and Fine'.

4.5   Wendy Wheeler[703]

Wendy Wheeler is a Texas-based writer of science fiction, fantasy, horror and mainstream fiction as well as a screenwriter, graphic artist, game designer, and teacher. Her work has appeared in *Analog, Gorezone, Aboriginal SF*, the Crafter's series, and online at www.RevolutionSF.com. She has also published retellings of fairytales in the anthology series *Snow White Blood Red,* compiled by Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow, which has been translated into French. Her tale 'Skin So Green and Fine', which is to be discussed here, appeared in one of the fairy-tale compilations, *Silver Birch, Blood Moon*, also compiled by Windling and Datlow. This Haitian retelling of 'Beauty and the Beast' was selected for the Thirteenth Annual Year's Best Fantasy & Horror award. She is the founder of the SlugTribe, a Science Fiction/Fantasy study group in Austin that is now in its twenty-fourth year, and sometimes teaches story structure for the University of Texas and various writers' workshops. She does freelance story development for Austin filmmakers, and her script INERTIA is currently in development. She acknowledges being influenced by seventeenth-and eighteenth-century *conteuses* and by contemporary authors such as Angela Carter.[704]

4.5.1   'Skin So Green and Fine' (1999)

'Skin So Green and Fine' is set on the island of Hispaniola which is made up of two states: the Dominican Republic and Haiti. As an animal-bridegroom retelling, it draws, like its predecessors on 'Cupid and Psyche' and 'Beauty and the Beast' but unlike them it revisits *Serpentin Vert* (The Green Serpent). The story focuses on Bonita, a young girl who is sent off to marry Monsieur Aspic. The reference to *La Belle et la Bête* is clear from the outset as the protagonist's name, Bonita, is the Spanish version of Belle. Bonita is innocent and naïve and she is terrified at the prospect of marrying a man that she hardly knows. It is no surprise that Monsieur Aspic should be known as the 'snake man' as Aspic is a type of snake, confirmed here by the character's scaly, snake-like skin and yellow eyes. Aspic's appearance is certainly a reincarnation of d'Aulnoy's *Serpentin Vert*, which Wheeler affirms was the inspiration behind her

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[703] The author prefers her date of birth not be published.
[704] Interview with Wendy Wheeler. See Appendix 2.

rewriting.[705] As in Leprince de Beaumont's, de Villeneuve's and d'Aulnoy's tales, a major theme in Wheeler's rewriting is fear of sexuality and subsequent sexual awakening. At first, Bonita cannot bear to touch Aspic, not only because of his physical appearance but also because of his strange religious rituals. He is Haitian and practices Voodoo, which to Bonita seems completely alien. In the rituals that she witnesses, he appears animal-like, lying on the floor, writhing and hissing which is, again, reminiscent of d'Aulnoy's tale. Even after she goes to live with her new husband Bonita still finds it hard to accept him. However, eventually, she comes to understand his otherness. Wheeler explores not only physical otherness but cultural otherness in great detail, something which she has added to this tale-type in order to make it relevant for today's society and values.

4.5.2 Honour, Initiation and Acceptance

Duty and honour are values traditionally upheld in fairy tales, specifically as regards the representation of the feminine. Here, Wheeler examines them through the character of Bonita who, like most Beauty characters, is dutiful, appearing at first to be submissive. Yet, this appearance is deceptive for it soon becomes obvious that she can also be audacious. Though she is scared of entering married life, Bonita is also curious as to what her new life will bring. Whilst actually 'wishing for the life of an adventurous woman'[706], she is also mourning the loss of her innocence: 'That is my childhood behind me, she thought'.[707] Despite her fears, Bonita wishes to gain experience and knowledge. She asks Saint Theresa: 'Bless me in this marriage [...] And Help me solve its many mysteries'.[708] This is an even bigger challenge to overcome than those with which her predecessors met. Indeed, though 'Skin So Green and Fine' is a contemporary rewriting, Wheeler chooses to set her tale within a culture where women have not yet benefitted from advances in women's rights. Bonita has little choice as regards her selection of husband. This decision, among others, is made by her family. In this way, Wheeler transports us to a place where society's values are from a former era and she reminds us that women, in some

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[705] *Ibid.*

[706] Wendy Wheeler, 'Skin So Green and Fine' in *Silver Birch, Blood Moon* ed. by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling (New York: Avon Books, 1999), pp. 259-88 (p. 260-61).

[707] *Ibid.* p. 266.

[708] *Ibid.* p. 273.

parts of the world, are still facing the same predicaments as the seventeenth-century *conteuses*. In this manner, she empathises with her ancestors and the struggles that they faced in their day.

Bonita's first real predicament is her struggle to accept her new husband's religious beliefs. In spite of her reservations, she must adopt a new code of values, in order to respect her husband's wishes: 'Father Christos says vodoun is wrong [...] B-but I will honor your beliefs, for you are my husband'.[709] Bonita accepts that this is what must be done; this is what a good wife does. There is certainly a sense of submissiveness in the words 'my husband' because Bonita is concerned with honouring and pleasing Aspic. Conversely, Monsieur Aspic refers to Bonita as '*ma femme*', which could mean 'my wife' or 'my woman' and there is an inference of possession in his choice of words that does not come across in Bonita's.[710] Aspic makes no effort to honour any of Bonita's beliefs; it is she who must change in order to please him. This could seem as though Wheeler is promoting a submissive heroine, rather than creating a strong one as we have seen in the previous tales. However, by reminding the reader that situations such as Bonita's still exist in the world, Wheeler, in fact, challenges the archetype of the obedient wife. By rewriting d'Aulnoy's tale, she is recalling women's past struggles comparing them to those of today in societies where women still live as second-class citizens.

In her exploration of femininity Wheeler also represents polar opposites as found in traditional portrayals of women, and offers new insights with regard to the feminine in men. On the one hand, Bonita's sisters are mean, capable of envy and of scheming against their own sister. On the other hand, the object of their cruelty is Aspic who, because he has not forced Bonita to have sex with him, is derided by them as impotent or homosexual:

> 'Ah, Raquella, this *chica* is still a virgin!' cried Ysabel. 'Oh, you poor
> girl,' cried Raquella. 'Six weeks, and he's not forced you or seduced
> you?' Ysabel put her hand to her mouth. 'Bonita, this one must not like

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[709] *Ibid.* p. 274.

[710] French and Haitian Creole are the two official languages of Haiti. The introduction of the French language to Haiti stems back to colonisation in the seventeenth century. The use of French in Wheeler's tale is perhaps also an allusion to the influence of d'Aulnoy's tale.

girls. I know! Papi can have the marriage annulled, and we will make this rich man pay us to keep his shameful secret.[711]

The attitude of Bonita's sisters reveals stereotypes surrounding men, this time, as Aspic should, in their eyes, display the appropriate macho traits of virility, dominance and aggression. But in thinking the way they do, they too appear as victims of the roles they are expected to play. They even consider Bonita a failure because she remains a virgin. Here, certainly, we can see the influence of not only d'Aulnoy, but also Apuleius on Wheeler. By bringing to the fore the very issues that are evident in 'Cupid and Psyche', Wheeler exposes the clichéd gender norms that are embedded in the myth. Indeed, she reinforces her message by highlighting the fact that the sisters are selfish and unscrupulous. When Bonita shows her sister the magic *govi* (vase) that Aspic has given her in order to be able to see him whilst she is visiting her family, her sister attempts to see what Bonita can see. Yet, all she can see in the *govi* is herself: 'I don't see anything in here except my own reflection!'[712] During this scene the reader learns that Bonita has far more insight than her shallow sisters. They cannot see past the superficiality of appearances whereas Bonita has come to realise what is more important.

Wheeler's stereotypical gender representations are not to be read literally but are, rather, a method of questioning. Indeed, in an interview, the author states that she purposely incorporated false female guides into the tale: 'I find it fascinating to write about the effect of the destructive feminine principle as this was something I dealt with in my family'.[713] Therefore, we can state with certainty that Wheeler's reception of the tale is coloured by her own life experiences and this has had a bearing on how she rewrote the tale. She highlights the fact that the sisters in Apuleius' myth are stereotypes of scheming women, yet she uses their characters as a representation of the close-mindedness of society. Archetypes still play an important role in rewritings, especially when related to rites of passage.

One rite of passage presented in Wheeler's tale is the first sexual encounter. Fear of this first experience is a prominent theme in this rewriting as,

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[711] Wheeler, 1999, p. 282.
[712] *Ibid.*
[713] Interview with Wendy Wheeler. See Appendix 2.

indeed, it is in all animal- bridegroom type tales, especially when the young woman does not have a choice of partner. Arranged marriages are still an issue today as there are many instances of abuse resulting from such practices. Wheeler, as McKinley before her, highlights Bonita's young age in order to make that point more forcefully: 'How was she to make babies with this man when she was only a baby herself?'[714] Not only does she feel unprepared, but she also refers to her new husband as 'this man', indicating that he is still a total stranger to her. This brings us back to the role of fairy tales as didactic tools warning but also reassuring women in such predicaments. Indeed, even in modern societies, where women have marital rights, the family can still insist on their traditions superseding the law, therefore this tale addresses itself to all female readers.

Bonita's fear is further expressed through the strangeness of the Haitian marriage ritual. She is asked if she truly wants to enter into the marriage, although, it is clear that she, in fact, has little choice. Her partner has already been chosen for her. What is more, her fear of sexuality is metaphorically represented by her reluctance to participate in the ritual. The 'writhing, shaking dancers' scare her and the Haitian customs seem strange and foreign to her: 'A flood of saliva filled Bonita's mouth, and her throat closed. Her soul fluttered in her chest, but Bonita knew her duty'.[715] Her forced participation in the marriage ritual reflects her anticipated forced participation in sexual acts with her new husband. She cannot bear the thought of 'snake's skin touching her private flesh'.[716] Indeed, snake imagery is associated with something that is slimy and phallic and, therefore, disgusting to Bonita. Yet, Monsieur Aspic assures her that she will not be forced to partake in anything which makes her feel uncomfortable: 'Don't worry *petite fille*, I won't force you'.[717] The words '*petite fille*' again remind us of Bonita's young age and the reader empathises with her. However, we also sympathise with Aspic as he is portrayed as a genuine and gentle character, despite Bonita's fears. Thus, Aspic's monstrosity starts to be considered a positive attribute in the tale.

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[714] Wheeler, 1999, p. 261.
[715] *Ibid.* p. 264-5.
[716] *Ibid.* p. 268.
[717] *Ibid.*

Alongside the issue of fear, Wheeler explores the concept of initiation into something foreign and different. This cultural initiation coincides with Bonita's sexual initiation throughout the tale. Her fear of sexuality is reflected in her fear of the Haitian culture. The 'spatters of blood'[718] that come from the sacrificed chicken during the marriage ceremony represent Bonita's soon to be 'lost' virginity, which she dreads, while also representing her fear of a culture and set of traditions that are completely new to her. As the tale moves on, however, the initiation process takes place and Bonita not only learns about the Haitian religion and culture, but she also experiences her sexual initiation: 'After another look at the neckline of her blouse, her husband finally asked, 'Thinking of lessons, *ma femme*, will you come to my room tonight? I want to teach you something else'.[719] Wheeler's protagonist overcomes her fear in two ways. She learns to accept Aspic as a sexual partner whilst also acknowledging her own sexuality and she accepts another culture fully. By putting these two forms of acceptance in parallel, Wheeler promotes difference as a positive attribute in her tale and as something which does not have to be conquered or overcome but merely understood.

Wheeler's tale is certainly a response to the previous stories of this tale-type. By championing cultural and sexual otherness, like Donoghue, she challenges the stereotypical and enforced norms that became typical of fairy tales over time. Indeed, she acknowledges existing interpretations of the animal-bridegroom tale within the text. We are reminded of Bettelheim's use of psychoanalytical theory when Bonita cannot accept the snake man until she breaks ties with her father: 'It is your Papa's face you see, is it?'[720] Aspic knows that Bonita is still holding on to her childhood when she sees her father's face in the *govi*. In fact, Wheeler admits that it was her reading of Bettelheim's analysis of 'Beauty and the Beast' that prompted her to write 'Skin So Green and Fine'.[721] Hence, Wheeler was influenced by how the tale had been previously interpreted and she, then, added her own interpretation. Also, Wheeler makes reference to the traditional themes in this type of tale by using

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[718] *Ibid.* p. 264.
[719] *Ibid.* p. 277.
[720] *Ibid.* p. 275.
[721] Interview with Wendy Wheeler. See Appendix 2.

the imagery of being eaten: 'The open doorway yawned like a dark mouth'.[722]
By hinting at past interpretations of the tale, Wheeler is reminding the reader of
the tale's origins and purpose. Though contemporary writers mould tales to
convey new messages, since animal-bridegroom tales always had at their core
an exploration of our fears surrounding sexuality, their retellings revisit the
same themes with a modern perspective, which, here, is interculturality, a
perspective to be developed in the next section.

In the resolution of Wheeler's tale, as in old tales, we see Bonita's
sexual awakening leading to fulfilment towards the end of the story as Bonita
begins to explore her own body by masturbating, yet another broken taboo.
Overall, in line with the previous Beauty characters, Bonita's curiosity is seen
as positive. Whereas Apuleius represented female sexuality as something
dangerous, here, Wheeler represents it as natural and good: 'In her solitary bath,
Bonita would rub soaps and lotions on her body and wonder what it felt like for
other hands to touch her all over. Here, maybe. And here. She'd taken to going
to bed in her panties, the better for the satin sheets to stroke her'.[723] The overt
sexual references in Wheeler's tale unveil sexuality as something to be explored
rather than hidden and, in this manner, Wheeler succeeds in removing the
element of taboo from the tale:

> She began to sponge him, first on his face and neck, then down to his
> chest. She held his arms up, the better to wash the curly hair in his
> armpits. The curve of his biceps struck her as so beautiful she stopped the
> bathing just to observe him. How long and lean! How fine-boned his face,
> how full his lips! She began to wash his chest, paying close attention to
> the flat dark nipples in their nests of hair. [...] She began to kiss it as she
> washed up the leg now, past the muscular thigh. The skin was warm and
> soft beneath her lips. Her husband caught his breath and sighed. Her eyes
> travelled to that other place at the juncture of his legs, which swelled so
> round and full beneath the silk. Was this it, then? Was this the secret that
> married women shared?[724]

Bonita's capacity for sexual pleasure is underlined as not only acceptable but
important. On the contrary, she enjoys her newly discovered sexuality in the

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[722] Wheeler, 1999, p. 284.
[723] *Ibid.* pp. 278-9.
[724] *Ibid.* pp. 285-6.

story. As in 'Cupid and Psyche', we are told of Erzulie, 'the energy of love and the teacher of fulfilment'[725] at the end of the tale which reminds us of the child, Pleasure, that Psyche bore. By knowingly playing upon the motifs of 'Cupid and Psyche' and d'Aulnoy's tale, Wheeler acknowledges the lineage of this tale type. However, she reverses the negative connotations that were associated previously with sexuality and, instead, portrays sexuality, especially female sexuality, and curiosity in a much more affirmative manner. In this way, Wheeler advocates a sexualised fairy-tale heroine who is not meek or disgraced, but a balanced character. Indeed, the author acknowledges that she finds the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' 'maddening': 'Psyche is too curious so that ruins her life? Women's curiosity is a destructive force?'[726] Wheeler adds that she 'consciously made Bonita's curiosity a plot driver for her education and healthy maturation'.[727] From Wheeler's comments, we can see that her reception of the tale was certainly influenced by her own convictions and, what is more, that her tale is a reaction to the misogynistic overtones concerning sexuality that permeate Apuleius' myth. Since Wheeler's snake man is influenced by d'Aulnoy's *Serpentin Vert* – 'I did take inspiration from d'Aulnoy' she says,[728] – we can say that Wheeler's tale is carrying on the lineage of animal-bridegroom tales. By transporting the tale into a more modern setting, Wheeler contemporises it but she also sets the story within a culture where women still have less rights than men and, in this way, her tale is very like d'Aulnoy's.

The Haitian setting of the tale brings to the fore issues of cultural otherness. Physical otherness, also, as in d'Aulnoy's tale, is represented by the imagery of snakes. The male character's reptilian form is repulsive to Bonita at first and her fear is tied up with the strangeness of his appearance: 'Bonita noticed his small ears and almost bald scalp. The Snake Man's skin was a color between olive and black-brown. And yes, there was a mottled pattern on his cheeks and neck. So the stories were true'.[729] Monsieur Aspic's 'dusky green

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[725] *Ibid.* p. 288.
[726] Interview with Wendy Wheeler. See Appendix 2.
[727] *Ibid.*
[728] *Ibid.*
[729] Wheeler, 1999, p. 264.

scales'[730] make him a figure of suspicion and legend. His being somewhat of a recluse adds to the sense of mystery that surrounds him. However, this sense of mystery is also what arouses Bonita's sense of curiosity, in the end. In this manner, Wheeler manages to portray Aspic's physical otherness as a positive on the whole. Once again, we see otherness being advocated in a contemporary tale.

Alongside physical otherness, Wheeler also uses imagery of Voodoo rituals to represent the otherness of the Haitian culture; the snake man's odd physical appearance reflects the otherness of a strange culture and religion that Bonita does not understand. During the marriage ceremony the Haitian rituals seem so strange that Bonita can hardly accept the fact that these people are human. The differences she sees between herself and them make her feel like an outsider: 'The bodies that whirled around her radiated heat; their blank faces seemed to have no human soul inside them'.[731] As Carter pointed out the unfairness of women being deemed soulless, here Wheeler explores not only the realm of personal otherness but cultural otherness also. In this way, she has modernised d'Aulnoy's tale to tackle modern issues such as racism and cultural tensions. Notwithstanding, she still retains the core of the tale; she does not lose the original message of the unimportance of appearances but she incorporates a further message of cultural acceptance and tolerance.

This message is brought to the fore through Wheeler's portrayal of the contrast between the two cultures: 'Although the two races, brown and black, shared the island of Hispaniola, they rarely mixed. This marriage was something of a scandal'.[732] Mixed-race marriages are still not accepted in some parts of the world. Wheeler's tackling of this issue is a testament to the evolution of fairy tales. Authors can mould them to convey their own messages and reflect the times they live in.

Aspic's otherness is developed further, later in the tale, through depictions of both his physical appearance and his religious practices: 'His eyes showed only white as he lay belly-down on the dirt floor, flicking his tongue in

[730] *Ibid.* p. 266.
[731] *Ibid.* p. 263.
[732] *Ibid.* p. 260.

and out and hissing'.[733] During his religious rituals, Aspic seems animal-like to Bonita. The rites he performs scare her and this is underlined through the association with serpentine imagery. Wheeler develops d'Aulnoy's snake man to represent not only Bonita's fear of the sexual but also her fear of anything outside the realm of what she considers culturally 'normal'. And, yet, Wheeler does not portray Bonita as a xenophobic person, but the reader understands that Bonita is young and fears what she does not know as she has been brought up in this way. Wheeler's message then becomes clear; our cultural background shapes how we think and how we view others in the world. Indeed, the main premise of reception theory is just this, we are influenced, consciously and unconsciously, by our experiences and this will affect how we interpret new experiences. These influences can then be traced in the changes that are made to tales over time. Wheeler's tale is an example of this.

Wheeler presents neither Bonita's fear nor her curiosity as negative. Bonita questions Aspic's religion, but she also wants to understand it. She is curious and Wheeler promotes this quality as the first step towards tolerance, considering it an attempt to understand the point of view of others. What is more, Wheeler highlights the sadness of being ostracised because of cultural or physical difference: 'Bonita saw him look down at his scaly hands as if he hated them'.[734] From d'Aulnoy's time to Wheeler's, this *Serpentin-Vert* type tale has evolved from a tale about physical otherness to a tale about racial and cultural acceptance.

Bonita's acceptance of Aspic's otherness comes towards the end of the tale, unsurprisingly. As she comes to allow for his cultural otherness, she can also accept his physical difference. She begins to empathise with him: 'He seemed so frail and young without any clothes'.[735] As she starts to see Aspic as a person rather than a strange being, she understands his sadness and self-hatred. Aspic explains to her: 'ugliness is the sign of a diseased soul. You, with your saint's face and generous heart, are proof that beauty inside and beauty outside go together. That is why I hide my skin and my deformity from other

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[733] *Ibid.* p. 273.
[734] *Ibid.* p. 278.
[735] *Ibid.* p. 285.

people's eyes'.[736] By exploring Aspic's hatred of his physical deformity, Wheeler questions the binaries of beauty and ugliness and good and evil. Reminding us of the moral message in Leprince de Beaumont's tale, Bonita tells Aspic: 'And you should meet all the pretty women and handsome men I know who are not worth a *phffft*'.[737] Wheeler expands on Leprince de Beaumont's message to not only comment upon the unfairness of judging people by their physical appearance but also, the injustice of judging people because of their race or cultural or religious background. In this way, Wheeler has revalorised a tale for a contemporary, multi-cultural society. By the end of the tale, Bonita sees Aspic's difference as 'fascinating'. She accepts not only his unusual, scaly appearance but also his racial and cultural difference. Thus, hundreds of years on, Leprince de Beaumont's and d'Aulnoy's tales are still sending a message of acceptance and fairness through rewritings by contemporary authors. Wheeler makes this tale relevant for a modern audience by questioning contemporary issues of otherness which revolve around recognition and approval not only of physical difference, but of cultural and racial differences too.

4.5.3   Reclaiming Sexuality

As outlined above, we can see that considering Wheeler's reception of the myth of 'Cupid and Psyche' and d'Aulnoy's *Serpentin Vert* is of great importance in understanding the motivation behind her rewriting of the tale. As regards the process of rewriting, Wheeler states that it is a conscious decision: 'writing new work based on existing sources allows the writer to delve deeper into the mysteries and meanings behind the original material' and, furthermore, that the writers 'all bring something of their own psyches to the table'.[738] When Wheeler rewrites, she acknowledges the work of past authors of the same tale and makes it clear that she is aware that her own values and experiences have an influence on how she rewrites the tale. Indeed, she asserts that, in writing 'Skin So Green and Fine', she wanted to put more focus on Bonita's sexual evolution than on the transformation of the Beast, as is the case with many animal-bridegroom tales, particularly 'Beauty and the Beast'. She states that, 'a

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[736] *Ibid.*
[737] *Ibid.* p. 286.
[738] Interview with Wendy Wheeler. See Appendix 2.

Beauty who comes to appreciate and have sexual interest in a reptile husband/creature puts the focus on her character's evolution and maturation'.[739] Wheeler acknowledges that, by rewriting this tale, her aim is to challenge notions that are embedded in previous tales. Thus, she makes it clear that her social context, in the form of her own beliefs and values, certainly have a bearing, firstly, on which tales she wishes to challenge and chooses to retell and, secondly, on *how* she transforms the tale to convey a new message.

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[739] *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

The six contemporary tales included in Chapter 4 of this thesis had to be selected from a vast and ever-growing group of rewritings of fairy tales and, unfortunately, many tales could not be included in this study for want of space. However, the sheer amount of tales available for a study of this nature indicates the importance of considering fairy tales for proper literary analysis, rather than sidelining them to the sphere of the neglected or unimportant, as has happened in the past.

The vast array of critical literature available on the topic of fairy tales and their rewritings also testifies to the genre's ever-growing popularity. In the Critical Review Chapter of this thesis, Chapter 1, the pertinent concepts that were examined related to women tale tellers and the subversive strategies they employed to write fairy tales. To do so, the notion of the fairy tale as meme was used, as memes are specifically relevant to *fin de siècle* thinking and literary output. All these approaches aimed at analysing the relationship between fairy tales, sexuality and the concept of the beastly body. This is why this chapter led to the interpretations of the animal-bridegroom tales which were discussed including the influential theories of Bruno Bettelheim. It was noted in this chapter that the fairy tale is often regarded as a lower form of literature precisely because it is associated with the feminine or domesticity. This was linked to Lewis Carl Seifert's notion of the 'gendered genre' and, indeed, this is one of the reasons why women authors fiercely defend the fairy-tale genre and proliferate it. They wish to revalorise misunderstood and somewhat forgotten texts. Traditional versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' often blame Beauty's curiosity for her subsequent demise and leave the responsibility of humanising the Beast with her. As was suggested at the end of Chapter 1, this is an issue that contemporary female authors address. Before analysing the tales, however, it was necessary, first, to lay down a theoretical framework on which a study of this nature could be based upon. In doing so it was necessary to consider the role of 'women's writing' and its relevance as regards the rewriting of fairy tales.

Chapter 2 provided this theoretical framework which focused upon and bridged intertextuality, reception theory and reader response theory as well as

feminist literary criticism. The intertextual nature inherent to the tales is apparent in the many similar motifs that have been carried through since before Apuleius' time till today. Taking into account the reception of these tales was an important method for piecing together the dialogic relationship that exists between the fairy-tale author and its reader as was the use of Stanley Fish's notion of 'interpretive communities'. Also, in discussing the theory of reception posited by Hans Robert Jauss, the question was raised as to whether the past can be reappropriated in different ways depending on the receiver of the text. It became clear that it can, as we have seen through the many different versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' examined. Yet, within the women's rewritings dealt with, a common thread remained: that of the constant need to challenge traditional notions concerning gender, sexuality and otherness. For this very reason, all these women can still be grouped within a community of readers and writers and, although we cannot say that women write in a similar manner simply because they happen to be of the same sex, there are common interpretive strategies in women's writing that lead to common motifs and themes within their texts, especially in the case of fairy tales due to their strong historical connection with the feminine and the maternal, as outlined in this chapter in relation to Marina Warner's theories on the inherent feminine image that is personified by Mother Goose. Thus, it was suggested at the end of Chapter 2 that the new vogue of fairy tales which began at the end of the twentieth century and is ongoing is a method for modern women authors to question the very patriarchal values that left women and fairy tales on the margins of literary history for so long.

The choice of the animal-bridegroom tale type was specifically due to the themes that are always prominent in this type of tale, namely sexual initiation and the concept of the monstrous which is naturally connected to the notion of otherness or marginality and, therefore, reflects the status of fairy tales and tale tellers in general. Hence, in Chapter 3 – Origins of Beastly Tales, Apuleius' myth, 'Cupid and Psyche', was examined as this is generally acknowledged to be one of the main precursors to the fairy-tale versions of 'Beauty and the Beast' that were later written and rewritten. The corpus of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors that was then examined comprised of versions of animal-bridegroom tales by Mme d'Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard,

Charles Perrault, Mme de Villeneuve and Mme Leprince de Beaumont. Firstly, the changes that Mme d'Aulnoy made to Apuleius' myth were examined. Charting these changes gave an insight into her values and the changing ideologies of this time period, allowing her to comment on the oppression that women faced. D'Aulnoy's revision of this myth was a clear challenge to this type of oppression. Subsequently, it became apparent during the formulation of this corpus that although most of the authors that were active in writing tales during this vogue were women, Perrault's fame eclipsed that of the *conteuses*. During the examination of two versions of *Riquet à la Houppe*, the first by Catherine Bernard and the second by Charles Perrault, striking differences between the two versions were noted. The main difference was that whereas Bernard's protagonist was intelligent and resourceful despite the tyranny she faced at the hands of Riquet, Perrault painted an all together different picture, labelling his protagonist as 'selfish' and 'scheming'. This disparity gives an insight into the differing attitudes of male and female story-tellers of the time and also justifies taking a fairy-tale author's gender into account, as there was a marked difference in how gender roles were represented in the two tales. Lastly, in this chapter, we saw the didactic changes that were appended onto *La Belle et la Bête* by Mme de Villeneuve and how this was further brought about by Mme Leprince de Beaumont. These moralistic changes reflected changing notions as regards the role of childhood and fairy tales as children's literature. Overall, the seventeenth-century *conteuses* can be grouped as one interpretive community as they all questioned prevailing norms and strove to create for themselves a means of expression through their tales. However, in light of the 'watering down' that occurred later in the eighteenth century, Mme Leprince de Beaumont and Mme de Villeneuve cannot be grouped in the same interpretive community as their predecessors. The change in attitude with regard to childhood that occurred during the eighteenth century resulted in the insertion of moral and didactic messages into the tales and many examples of this were demonstrated in Chapter 3.

The contemporary authors that were examined in Chapter 4 were Angela Carter, Robin McKinley, Emma Donoghue, Tanith Lee and Wendy Wheeler. For the *conteuses*, the *contes de fées* were their only means of expression and it may have seemed anomalous at first that modern women writers would

reappropriate the very texts that previous women authors were confined to. However, contemporary authors rewrote these tales in order to specifically question the patriarchal values that relegated women authors and fairy tales to the sphere of the domestic in the first place. Whereas for the *conteuses*, the fairy-tale genre was one of their only means of having work published, now, women chose to use these tales as a form of communication. Indeed, this is an important factor in considering the reception of tales. Much can be gained by endeavouring to understand how these women authors have influenced and inspired each other and how the web of tales that they have created continues to grow and expand. Certainly, one author's text helps the reader to understand the next and this is particularly true as regards fairy tales because of the reader's horizon of expectations. The tales that form this mosaic of stories are seemingly conformist yet subversive. They never stray too far from an existing template so as to be unrecognisable but authors can change and twist them to question normative values. It is this facet of fairy tales which accounts for their proliferation and endless rewriting in order to continue to be passed on to new generations.

This thesis demonstrates that all of the modern authors discussed can be grouped as part of the same interpretive community because of the similar manner in which they receive and interpret these tales. They all challenge gender stereotypes and promote acceptance as regards sexuality and otherness. What is more, all of the modern authors chose to recreate the ending of the tale, in various ways, so as to render the metamorphosis of the Beast unnecessary. This ultimate message of tolerance is the main difference between the two corpora used in this study. Nevertheless, the seventeenth- and twentieth-century women authors examined here appropriated the genre of the fairy tale for very similar reasons notwithstanding their different cultural and social backgrounds. They all used fairy tales as a means of challenging and questioning their reality. In Chapter 2, I discussed Annette Kolodny's contention that women writers can easily become 'isolated islands of symbolic significance'.[740] However, the texts and authors examined as part of this study are not isolated; they are part of an ongoing interconnected web of tales that is woven by and for women.

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[740] Kolodny, p. 54.

Without a doubt, we are today in the midst of another type of vogue, that relates back to Apuleius' myth; that of teen-vampire fiction. This vogue has become immensely popular in recent years with the release of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novels and of television series such as *The Vampire Diaries*[741] and *True Blood*.[742] This is another area of research that could develop from this study because of the monstrous nature of the vampire characters. The male vampire, although devastatingly handsome, is a beast character and because of this, vampire romance tales fit into the category of the animal-bridegroom tale. Indeed, the relationship between gender and vampire fiction has been somewhat examined. Anthea Taylor has examined masochism and female adolescent desire in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* novels. Taylor notes that the relationship between the two protagonists, awkward Bella and 'hyper-idealized vampire hero'[743] Edward, is troubling. Female, adolescent desire is represented as seductive and dangerous whereas Edward's obsessive and controlling behaviour is portrayed as endearing. The negative associations with female desire are reminiscent of Apuleius' myth as is 'Meyer's nostalgic return to the inscription of gendered dynamics'.[744] In the *Twilight* novels, readers (most likely teenage girls) are presented with yet another helpless heroine whose identity is only defined through the love of god-like Edward. Their relationship is one of dominance and submission. Taylor notes that Bella even begs Edward to kill her, or rather, turn her into a vampire. We also see traditional norms embedded within the text whereby premarital sex is discouraged by virtuous Edward and Bella's desire must be controlled. What is more, Taylor also notes that Edward's controlling behaviour in the novels borders on the abusive.[745] Indeed, Renae Franiuk and Samantha Scherr also make this point regarding both the *Twilight* novels and the television series, *The Vampire Diaries*. In examining gender and violence, Franiuk and Scherr contend that patriarchal

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[741] Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec (Executive Producers), *The Vampire Diaries* (The CW Television Network, 2009). The series *The Vampire Diaries* is based on the series of novels by the same name by J. L. Smith.

[742] Alan Ball (Creator and Producer), *True Blood* (HBO, 2008). The series *True Blood* is based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* series of novels by Charlaine Harris.

[743] Anthea Taylor 'The Urge Towards Love Is An Urge Towards (Un)Death: Romance, Masochistic Desire and Postfeminism in the *Twilight* novels', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15.1 (2011), 31-46 (p. 31).

[744] *Ibid.* p. 32.

[745] *Ibid.* p. 36.

themes are particularly strong in both the novels and the television series.[746] They demonstrate how the lead male vampires' jealousy and dominance is representative of domestic abuse and, what is more, they posit that violence is eroticised by the linking of violent acts with sex.[747] These are worrying concepts to cultivate in the minds of young readers and viewers, especially when we take into account the prevalence of domestic violence worldwide.[748] According to the United Nations, the most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner. A World Health Organisation study in eleven countries found that the percentage of women who had been subjected to sexual violence by an intimate partner ranged from six per cent in Japan to fifty-nine per cent in Ethiopia. It is also estimated that, worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime.[749] In Chapter 2, I posed the question: Why does an alternative lineage of fairy tales continue in the age of equal rights, when one gender is supposedly equal to the other? It seems the answer is, unfortunately, one gender is not yet equal to the other, in fiction or reality.

With writers like Stephenie Meyer producing global franchises out of teen-vampire novels, one can say with certainty that 'Beauty and the Beast' and the animal-bridegroom tale type in general is in no danger of disappearing. In fact, the web of tales seems to be evolving and growing more than ever. Despite the worrying sexism evident in *Twilight*, there are many contemporary fairy-tale authors who question such attitudes. Perhaps such writers will adopt the vampire trend and create feminist revisions in the same vein as their fairy-tale revisions. Indeed, Robin McKinley has already produced one vampire novel, *Sunshine* (2003).

Fairy tales have provided, for women a means of communication since before the time of the French *conteuses* and will do so for a long time from now. The dialogue that exists and is hidden within these texts continues to

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[746] Ranae Franiuk and Samantha Scherr, 'The Lion Fell in Love with the Lamb: Gender, Violence, and Vampires', *Feminist Media Studies*, 13.1 (2012), 14-28(p. 14).
[747] *Ibid.* p. 22.
[748] See also Laura Béres discussion of abuse in 'Beauty and the Beast' and *Dracula* in 'The Romanticization of Abuse in Popular Culture', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2.2 (1999), 191-207.
[749] United Nations, 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls', <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/endviol/index.shtml> [accessed 12 August 2013].

evolve and the web of tales that has been created by women stretches back for centuries and will continue to develop, centuries from now. Despite the fact that fairy tales may be regarded by some as an unimportant genre, the fact remains that these tales will continue to be passed on from one generation to the next and, like Arachne, women tale tellers will continue weaving words.

> Touch'd with the pois'nous drug, her flowing hair
>
> Fell to the ground, and left her temples bare;
>
> Her usual features vanish'd from their place,
>
> Her body lessen'd all, but most her face.
>
> Her slender fingers, hanging on each side
>
> With many joynts, the use of legs supply'd:
>
> A spider's bag the rest, from which she gives
>
> A thread, and still by constant weaving lives.[750]

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[750] Ovid, *The Tale of Arachne* in *Metamorphoses*, Book VI
[http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.6.sixth.html]

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APPENDIX 1

Interview with Emma Donoghue, 19 November 2012

Why did you decide to write a book of fairy tales?

The late lamented Roisin Conroy suggested it, because her Irish feminist press (Attic) were doing a few fairytale-revision titles. I didn't end up publishing it with them because I already had a relationship with other presses (Penguin in Ireland/UK and HarperCollins in US), but I've always been grateful to her for the notion. It really should have occurred to me anyway, because I spent my entire childhood reading fairytales.

You mention Andrew Lang and your mother at the start of *Kissing the Witch*; do you think there is an inherent maternal aspect to telling tales and would you say that that influenced you?

Inherent? I'm not sure about that: there's just as long a tradition of the male storyteller and men (such as Andrew Lang) have never been absent from the genre.

Do you think that fairy tales can be considered as a gendered genre? (That the author's gender or sexuality is somehow inscribed in the text).

No more than any other text.

And do you think your gender/sexuality is therefore inscribed in *Kissing the Witch*?

I'm resisting your 'therefore', but in the case of KTW, yes, this was a specifically feminist and lesbian project for me in that I chose to focus on under-explored relationships between women in these old stories.

Do you think there is a certain inherent femaleness in fairy tales?

No.

Why, in your opinion, are particularly women writers drawn to the genre? Or, do you think that is true?

It's been true at some specific cultural moments - when seventeenth-century French court women wrote stories such as Beauty and the Beast, for instance, or from the 1970s till now, when feminist writers have tackled and reworked traditional fairytales, more because of their painfully patriarchal plots which still rule popular cultural (sit and wait for your prince, for instance) than because they're an inherently female genre.

Do you think women (lesbian or straight) writers are particularly fascinated with the monstrous or beastly and, through this, otherness?

No, I think the past few decades have seen a widespread fascination with rethinking and celebrating the freak, for instance in the form of vampires; it may overlaps with feminism at points but everybody's doing it.

Do you think that fear of sexuality is an important theme in animal-bridegroom tales, such as 'Beauty and the Beast' and its variants?

Sure. My own favourite example is the Frog Bridegroom, who creeps so slimily and sickeningly onto the Princess's clean sheets...

APPENDIX 2

Interview with Wendy Wheeler, 23 November 2012.

Why did you decide to write fairy tales?

I grew up reading all the myths, legends and fairytales from all cultures that I could find, so when I learned that Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling were creating this new series, it seemed a perfect fit for my talents and interest. Writing new work based on existing sources allows the writer to delve deeper into the mysteries and meanings behind the origin material. You can have as many versions of Beauty and the Beast or Little Red Riding Hood as you have writers retooling the story, and they all bring something of their own psyches to the table, which is fascinating to me. I believe, as did Freud, Jung, Joseph Campbell and others, that fairytales and myths embody some deep truths, so the source material helps deepen your story in ways magical and mystical.

Do you think that there is an inherent maternal aspect to telling tales and would you say that that influenced you?

I didn't think of that specifically until your question. For one thing, the Brothers Grimm were male, Charles Perrault was male, but the collection of stories he gathered he ascribed to a person called Mother Goose. The implication being that a wise female told these ancient nursery stories to children for their entertainment and education. Women-focused works don't get half the prestige and attention that male-focused ones do, especially in fiction. That was changing 30 years ago; I loved the way that Angela Carter had reclaimed fairytales in her work, creating new versions with intensity, weirdness, and creepy sexual subcurrents. Carter started a revival in fairytale stories, and editors Datlow/Windling saw it and created a multi-book series based on it. Honestly, I probably have a bit of a blind spot as these relate to the maternal, in that my own take on fairytales consistently features the inimical mother or false female guides. I think this is a reality of life that fairytales help prepare us for, in a hidden, deflected way. I find it fascinating to write about the effect of the destructive feminine principle as this was something I dealt with in my family.

Do you think that fairy tales can be considered as a gendered genre? (That the author's gender or sexuality is somehow inscribed in the text).

The gendered genre is more about who tells the stories (child carers) and who's the audience (children), which has made it appear a genre less important than male-oriented fiction. The modern fairytale-retelling anthologies from Datlow/Windling and others have a mix of male and female authors, and the author's gender is rarely part of the subtext, at least in my reading. But I do see in the modern retellings and updates a revisiting of the western culture's gender roles. Some of the fairytales with the passive, non-heroic females drive me crazy. And the Cupid/Eros and Psyche story, the progenitor of Beauty and the Beast, is especially maddening. Psyche is too curious so that ruins her life? Women's curiosity is a destructive force? Well, when generations of men have insisted on their secret second families, private affairs and unlimited control over family finances, I guess screeds against women's curiosity serve a cultural purpose. Hey, let's demonize anything that might destabilize patriarchal social mechanisms! I consciously made Bonita's curiosity a plot driver for her education and healthy maturation.

Do you think there is a certain inherent femaleness in fairy tales?

Same answer as above; because the genre itself is not considered male oriented, it's seen as a girl thing. But protagonists do not appear inherently more female to me, nor do the tales themselves seem more female. True, they are family and relationship focused, which seems the women's arena, yet fairytales do contain some swash-buckling scenes of adventure!

Why, in your opinion, are particularly women writers drawn to the genre? Or, do you think that is true?

It seems to me more significant that the majority of the *erotic retellings* of fairytales are by women authors. A lot of that is reclaiming women's sexual fantasies, redefining the erotic and making heroines their own sexual agents. By turning fairytale predators into sexual prey, for instance, these authors are overturning the patriarchal fantasies of what are supposed to be women's desires.

Do you think women (lesbian or straight) writers are particularly fascinated with the monstrous or beastly and, through this, otherness?

That's an interesting thought. I think female authors and artists show more fascination with the monstrous or beastly as it confronts us *in the family arena.* The Bluebeard stories are an overt explication of this. Bluebeard is a monster who appears non-monstrous to the women he convinces to marry him; he looks like a normal human, but his appetites and misogyny behind closed doors are beastly. That's the chilling threat that mothers, wives and daughters have had to deal with for millennia, that a monster in the family demands accommodation, even total sacrifice — or must be destroyed in some way that gives the female the freedom she deserves (tricky when the laws are made by and for men, and women and children are considered chattel). It's so much more frightening when a story gives us monsters at the dinner table or in the marriage bed, rather than a beast who bellows, flaps its wings and blows flame from a distance.

Do you think that fear of sexuality is an important theme in animal-bridegroom tales, such as 'Beauty and the Beast' and its variants?

Ha, it's funny you ask. My story was written from my reading of Bruno Bettelheim's analysis of Beauty and the Beast. I wrote in my cover letter to Ellen Datlow that B&B shows the successful resolution of the oedipal conflict within the family structure. Beast represents the dark, sexual urges. The character arc of Beauty is that she is not meant to find males sexually interesting or attractive while she's still in the family home and bonded to her father. Transferring her affection and connection to the Beast is what allows her to find him, and sex, attractive and relatable.

The voudoun religion, with its emphasis on snake-like deities, religious frenzy and possession, I also used for its similarity to erotic ecstacy (sic). Bonita has to accept its practices (it's her husband's religion) despite some of them being distasteful to her. There are also false female guides, fairytale archetypes, in the divergent and unhelpful advice from Bonita's sisters about sexuality and what husbands and wives do privately. One sister tells her how disappointing the reality is to the fantasy, while the other scares her by saying the woman's burden weighs heaviest in the marriage bed.

Would you say that you are influenced by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fairy tale authors, such as Mme d'Aulnoy? Particularly her tale *Serpentin Vert* (The Green Serpent) as regards 'Skin so Green and Fine'.

So many B&B stories have a ferocious, furry male mammal as the Beast, but I made the animal-bridegroom a snake man, bringing out the phallic in this most-oedipal of fairytales. The odd thing is how few readers figured out which origin story this was until I told them! I did take inspiration from d'Aulnoy and others who also intuited the sexual underpinnings of the family dynamic in the story long before Bruno Bettelheim or Freud were even born. In story terms, by making Beast a gruff, furry animal, the emphasis is on how Beauty tames him back to a human, so it's mostly his character arc. But a Beauty who comes to appreciate and have sexual interest in a reptile husband/creature puts the focus on her character's evolution and maturation.