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Beauty And The Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale: 1950–1985

Betsy Hearne

The story of “Beauty and the Beast” emerged, during the eighteenth century, from folk and literary sources that were combined into a literary fairy tale by French writers Madame Gabrielle Susanne Barbot de Gallon de Villeneuve (1740) and Madame Jeanne Marie Le Prince de Beaumont (1756). Printed versions subsequently varied almost as much as oral narratives, which have included diversely active heroines and gender-reversed roles with the female as beast. An examination of the story’s development reveals an organic shaping and reshaping around a core of basic elements in response to historical and cultural influences. Eighteenth-century versions are affected by the forging of folk narratives with a new literary tradition; the nineteenth century, by innovations in book-marking and printing; and the twentieth century, by the influence of psychological interpretations, new media techniques, and mass market distribution. The following is a comparative analysis of contemporary English and American versions, based on a more complete study of the story’s recreations, through several hundred years, in the form of folklore, drama, poetry, novel, film, and picture book.¹ The examination of variously successful versions defines which elements of the story are crucial to its survival and shows that its resilience lies in a metaphorical strength more flexible than most interpretations suggest.

In the story of “Beauty and the Beast,” a wealthy merchant with three beautiful daughters, the youngest incomparably lovely and good-hearted, loses everything through misfortune. Hearing of one cargo ship’s safe return, the merchant sets out to straighten out his finances. His older girls clamor for rich gifts, but Beauty requests only a rose. After a fruitless journey, the merchant turns homeward, gets lost in a storm, and discovers a magic palace, where he plucks from the garden a rose. This theft arouses the wrath of a terrible Beast, who demands he either forfeit his life or give up a daughter. Beauty insists on sacrificing herself but becomes instead mistress of a palace and develops an esteem for the Beast. In spite of her growing attachment to him, however, she misses her ailing father and requests leave to care for him. Once home, she is diverted by her two sisters from returning to the palace until nearly too late. She



Beauty and the Beast. Pictures by E. V. B. London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Low, and sale, c. 1905.



Beauty and the Beast. Vol. II, *Hewet's Household Stories for Little Folks*. Illustrator: W. H. Thwaite. New York, Hewet, 1855.

misses the Beast, arrives to find him almost dead with grief, and declares her love, thereby transforming him into a prince who makes her his bride.

From 1950 to 1985, the publications and media productions of “Beauty and the Beast” have multiplied dramatically but ephemerally. Of the scores of picture book versions, only a dozen are now in print. Eight are of mediocre quality and published by small houses that cannot sustain backlists long; the other four are fine editions but still threatened by an economy that forces books out of print as soon as immediate post-publication sales drop. Mass media productions, by their very nature, are often limited to one airing. The one-act opera by Vittorio Giannini, with a moving libretto (“Beauty was a girl who lived in dreams”) by Robert Simon, was broadcast on the radio in 1951; the recording is inaccessible if it exists at all, and the score almost impossible to find. An elaborate television production viewed by millions in 1977 has never been rerun.

It is tempting to speculate whether the effect of so many versions of such varied quality duplicates oral folk dissemination. Both children and adults are exposed to the story periodically and ubiquitously, with divergence expected around the given themes despite a seeming permanence or authority of printed words and celluloid images. The pattern of adaptations available to any given individual must be random when a comprehensive search over several years has found so many versions, even



Beauty and the Beast. London: Mentor, c. 1900. Illustrator unknown. This illustration may have been based on one from an earlier chapbook.

those mass marketed at production, difficult to attain. The adaptations examined here represent those most likely to exert the most steady impression on the most people. Yet it is probable that similar conclusions would emerge from other examples—and awesome to think of this and future generations exposed to entries in the standard Library of Congress computerized holdings printout, at present more than seven feet long, summarizing over and over,

Through her great capacity to love, a kind and beautiful maid releases a handsome prince from the spell which has made him an ugly beast. READY FOR NEW COMMAND:²

The impact of one adapter, such as Andrew Lang in the late nineteenth century, or one illustrator, such as Edmund Dulac in the early twentieth, on public awareness has been reduced not only by plurality but also by mediocrity. A substantial percentage of the versions available suffer from trivialization 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. Some earlier versions were certainly child-conscious. The “Little Plays



Les Contes des fées offerts à Bébè. Paris: Emile Guérin, c. 1900. Illustrator unknown.

for Little People” series by Miss Julia Corner and Alfred Crowquill (1854) overdoes rhyming couplets and doll-like figures in its didactic, multi-fairied presentations of “Beauty and the Beast.” Aunt Mary’s 1856 version revises Madame de Beaumont’s eighteenth-century stone statue punishment of Beauty’s rivals for the benefit of penitent young readers:

Her sisters after continuing in their mortifying situation several years, were restored by the good fairy to their original shape, and by their conduct fully atoned for their past follies.

Laura E. Richards’ retelling, illustrated by Gordon Browne in 1886, is cute and condescending, with Beauty harassed by sisters Gracilia and Superba. A tree narrates the story (“Long, long ago, before there were railways or radishes, and when the moon was still made of green cheese, there lived in the Kingdom of Rigdom Funnidos a rich merchant who had three fair daughters” [Richards, np]) and is interrupted constantly by some children asking questions. These occasional aberrations have always plagued the story; in 1951, *Beauty and the Beast: A Play for Children* sported a heroine named Jane, the merchant Mr. Clement with his nephew



Harry Golding, ed. *Fairy Tales*. Illustrator: Margaret Tarrant. London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1936.



Harry Golding, ed. *Fairy Tales*. Illustrator: Margaret Tarrant. London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1936.



Harry Golding, ed. *Fairy Tales*. Illustrator: Margaret Tarrant. London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1936.

Mikey, and Hodge the Wizard, with everything explained (including the prince's spell) in a carefully modernized, conversational tone.

Still, in extent of distribution, most nineteenth-century versions were not dime-, drug-, or grocery-store items. Nor were they supplements to a public school curriculum. A brochure advertising the 1979 film of "Beauty and the Beast" (a 19-minute, color, 16 mm. production featuring doll-faced marionettes) announced to attendees of an educational conference that "THE BEAST will be at the Coronet booth . . . to meet you, sign autographs and have his picture taken with you." "Remember," advises a companion leaflet, "Beauty and the Beast can also be ordered on approval; after evaluation it may be returned if for any reason you are not enchanted by it, and your billing [\$350] will magically disappear" (Coronet Films).

One publishing company, Troll Associates in Mahwah, New Jersey, customarily aims at educational and school library markets and offers a common sample of Disney-like, slapstick illustrations calculated to grab restless readers' attention and a "dumbed-down" style calculated to ease reluctant readers to the end of the book. The sisters on the first page, one thin, the other fat, are sticking their tongues out at each other.

They were not as lovely as Beauty. They were not as generous and kind as Beauty. They were too busy thinking of themselves to be thoughtful of anyone else.

This is not, in fact, a particularly bad book. There are others less competent and more boring, with the minimal feeling and individualization evident here drained out of them. The most frequent offender in the versions of the period is not poor crafting but slick blandness, making it difficult to explain to consumers what distinguishes a "bad book" from a good one. In the absence of an opportunity to experience the story at full strength, a weakened version may seem adequate. Even critics and reviewers are often unaware of the story's background or careless in evaluating new versions.

Fortunately, "Beauty and the Beast" has survived its frequent dilution and found expression through a number of recreations with staying power.³ This discussion focuses on several picture books (the story's most common vehicle for several decades), one selection from an anthology, a young adult novel, and two adult short stories appearing in science fiction and fantasy collections.

Beauty and the Beast, retold by Philippa Pearce and illustrated by Alan Barrett in 1972, has minimized details in both text and art with forceful results. Based on Beaumont's plot and characters, the story presented

here reduces the number of children to three girls—"all that the story really needs," as Pearce notes in an afterword. Only the last dream, the appearance of the dying Beast necessary to the climax, remains. The merchant does not return with Beauty to the castle; she sneaks off alone one night, thereby dispersing any doubts as to the merchant's strength of character. Fathers do not give away their daughters but sometimes let them slip away when they are truly determined.

The style itself is spare (where Cocteau's mirror said "Reflect for me. I will reflect for you," Pearce's says "Show-Show"). The telling is not ungraceful, however, and Pearce has supplied some imaginative specifics of her own. The roses, for instance, first evade the merchant's grasp, setting up an element of suspense before the Beast's appearance. (The rose bled in an oral version collected in Delarue—see Appendix II.) Beauty's knife and fork spring into her hand, and the palace offers story-books, toys, Persian cats, and Spaniels; this is the first version to mention what a girl-child rather than a woman might consider treasures. But overall, the narrative relies on action, with relatively little description or dialogue, to carry the themes, and graphically Barrett has mirrored Pearce's concentrated tone in his gouache paintings.

The opening and closing cameo frames, for instance, telescope a distance of time and place—the aging father, the obedient daughter. The mottled pages and rough textures give an appearance of antiquity. The subdued colors set a foreboding tone. As the scenes progress, they remain isolated in round cameos of another place and time, but they enlarge, with colors growing more intense; still very impressionistic, the work indulges few details. The strong focus of white on a horse and on the snow-streaked wind slanting down on it, reveals the father small and helpless in the storm without face or forest outlined at all. In the full vista following it, the story would take over, with the small introductory cameos left behind as doorways. The blue gives a powerful, brooding sense of magic as it does with Mercer Mayer's 1978 book (picture-book scenes of magic are often dominated by the color blue). Shapes are implied rather than elaborated.

The Beast revealed is a frightening horror of the imagination, a fragment of nightmares, his eyes, nostrils, and fangs magnified to fill the page yet dragged downward in lines that imply pain as well as the capacity to inflict it. In only one picture does Barrett's diminutive Beauty appear with the Beast, and there the composition of the two figures shows them powerfully pulled as in a tug of war, the Beast one way and Beauty another. Barrett does not show their growth toward friendship and acceptance. He deals, as Pearce does in her written work, with only a few basic developments, but with tremendous force.

Like the first powerful portrait of the Beast, the last reflects white glints across his face to create a terrifying ghostly pallor (matching the merchant's first terror under white-smudged roses and white-smearing sky), with a midnight blue consuming him as he lies dying in his coliseum-like surrounding. The prince that replaces him appears in a burst of soft orange sparks again created by an impressionistic texture that leaves out detail in favor of central impact. At the end, the characters are put back in their frames of remote time and place, but this prince retains an animal power and roughness in his face that none of the other fairy tale princes have, and it makes for a stronger conclusion. Beauty has changed position from a submissive bowed head to a decisive, straightforward gaze. Sheered to minimal appearances, the two main characters are nevertheless rendered distinctive by Barrett's strong, stark visual suggestions.

Diane Goode's 1978 art work could not offer a more startling contrast to Barrett's. Her close translation of Beaumont's story is smooth, with full-page paintings exuding an elegant, French-court flavor. Fleurs-de-lis decorate the endpapers, and the miniature reflection of a distant land in the "O" of "Once" represents not so much an archaic time as a conventional fairyland, with green tendrils curling out of the mist into the present of a new telling. Where Barrett's colors are muted and brooding, Goode's are almost gay, sometimes affecting or even contradicting the mood of tension in a serious scene but adding luster where they are well integrated. The skillful line work is most evident in occasional black-and-white pictures, but there is careful attention to drafting throughout, with a complex maze of arches framing several compositions and other architectural features forming a prominent focus. The play of lines and space, light and shadow is subtle when it is not overwhelmed by lavish patterns of turquoise, purple, or gold in costumes and settings.

Despite the strong drawing, the lion never looks truly fearsome. In fact, he appears, in his magnificent robes, as worried as Beauty and her father. The sisters, on the other hand, show a genuine petulance, and the small, rouged tautness of Beauty's face is affecting. This is a formal, almost flowery portrayal of the story much in accord with Beaumont's elevated sentiments and poles away from another picturebook version published the same year.

Mercer and Marianna Mayer's re-creation is a dramatic blend of adaptation and illustration that has immediate appeal. The plot structure is close to Lang's Villeneuve-based version than to Beaumont's, with the dream sequence included and the sisters' punishment curtailed from their turning into stone statues to their simply envying Beauty's happiness. Dialogue is a mainstay, with each character explaining instead of explained, as in Beauty's reassurance after the merchant's fall:

“Don’t worry, Father. You’ll see—it will be a new life for us. I will love to live in the country. It will be as though we were having a vacation all year long.” (2)

The sisters vociferously protest their fate and weasel out of chores. And to Beauty’s persistent questions about his day, the Beast retorts angrily,

“I hunt. I prowl the woods for prey. I am an animal after all, my lady! I must kill for my meat. Unlike you I cannot eat gracefully.” (25)

Although their development stays on a symbolically abbreviated plane, Mayer’s characters nevertheless assume more reality than stock types, and their relationships develop accordingly beyond a statement of roles. In their evenings together, Beast emerges as something of a magician as well as a vivid story-teller, justifying Beauty’s growing rapport with him. She herself is attached to a tiny red bird with whose loyal affection she identifies: “Often she would take the little bird from its cage, letting it fly free. Though the windows were open wide, it would never leave the tower” (23).

Both the conflicts and commentaries are direct. The Beast’s confrontation with the merchant explicitly defines each.

“I would never allow my daughter to take my place!” protested the merchant. “Kill me if you must.” But the Beast refused. “It must be your daughter’s choice. If she will not come, then at least go to your family and say good-bye. If you do not return I will come and find you.” (15)

Later, the old woman of her dreams admonishes Beauty: “Your prince cannot return to you . . . since he has failed to make you his wife, you must really love him” (31). The Beast himself explains his enchantment.

When I was a boy I was very vain and quite proud. My palace was filled with servants and everyone honored me and did my bidding. One day an old hag came begging at my palace gate. I showed her no pity, she was so ugly. The sight of her did not move me and I sent her away without food or money. As she left she warned that I would spend the rest of my life wandering in my fine palace without a friend till someone could find beauty in me. I laughed at her; but when I returned to my palace, I found it empty. I have been alone ever since. (29)

Although the text is fairly long, it moves quickly and is faced on every page with an absorbing depiction. Mercer Mayer’s story-art has almost a filmic effect, its series of images presenting the tale independently from (though in this case harmoniously with) the words. Details both define the action and heighten the symbolism. In a striking example of the latter, the Beast is connected to ancient cultures through numerous Egyptian

figures of animistic worship appearing as statuary in his palace: Ba, the bird-symbol for the soul; Anubis, the god of the death; Wadjet, the cobra goddess. Peering from the back of Beauty's room is Isis, goddess with cow's horns who brought the dead fertility god, Osiris, back to life and doubled as mother/life-giver and enchantress with powers to cure the sick—obviously a parallel to “Beauty and the Beast” in Mayer's iconography. (Apuleius, author of “Cupid and Psyche,” was initiated into the cult of Isis, a fact noted by von Franz in her introduction to *A Psychological Interpretation of the Golden Ass of Apuleius* [8].)

One scarab joins Beauty's cloak only inches away from another hanging around the statue of a lion like those guarding certain pyramids. The bridle of the Beast's horse is also decorated with a scarab. In the first glimpse of Beauty's house, a crucifix hangs on the wall; in her first glimpse of the Beast's palace, an ankh holds the same position over her head. These symbols blend sufficiently into background shadows or graphic details of the story to elaborate without intruding.

There is a propelling movement to the pictures. The drama of emotions mounts urgently with the Beast's appearance. The first pictures show a peculiar foreshortening of figures, a caricaturing of faces. The dominant color in the earlier spreads is brown. But with the Beast comes a dominance of deep blue, first introduced in the approach to the castle and running through most of the scenes with a magical setting. Here Mayer deepens the mood and realizes his character more completely. There's great suspense in seeing the Beast's clawed figure, its face left to the imagination, leaning over the vulnerably sleeping father.

The Beast's face is no disappointment—a lionish visage of fury, with glowing eyes and unrelenting snarl. There's no trace of cuteness, but rather real anger. By contrast, the father's down-turned mouth and rolled-up eyes seem almost farcical. The flow of feeling in the illustrations is as marked as the pace of action. The foreboding in Beauty's backward glance against the wind is justified in the next scene pressing her confrontation with the Beast. Tension reigns in somber colors and in the Egyptian funeral symbols already mentioned. The Beast is calmer but has lost none of his threatening stature. By contrast, one sees Beauty at her most vulnerable in the next striking composition stressing her tearful payment of her life for a rose.

Mayer's invention of “whatever Beauty wants” stresses her loneliness within the wealth, but for one bird to talk to—a pronounced contrast to the raucous parrots of past versions. The castle has many Gothic elaborations, which, though they usually focus on the main character and on their relationships, occasionally overwhelm them. Mayer's dream se-

quences are appropriately static, interrupting the dramatic development that resumes with Beauty's urgent journey home to her sick father.

The sequence of the Beast's impending death is a study in sorrow. From blown roses to surrendered paws, he lies entwined by wintry vines and gnarled roots. Beauty for the first time sees the Beast vulnerable as he weeps into the mirror, and in one of the most poignant and intimate of all the various artist's reconciliation scenes, she puts her face on his for the acceptance kiss. Because the scene is so powerful, it is hard to follow. Indeed, it is impossible. The prince pales by contrast. The Beast has been dearly accepted on his own terms and one wishes a bit of him, at least, were left.

The lion visage seems dominant in Beasts of this period, and Michael Hague's illustrations for *Beauty and the Beast* are no exception. His version appeared first in a calendar and small press book (Green Tiger) accompanying a retelling by Deborah Apy, and was widely distributed in a 1983 hardcover edition. However, where Mayer was preoccupied with Egyptian religious creatures half animal, half human, Hague elaborates his scenes with motifs in a Hellenic/Christian dichotomy. Greek statuary adorns the Beast's palace. The ram horns (reminiscent of D'Aulnoy's "Le Mouton") thrusting through the Beast's leonine mane parallel the horns atop a bust of Pan, the figure central to the Beast's secret garden, which also shelters an antlered deer and horned goats. The unicorn featured in this version seems a sentimental addition, though theoretically it bridges classical nature worship and Christian tradition. Christ raised the horn of salvation and dwelt in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Beauty, whose lap the unicorn seeks out, is a virgin offering salvation to a soul incarnated in a beastly form shed at death. Although never explicitly spelled out, the allegory of purification and resurrection is clear through associations.

The unicorn is only one of the inventions that Apy has injected into a 64-page version combining features of Jean Cocteau's 1946 film with the traditional Beaumont structures. The sisters are decorated with names, Jeanette and Adelle. They discuss at length the virtues of peacock feathers and the drawbacks of a simple sister. Dialogue of a much more elaborate nature than Mayer's stretches the story here, punctuated by an occasional marvel such as the butterflies (Psyche is the Greek word for butterfly as well as soul) that burst from the trunk appearing on the merchant's return with the rose and the bad news.

"It is magic, Father. It must have something to do with the Beast. . . . Here, Father, is all that my sisters asked for," said Beauty. . . . "It must mean that things are as they should be, even if we don't understand them. Don't you see, Father, this is a sign that things will be well." (Apy 19)

In the dreams appear the usual fine lady and the prince, apparently drawn from the Villeneuve/Lang version, and a small unicorn that grows in the course of the story to maturity and appears in carving on a chest and on Beauty's bed. The aviary and palatial entertainments also find their way here, along with a balcony scene in which Beauty's physical attraction to the Beast becomes tangible as they dance. Several passages seem directly lifted from Cocteau: "At the top of the glass were written the words 'Reflect for Me,' and, at the bottom, the word 'I Will Reflect for You' " (29). Later, the Beast enters Beauty's sleeping chamber with blood on his hands from a kill (39), and Beauty's description of him to her father echoes the filmscript almost word for word.

"Sometimes he's funny and makes me laugh. Other times, though, he seem so very sad that I must turn away from him so as not to cry myself."
(Apy 56)

"But now he makes me want to burst out laughing, sometimes; and then I see his eyes and they are so sad that I turn my own away so as not to cry." (Cocteau 252)

The sentence Beauty speaks next is the same in both versions, " 'Certain forces obey him, other forces command him.' " (Apy 56; Cocteau 252) Whether Apy is unconsciously drawing on a literary tradition established by Cocteau or simply plagiarizing is open debate.

Hague's paintings, too, reflect the influence of other children's book illustrators: Rackham-like wood-creatures in the forested maze where the merchant is lost and Beauty later rides; a dream fairy figure strikingly akin to Dulac's, in a similar pose before a tent-like canopy around Beauty's bed—both supported by clouds. Cocteau's death-scene swans appear in Hague's as well. Hague incorporates nice touches of his own, however: Beauty is surrounded by a flock of humdrum geese in her noon-day barnyard; two of the same birds, ethereal in night flight, wing over her head as she dances with the Beast. Hague's scenes are predominantly dark, almost Gothic, with intense flashes of color and refined texturing of drapery, foliage, marble, wood, stone, feathers, fur, and other contrasting surfaces. Striking compositions centralize the main characters in an artful variety of postures more memorable than the faces.

Less romantic than Hague, Mayer, or Goode's interpretation is a 1985 picture book by British artist Warwick Hutton. The text is a dignified retelling of Beaumont's version, as well distributed from page to page for reading aloud as Marianna Mayer's, with less modern dialogue. Hutton is a master of lighted landscape and light-filtered interiors, striking examples of which appear in each painting. He builds the father's ride into

an ominous situation with boulder-black clouds, one fork of white lightning extended in the wind against the horse's white tail, white bones of another horse (or perhaps the Beast's prey), on the left and the eerie green-under-gray of a coming storm. All this is heightened by a too-distant rift in the clouds behind and in the deep shadow ahead. The serpent on the ground could only be deadly.

Hutton's restraint in color, even in showing the garden, and in line, even in showing the father's emotional expression, is marked in contrast to Mayer's depiction, which is so exaggerated. This Beast is a darkly vague hulk. His few frontal closeups suggest features of a gorilla, close in evolutionary developments to humans. In his first appearance, the lighting effect comes straight from a circled sun, and the shadows thrown make a brilliant composition. The Beast is thrice threatening for his back's being turned; and the peacocks, along with their towering-hedge replicas, make a kind of play on reality, pointing at the kneeling victim. They are an inventive contrast to Dulac's parrots and Mayer's one red bird.

The palace features a patterned mosaic of Eastern splendor, cool in the shadows and well lit by the sun; but for all the wealth, it is fine-lined, carefully shaped, and never cluttered, or overstated. Hutton shows with clarity and grace what it's like to be alone. Beauty's isolated figure, dwarfed by the palatial grounds over which she looks with her back to the viewer, projects a total silence and stillness. The Prince's amazed expression at being transformed offers a contrasting hint of humor. Hutton has walked a fine line between distance and involvement, keeping the tone of personal romance subsumed in formal patterns.

The 1983 collection of 11 Perrault and two Beaumont stories translated by Angela Carter and illustrated by Michael Foreman cast "Beauty and the Beast" into a half medieval, half futuristic mode, with castle and costumes out of the Middle Ages and a one-eyed monster that suggests a mutation from science fiction. A newt and frogs gather at his dying moment, and there is not a rose in sight. Brownish purples and dark blues dominate the three full-color paintings bleeding off 8" x 11" pages. A skull decorates the candlestick whose flickering light cast a shadow of the Beast in a sketch above the opening paragraph. The castle looms with an ominous face of window-slits and toothy gate. The goblet and dainties set before the viewer, who is forced into a frontal view of the Beast from Beauty's perspective, are noticeably missing from the Beast's place. He sits at the table with nothing before him but his reptilian hands. Yet his decline below moonlit topiary is still poignant.

Beauty and the merchant are almost unnoticeable in these pictures, as is the inch-high prince sitting up in the illustrated strip bordering the

story's end. It is ironic that this most grotesque of Beasts should accompany a demure translation of Beaumont's story. And it is interesting that Carter has included a related Beaumont story, "Sweetheart," which overtly moralizes about a prince turned beast until he can learn to be good, do what he is told, and find a mate with the same virtues.

Many noted children's book illustrators, including Roger Duvoisin (Virginia Haviland, *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in France*, Little Brown, 1959), Hilary Knight (Macmillan, 1963), Alice and Martin Provensen (*Provinsen Book of Fairy Tales*, Random House, 1971), Errol Le Cain (Rosemary Harris, Doubleday, 1980), and Francesca Crespi (*Little Box of Fairy Tales*, adapted by Olive Jones, Dial, 1983) have undertaken picture-book or anthologized versions of "Beauty and the Beast," and even Maurice Sendak has offered a swashbuckling version of the Beast in a playbill poster for a one-night Broadway production of Stuart Ostrow's experimental play, *Stages* (1978), available in Michael Hearn's *Art of the Broadway Poster* (1980).

Etienne Delessert's 1984 picture book, which mistakenly attributes the story to Madame D'Aulnoy, is accompanied by sophisticated, surrealistic paintings that will challenge junior high students to plumb both art and story. Illustration, book design, and format are coordinated to lead perceptive viewers through the symbolic overtones. Single- or double-page spreads focus on dramatic highpoints featuring a griffin hideous one moment and vulnerable the next; at times, he peeks in miniature form over or at the framed text. Natural elements such as a storm, night, or flower are personified with human faces, while social acquaintances rejecting the family after its loss of wealth appear with serpents' heads. Implications of resurrection surface in a phoenix figure. The drama of color and action coupled with subtleties of humor and sadness invite close involvement.

Every picturebook version has its followers:

I liked the story because it showed that things that may seem mean and furoshoise [sic] outside can still be loving, eflectionet [sic] and caring just on the inside as a human. (David Ward, third grade, Forest Glen Elementary School)⁴

. . . or its detractors:

I didn't like it because [sic] it was boring. I lost my attanchon [sic] to the story. By the time it was done I was picking my shoe. (Anonymous third grader, Forest Glen Elementary School).

Three-year-olds have been absorbed by the emotional drama of Mercer

Mayer's adaptation. Primary graders and older elementary school children respond to increasingly complex versions.

Since 1978, adolescents have been captivated by Robin McKinley's novel *Beauty*. The creation of a contemporary, first-person, young adult novel from a fairy tale could raise a host of technical problems for the novelist and objections from devotees of traditional lore. *Beauty, A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast* was included by American Library Association committees in both the Notable Children's Books and the Best Books for Young Adults lists for 1978. It was Robin McKinley's first novel, written in the throes of a negative reaction to the television adaptation starring George C. Scott, in which McKinley felt that the point had been missed and the aesthetic thinned. The story, she maintains, is about honor. Honour is her heroine's real name, given to match her two older sisters', Grace and Hope, by a mother who does not survive the birth of baby Mercy, who also dies. In the tradition of the story from its origins, Beauty is a nickname, but one bestowed here ironically on a five-year-old who cannot comprehend the concept of Honour and requests Beauty instead, an appellation retained into a gawky adolescence.

For a 247-page novel, the cast is compact, with secondary characters introduced and developed naturally within the context of the traditional plot. Grace, Hope, and Honour (nicknamed Beauty) Huston are the sisters. Their father, Roderick Huston, is a shipwright/merchant and carpenter. Robert Tucker is a sailor and fiancé of Grace; Gervain Woodhouse is an iron-worker/blacksmith who marries Hope. Greatheart, a horse given to Beauty by a family friend, leads her to the palace of the Beast and keeps her company there. Lydia and Bessie are two breezes who attend Beauty in the palace.

A few minor characters make brief appearances essential to McKinley's revisions: Ferdy, whose first kiss repels Beauty in a reaction that presages her resistance to admitting love for the Beast; Pat Lawry, who courts Grace in Robbie's absence; Mercy and Richard, twins born to Hope and Gervaine; Melinda Honeybourne, Gervaine's widowed aunt, manager of the Red Griffin and Roderick Huston's eventual wife; and Orpheus the canary, who cheers the company throughout their resettlement in the country. All but Orpheus further the theme of male/female relationships, and the canary serves as a link with the birds Beauty later coaxes to her palace window—a sign that her involvement is weakening the Beast's enchantment.

There are no villains here. And where fairy-tale brevity benefits from the Beast's initial and terrible impression to lend tension to Beauty's

dilemma, it is McKinley's task to maintain that tension through a longer work in which the Beast's essential nobility quickly becomes apparent. The conflict, of course, is shifted to an internal level with Beauty's rite of passage. It seems ultimately fitting that modern teenage fiction should emerge from an old tale of the journey into maturation.

To sharpen this focus, McKinley has altered the father's weakness and the sisters' villainy (those faults shifted the onus of responsibility from Beauty's self-determined choices), in much the same way that Villeneuve either omitted or explained away the family flaws. All three are paragons of integrity, as are the girls' suitors, their virtue fortunately relieved by practical, down-to-earth humor and genuine affection. Beauty herself is strong-willed to obstinate, plain and thin, a tomboy passionate only about animals and books. She is a smart, adolescent ugly duckling, with everyone else's assurance that she will eventually turn into a swan. True to life, Beauty believes only her own critical assessment. She is as deprecatory of her physical appearance and as apprehensive of mirrors as the Beast (there are none in her room or home nor in the palace of the Beast).

The narrative, covering Beauty's fifteenth to eighteenth years, is structured into three parts. The first established the family background and situation, the courtship of the older girls, the loss of the ships (and with them, Grace's fiancé), the auction of goods, the removal to Gervaine's childhood home in the north country, his marriage to Hope and prohibition not to enter the reputedly enchanted forest behind their home, the birth of their twins, and the father's trip to the city to recover one ship, from which he returns with a rose.

In section two, the father tells his story of finding the Beast's castle and picking the fateful flower, after which his saddle-bags are opened to reveal rich gifts. Beauty determines to go back in his stead after a month's reprieve and dreams twice of the castle as she prepares to depart. The third and last part comprises more than half of the book, beginning with the farewell of father and daughter at the castle gate and ending with her declaration of love for the Beast and the celebration. With unexpected holding power, McKinley amplifies descriptions of Beauty's settlement into life at the palace, the development of her relationship with the Beast, her homesickness and desperation to tell Grace of Robbie's return (seen through a magic glass, or nephrite plate, belonging to the Beast) before another suitor proposes, and the visit home, which convinces Beauty of her love for the Beast and delays her return till almost too late. The reader knows that Beauty must finally accept her own physicality and release the Beast, but the questions of how and when raise anticipation and even anxiety during Beauty's last ride, when the Beast's magic weakens and she must find him on the strength of her own love.

Sustaining the plot are the book's compatibly blended point of view, pace, style, tone, and theme. The first-person narrative lends immediacy, fosters a reader's identification with the protagonist, and allows a candid look at Beauty's internal journey. The Beast shows mature perceptions, developed during his 200 years of brooding alone in the palace, on their first meeting, when he tells her he would only have sent her father home unharmed had she decided not to come to the palace herself.

"You would?" I said; it was half a shriek. "You mean that I came here for nothing?"

A shadowy movement like the shaking of a great shaggy head. "No. Not what you would count as nothing. He would have returned to you, and you would have been glad, but you also would have been ashamed, because you had sent him, as you thought, to his death. Your shame would have grown until you came to hate the sight of your father, because he reminded you of a deed you hated, and hated yourself for. In time it would have ruined your peace and happiness, and at last your mind and heart." (115)

But Beauty's knowledge, limited to an honest if impetuous intuition at the book's beginning, develops through her solitude at the palace and her experiences with the Beast, as evidenced in self-examinations that slowly raise her to the Beast's level of awareness.

I had avoided touching him, or letting him touch me. At first I had eluded him from fear; but when fear departed, elusiveness remained, and developed into habit. Habit bulwarked by something else; I could not say what. The obvious answer, because he was a Beast, didn't seem to be the right one. I considered this. (170)

Without becoming too confessional, these insights bond the reader to Beauty as she progresses through nightly more difficult denials of the Beast's proposal to taking his arm and finally realizing her feelings in the face of the family's animosity toward the Beast.

I knew now what it was that had happened. I couldn't tell them that here, at home with them again, I had learned what I had successfully ignored these last weeks at the castle; that I had come to love him. They were no less dear to me, but he was dearer yet. (215)

The frequency of vivid scenes keeps Beauty's development from dwindling into a diary. A confrontation she forces between her horse Greatheart and the Beast, whom all creatures fear, is gripping. Beauty's discovery, in the library, of books that have never been written and her attempts to understand Robert Browning or to envision modern inventions referred to in other works is quite funny, as are the struggles of the two attendant

breezes to outfit her like a lady. Her encounters with the Beast are natural, as often light as moving.

“It’s raining,” I said, but he understood the question, because he answered:
 “Yes, even here it rains sometimes . . . I’ve found that it doesn’t do to tinker with weather too much. . . . Usually it rains after nightfall,” he added apologetically. (141–42)

The occasion on which she feeds him her favorite dessert, however, proceeds from a touching note to a powerful confrontation—the last barrier she throws up against him before her vision (literally, in this case) begins to clear for a new sensual awareness.

A deceptively simple style blends drama with detail. Part of the book’s appeal is certainly its descriptions of a life anyone might long for—leisure spiced with high cuisine and horseback riding, with learning for learning’s sake thrown in at will. These descriptions are by turn specific and suggestive, allowing readers to luxuriate in a wish-fulfilling existence but leaving room for them to grow their own fantasies. The marvels of palace life are quite explicit.

I returned my gaze to the table. I saw now that it was crowded with covered dishes, silver and gold. Bottles of wine stood in buckets full of gleaming crushed ice; a bowl big enough to be a hip bath stood on a pedestal two feet tall, in the shape of Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders; and the hollow globe was full of shining fresh fruit. A hundred delightful odours assailed me. At the head of the table, near the door I had entered by, stood a huge wooden chair, carved and gilded and lined with chestnut-brown brocade over straw-coloured satin. The garnet-set peak was as tall as a schooner’s mast. It could have been a throne. As I looked, it slid away slightly from the table and turned itself towards me, as another chair had beckoned my father. I noticed for the first time that it was the only chair at that great table, and there was only one place laid, although the table gleamed to its farther end with the curved backs of plate covers, and with goblets and tureens and tall jeweled pitchers. (107–08)

Other passages leave a strategic amount of information to the reader’s imagination. During Beauty’s first conversation with the Beast, she sees only his “massive shadow” (113), heightening a dread peak when he finally stands to reveal himself. Even then, only his body is delineated; the specifics of his face are implied by Beauty’s reaction.

“Oh no,” I cried, and covered my own face with my hands. But when I heard him take a step towards me, I leaped back in alarm like a deer at the crack of a branch nearby, turning my eyes away from him. . . . What made his gaze so awful was that his eyes were human. (116)

Bit by bit, through references to long white teeth and mangy fur, readers can construct an image of the Beast, but it is largely their own.

There are twists of humor throughout dialogue and description that balance the darkest hours of both Beauty and the Beast for a tone alternately sweet and bitter, ingenuous and sophisticated. Underlying all the various shades of emotion, however, is a sense of inevitable destiny, the fairy-tale security that all will be well in spite of threats and confusions. The roses Beauty plants in winter bloom to comfort her before she leaves home. A griffin on the ring (and later necklace) given her by the Beast looks powerful but not predatory. In spite of Beauty’s association of the Beast with the Minotaur when Gervaine first tells her of the rumored enchantment, the mazes she encounters at the castle simply mirror her own internal loss of direction.

I dreamed of the castle that Father had told us about. I seemed to walk quickly down halls with high ceilings. I was looking for something, anxious that I could not find it. I seemed to know the castle very well; I did not hesitate as I turned corners, went up stairs, down stairs, opened doors. . . . (82)

. . . I found myself in the castle again, walking through dozens of handsome, magnificently furnished rooms, looking for something. I had a stronger sense of sorrow and of urgency this time; and also a sense of some other—presence; I could describe it no more clearly. I found myself crying as I walked, flinging doors open and looking inside eagerly, then hurrying on as they were each empty of what I sought. (91–92)

I walked across more corridors, up and down more stairs, and in and out of more rooms than I cared to count. . . . I soon lost my sense of direction, and then most of my sense of purpose, but I kept walking After a while, perhaps hours, I came to a door at the end of a corridor, just around a corner. . . . (109-10)

Nearly every day we found ourselves traveling over unfamiliar ground, even when I thought I was deliberately choosing a route we had previously traced; even when I thought I recognized a particular group of trees or flower-strewn meadow, I could not be sure of it. I didn’t know whether this was caused by the fact that my sense of direction was worse than I’d realized, which was certainly possible, or whether the paths and fields really changed from day to day—which I thought was also possible. (137–38)

“I can’t seem to keep the corridors straight in my head somehow, and as soon as I’m hopelessly lost, I turn a corner and there’s my room again.

So I never learn anything. I don't mean to complain," I added hastily. "It's just that I get lost so very quickly that I don't have the chance to see very much before they—er—send me home again." (142)

It is Beauty's inner pressure and the Beast's need that tell time; there are no clocks in the palace. Like Cocteau, McKinley is intrigued with different dimensions of reality. The space, time, and logic of the Primary World are suspended in the Secondary World. Beauty's bridging of both requires some adjustment.

You look at this world—my world, here, as you looked at your old world, your family's world. This is to be expected; it was the only world, the only way of seeing, that you knew. Well; it's different here. Some things go by different rules. (177)

.....
 . . . it was slowly being borne in on me that my stories about the castle and my life there had little reality for my family. They listened with interest to what I told—or tried to tell—them, but it was for my sake, not for the sake of the tale. I could not say if this was my fault or theirs, or the fault of the worlds we lived in. (210–11)

And as Cocteau admonishes, only true believers can know a world other than the mundane. Beauty's sisters are too pragmatic even to receive a message from the Beast. Her father accepts the dreams sent to comfort him by the Beast, and Gervaine believes in the rumored enchantment of the forest and in Beauty's fate after she has drunk from the forest stream. Beauty herself develops her already strong instincts into a sixth sense so sharpened that she can not only see, hear, and smell the ordinary more keenly but also divine the invisible: envision the Beast in his palace from her country house without a magic glass (211); understand her attendant breezes' gossip.

As the mysterious becomes familiar, it is less awesome. One reviewer accused McKinley of fettering archetypes with concrete realization, of reducing the larger-than-life to normal. Another critic countered this charge with a defense of the book's fairy-tale facets, quoting Tolkien on the creation of a Secondary World.

Fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and the clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make. (In Tolkien, "Tree and Leaf" 74–75)

Fairy tales assume belief, on either a literal or symbolic plane. Fantasies assume only a suspension of disbelief; the rest is a matter of persuasion.

As McKinley told me when I interviewed her in 1983, it was her determination to make the story immediate to contemporary readers, to keep the fantastical effect to a minimum and thus obey the rules of convincing fantasy.

The next version also falls into the realm more of fantasy than of faerie. Angela Carter's 13-page story, "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon," published in 1982 in a collection called *Elsewhere: Tales of Fantasy*, Vol. II, has a modern setting of English country manor and London hotel suite. The characters are only four: Beauty, her father, the Beast (Mr. Lyon), and a liver-and-white King Charles spaniel that figures strategically in the plot (an interesting addition in light of the British variant of 425A, "The Small-Tooth-Dog"). The narrative, covering midwinter to early spring, begins with Beauty waiting for her father, but his car is stuck in a snowstorm. Entering the wrought-iron gates of "a miniature, perfect, Palladian house that seemed to hide itself shyly behind snow-laden skirts of an antique cypress (121), the father shelters within to find himself welcomed by the spaniel with whiskey, roast-beef (thick-sliced and rare) sandwiches, and a telephone placed at his disposal. On his way out, he sees one last perfect rose clinging to a wintery bush and steals it. "At that, every window of the house blazed with furious light and a fugal baying, as of a pride of lions, introduced his host" (124).

Beauty's father pleads his case and shows the Beast a photograph of Beauty, whereupon father and daughter are commanded to come to dinner. At dinner it is suggested that her father's business problems will be reversed with the help of the Beast's lawyers if Beauty accepts country hospitality while her father proceeds to London. Forcing a smile, she agrees and spends the winter in luxury. Her growing companionship with the Beast terminates abruptly with her father's summons to London high society, to which his success has restored him. Beauty remembers the Beast but abnegates her promise to return until one day the bedraggled spaniel appears and urgently shepherds her back to the dying Beast, whom she kisses, transforms, and marries.

Carter has grafted the old onto the new here with some brilliant writing and subtle structure maneuvers that render her abbreviated account effective. There is even space for a few telling descriptions, as in the opening forecast.

Outside her kitchen window, the hedgerow glistened as if the snow possessed a light of its own; when the sky darkened towards evening, an unearthly, reflected pallor remained behind upon the winter's landscape, while still the soft flakes floated down. This lovely girl, whose skin possesses that same inner light so you would have thought she, too, was made

of snow, pauses in her chores in the mean kitchen to look out at the country road. Nothing has passed that way all day; the road is white and unmarked as a spilled bolt of bridal satin. (121)

Later passages are trimmed but synchronized for maximum impact, especially in the repetition of rose and lion images.

The aura of timelessness, underscored by these changes from past to present and vice versa, imbues, even overwhelms, present-day trivia; “. . . he knew by the pervasive atmosphere of a suspension of reality that he had entered a place of privilege where all the laws of the world he knew need not necessarily apply. . .” (122). The lion’s-head knocker is made not of brass, as he first thinks, but of gold, with agate eyes. The spaniel waits for him on a Kelim runner. The Beast himself appears as a “leonine apparition” in a step back from the action, literally a double-spaced break in the text.

There is always a dignity about great bulk, an assertiveness, a quality of being more *there* than most of us are. The being who now confronted Beauty’s father seemed to him, in his confusion, vaster than the house he owned, ponderous yet swift, and the moonlight glittered on his great, mazy head of hair, on the eyes green as agate, on the golden hairs of the great paw that grasped his shoulders so that their claws pierced the sheepskin as he shook him like an angry child shakes a doll. (124)

Beauty, later caught up in a swirl of London activities, is “so far away from the timeless spell of his house it seemed to possess the radiant and finite quality of dream and the Beast himself, so monstrous, so benign, some kind of spirit. . .” (13). Beauty herself at first possesses the timeless quality.

The camera has captured a certain look she had sometimes, of absolute sweetness and absolute gravity, as if her eyes might pierce appearances and see your soul. (125)

The reader is aware only of this inner beauty until she begins to be corrupted by empty society and sees in the mirror a “lacquer of prettiness”—accompanied by Carter’s first real physical description of her. It is a far cry from her reflection in the Beast’s eyes, when “she saw her face repeated twice, as small as if it were in bud” (128).

She perceives early on that “her visit to the Beast must be, on some magically reciprocal scale, the price of her father’s good fortune” and refers to herself once as “Miss Lamb.” She is also aware that this “restful time”—with its dinners of grilled veal, the rosewood revolving bookcases stocked with French fairy tales, the glass bed and fleecy towels, the

“pastel-colored idleness”—is more than a holiday. For after their surprisingly easy conversations each night, he helplessly declares himself.

As she was about to rise, he flung himself at her feet and buried his head on her lap. She stayed stock-still, transfixed; she felt his hot breath on her fingers, the stiff bristles of his muzzle grazing her skin, the rough lapping of his tongue, and then, with a flood of compassion, understood: All he is doing is kissing my hands. (128)

Always, she flinches from his touch, and even in tears at their parting, cannot drop upon his shaggy mane the kiss to which she feels moved. Her subsequent freedom fills her both with relief and a “desolating emptiness,” which she rushes to fill, ironically, with flowers and furs. Yet there is no hesitation when the spaniel comes. The magic is almost dead in her heart as well as in the spring garden she finds unblooming, the house desolate.

The care taken with the last scene makes it one of the few transformations consistent in power with earlier portions of the story. Beauty flings herself on the dying Beast.

When her lips touched the meat-hook claws, they drew back into their pads and she saw how he had always kept his fists clenched but now, painfully, tentatively, at last began to stretch his fingers. Her tears fell on his face like snow and, under their soft transformation, the bones showed through the pelt, the flesh through the wide, tawny brow. And then it was no longer a lion in her arms but a man, a man with an unkempt mane of hair and, how strange, a broken nose, such as the noses of retired boxers, that gave him a distant, heroic resemblance to the handsomest of all the beasts. (133)

From the first “dawning of surmise” on his face when the Beast sees Beauty’s photograph to the understated triumph in his concluding request for breakfast, his gentleness and power are well-tempered. The “happily ever after” statement, too, offers a perfectly contained telescopic view: “Mr. and Mrs. Lyon walk in the garden; the old spaniel drowns on the grass, in a drift of fallen petals” (133).

Carter’s success in “updating” the story without losing its timeless quality is carried one step farther by Tanith Lee in her futuristic “Beauty,” a 40-page selection from a collection called *Red As Blood* that was included in The American Library Association’s 1983 list of Best Books for Young Adults. This version features an essential difference, however, in addition to the science fiction elaboration of setting. The focal transformation is clearly and overtly Beauty’s, never the Beast’s, and is completely inner.

The Beast's physical form is a matter of revelation and permanent acceptance.

The characters include Mercator Levin, his three daughters—Lyra, Joya, and Estar—and a nameless alien residing on Earth. The narrative is sectioned into four parts, starting with Levin on his way home from a successful space voyage. Upon docking his cargo, he receives the dreaded green rose, a summons rarely but irrevocably handed to earth families by powerful resident aliens for a son or daughter of the household. The homecoming party (it is Levin's 155th birthday) becomes an occasion for selecting which child will go, but the decision is quick. Lyra is a precocious musician committed to career and lover. Joya is four months pregnant. Estar, the restless spirit never at home in her own family or society, fills all the omens; she had even, ironically, asked her father to bring her a rose from his travels. There follows the background story of the aliens' mysterious requests and their victims' apparent freedom, contradicted by the increasing sadness of these select young people on visits home that eventually cease altogether.

In the second section, Estar leaves home confused and enraged, settles into the alien's estate, and after a month of refusing to see him, finally invites a confrontation. He is completely covered, in deference to humans' reaction to his kind's reputedly hideous form, but Estar discovers a telepathic rapport with him unlike anything she has known. Over the course of conversations, dinners, and walks in the garden, she grows to love him.

The third section sees her back home for a visit, during which she feels isolated from her family and finally anxious to get back to the alien. Deeply disturbed by her own and her family's uncertainty about the alien's ultimate motives—specifically whether he will become her lover—she asks him to reveal himself, something Joya has urged to relieve Estar's state of anxious limbo. When he does, she returns to her family—at the beginning of the last section—in speechless shock, which they and the reader attribute to the horror of the alien's appearance. Nevertheless, she is drawn back, and only at the conclusion does the reader learn that the Beast is so strangely beautiful that Estar cannot hope to be loved in return.

Then he reveals to her the story of her own birth and the real reason behind the alien's residence and summons. Their perfection, it seems, had led to sterility until a method of embryo implantation, secretly done in women who miscarried and awoke from a drugged state believing themselves lucky enough to have retained their babies, resulted in children with physical attributes of the host body but souls of their alien parents. Eventually these children grew into a restless maturity that signalled, via

the aura of a rose planted at their birth, the time they should return to their real culture and a companion with whom, because of their physical alterations, they could bear children that would survive. The restless Estar has found her rightful home and perfectly compatible mate.

The environmental adornments distract very little from the essential themes of the story. Household robots, ultimately equipped transports, weather control, the manmade mountain and dwelling of the alien are all more scene-setting than interfering, to the author's credit. Tapes, consoles, and serving mechanisms echo libraries and palatial conveniences of past versions. A voice-bead hovers "in the air like a tame bird" (Lee, "Beauty" 179) or comes "to perch on her fingers, . . . a silly affectionate ruse . . . that it was somehow creaturely alive" (196) in reflection of consoling creature-companions in Beauty's previous isolations.

The garden receives its symbolic emphasis, with a twist, in descriptions of illuminated flowers from another planet "mutating gently among the strands of terrestrial vegetation" (183):

Three feet high, a flower like an iris with petals like dark blue flames allowed the moon to climb its stem out of the valley below. (183)

.
Alien roses, very tall, the color of water and sky, not the blood and blush, parchment, pallor and shadow shades of Earth. She walked through a wheatfield of roses. . . ." (194)

The summons rose itself, "slender as a tulip, its petals a pale and singing green" has "no thorns, or rather only one and that metaphysical, if quite unbearably penetrating" (170).

It is not so much the details of the story that create its self-conscious tone, but a jug-saw-puzzle effect manipulating readers towards the protagonist's "raison d'Estar" (178). The pieces of the puzzle, however—both the story-within-a-story subplots and the build-up of suspense—are cleverly fitted. Through Levin's foreboding, the apprehension engendered by the alien's suggested hideousness, and Estar's reactions themselves, one is prepared for but still intrigued by her fate, a quality of the earlier fairy tale.

Levin's foreboding begins immediately on the first page with his consideration of Estar, "ill-named for a distant planet, meaning the same as the Greek word for psyche" (168). He worries about her inability to express or fulfill herself, in sharp contrast with his other two daughters. "She did not reach to kiss him as the others did, restrained, perhaps inhibited" (172). Her life seems as uncertain as her birth—she was nearly aborted. Her preferences in dress, decoration, and reading run to the archaic.

Aware that she is a misfit, she is not yet prepared to be sacrificed to the unknown. The reader suffers her anxiety through artfully planted disclosures. It is rumored that the aliens

covered their ugliness with elegant garments, gloves, masking draperies, hoods and visors. Yet . . . there were those things which now and then must be revealed, some inches of pelted hairy skin, the gauntleted over-fingered hands, the brilliant eyes empty of white, lensed by their yellow conjunctiva. (176)

When the alien finally appears to Estar, “Not a centimeter of body surface showed,” leaving her to speculate the worst. At dinner, “the blank shining mask” (184) rearranges itself disconcertingly as he eats, the visor “constructed of separable atoms and molecules” (183). Even his voice is distorted by some mechanism to avoid its offending her kind.

The reactions of Estar herself to an unknown threat range through stages of self-knowledge: confusion, fear, control, honesty, and understanding. At first she defines the issue as one of power: she is angry that there is no choice. But then it appears she is “not a slave, not a pet. She was free as air” (181). When she tells the alien she wants to return home forever, he senses instantly it is a lie to herself. She does not want to leave the table. The fear of the sexuality to which her love would inevitably lead causes her to let it go unrecognized. She plays hide-and-seek games to elude him, but he simply does not appear. Her plans to escape become daydreams in which he finds her. She dreams of him before his uncovering and after. She experiences the strangeness of her own home, where she has become an alien. There, her face takes on the pain common to other victims.

The expression of the children of Earth sacrificed to monsters or monstrous gods, given in their earthly perfection to dwell with beasts. That dreadful demoralizing sadness, that devouring fading in the face of the irreparable. (200)

But of course, she is really coming into her own and “unable to reveal her secret. . . . They would not realize her sadness was all for them” (208).

Sexuality is acknowledged overtly as a key issue from her father’s and sisters’ direct inquiries, through her own conflicts, to the minute description of the alien unmasked.

The hirsute pelt which covered his kind was a reality misinterpreted, misexplained. It was most nearly like the fur of a short-haired cat yet in actuality resembled nothing so much as the nap of velvet. He was black,

like her sister Joya, yet the close black nap of fur must be tipped, each single hair, with amber; his color had changed second to second, as the light or dark found him, even as he breathed, from deepest black to sheerest gold. His well-made body was modeled from these two extremes of color, his fine musculature, like that of a statue, inked with ebony shadows, and highlighted by gilding. Where the velvet sheathing faded into pure skin, at the lips, nostrils, eyelids, genitals, the soles of the feet, palms of the hands, the flesh itself was a mingling of the two shades, a somber cinnamon, couth and subtle, sensual in its difference, but not shocking in any visual or aesthetic sense. The inside of his mouth, which he had also contrived to let her see, was a dark golden cave in which conversely the humanness of the white teeth was in fact itself a shock. While at his loins the velvet flowed into a bearded blackness, long hair like unraveled silk; the same process occurred on the skull, a raying mane of hair, very black, very silken, its edges burning out through amber, ochre, into blondness—the sunburst of a black sun. The nails on his six long fingers, the six toes of his long and arched feet, were the tint of new dark bronze, translucent, bright as flames. His facial features were large and of a contrasting fineness, their sculptured quality at first obscured, save in profile, but the sequential ebb and flare of gold and black, and the domination of the extraordinary eyes. The long cinnamon lids, the thick lashes that were not black but startlingly flaxen—the color of the edges of the occipital hair—these might be mistaken for human. But the eyes themselves could have been made from two highly polished citrines, clear saffron, darkening around the outer lens, almost to the cinnamon shade of the lids, and at the center by curiously blended charcoal stages to the ultimate black of the pupil. Analogously, they were like the eyes of a lion, and perhaps all of him lionlike, maybe, the powerful body, its skin unlike a man's, flawless as a beast's skin so often was, the pale-fire edged mane. (201–02)

Here, too, is a religious aspect that appears strongly throughout the story to the last page (along with the sensuousness of the acceptance kiss). Estar loves the alien “spontaneously, but without any choice” (208), in exact parallel with Protestant theological explanation of predestination. Those without grace—the family and friends of the saved—do not understand.

And when she no longer moved among them, they would regret her, and mourn for her as if she had died. Disbelieving or forgetting that in any form of death, the soul—Psyche, Estar (well-named)—refinds a freedom and a beauty lost with birth. (208)

Estar's death, referred to repeatedly—“she felt as if some part of her had died” (196), a drugged sleep “aping the release of death” (198)—ends in resurrection. Her redemption comes through confirmation of her Otherness.⁵

The determined, humorless intensity of the vision is especially marked in contrast to light incorporations of the story in mass market versions, mentioned earlier, or teenage romances that arbitrarily use the story's themes at a superficial level. Halfyard and Rose's *Kristin and Boone* (1983), for example, centers on a television production of "Beauty and the Beast" in which adolescent actors become involved with each other and their physically deformed director. Barbara Cohen's 1984 *Roses* plumbs the story somewhat more deeply in a modern parallel of the father-daughter-suitor triangle, with the suitor role divided into two characters. The Beast is a hideously deformed middle-aged florist who hires beautiful young Isabel in seeking redemption for a death he once caused an actress resembling her. High school senior Rob understands Isabel's fear of physical closeness to be a result of her mother's early death, seeks to overcome it with loving patience, and wins his suit.

Certainly the metaphors for self-acceptance and reconciliation with the Other that appear in "Beauty and the Beast" are commonly borrowed. In 1982, millions of children around the U.S. caught their breath in hushed sorrow as a small boy cried over the dying form of his ugly, extra-terrestrial friend. The same children clapped and cheered with released tension as the beast's heart, dead by all measurement of medical machinery, relit suddenly into a bright throbbing red at the boy's words, "I Love You." The terrifying unknown had been transformed into the affectionate familiar. In the film *E.T.*, the motif of "Beauty and the Beast" rose like a phoenix and captured the imagination of yet another generation.

Scores of picturebooks, including the Caldecott Award-winning *Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* (Goble, 1978), an illustrated native American legend about the human adapting to the animal—reveal intriguing parallels with "Beauty and the Beast." The very problem of spiritual versus materialistic values—a theme central to the story—is enough to turn the art forms of a computerized world that seemingly threatens literary tradition back to the fairy tale for plot, characters, and motifs.

The archaic force of Barrett's paintings, the nostalgic fairyland of Goode's, the Egyptian symbolism in Mayer's, the classical/Christian iconography in Hague's, the medieval setting for Foreman's, the Persian splendor of Hutton's are all efforts to reach into the past for better understanding of the present in terms of the story. There are indeed stronger religious overtones in the versions of this period, notably Mayer's, Hague's, and Lee's, than in any other. Love as the only possible resurrecting force is a theme of unequalled importance in a nuclear age.

The three women—McKinley, Carter, and Lee—who have extended the tale into fantasy and science fiction have focused more than any other

writers on the kinship between Beauty and the Beast. Their concept of the relationship is not so much the romantic courtship of old, as a deeper connection out of loneliness for both characters. Since the Beast is obviously an alien to society already, it is Beauty on whom they concentrate, a person who seems to have been tailored for social fitness but in fact feels alienated or isolated (although both McKinley and Lee's sister figures are supportive and never ostracize Beauty). Lee's Estar (like Gabrielle Villeneuve's Beauty in the eighteenth century) is not even the Merchant's real daughter, and it is her version that most radically projects the alienation theme to a conclusion of Beauty's permanent separation from family and earth environment for her coupling with an untransformed alien.

This is a curious update of Cocteau's identification with the alienated Beast and one resolved quite differently. Where his ending whisked the two away in glamorous flight, Carter and McKinley show a settled couple who have reached an accord with equal measures of sympathy and humor. One walks in the garden with their old dog; the other prepares for a marriage that graces the long hard testing of having lived together and squabbled as well as having dined elegantly at nine.

In all three, the exercise of maturation for Beauty seems less a release from Oedipal involvement than an adventure in self-discovery that goes beyond traditional self-acceptance. Honour Huston, the future Mrs. Lyon, and Estar Levin are all strong protagonists who deal with fate willfully in spite of their vulnerability. The eighteenth century's liberation of Beauty from Psyche's physical captivity and emotional bondage in "Cupid and Psyche" is paralleled here with greater force.

Each writer varies characters, events, viewpoints, and details of the Beast's habitat with imaginative relish but cleaves to the central characters, narrative structures, and images: the leading cast of Beauty, Beast, and Merchant, the rose, the seasonal cycle, the city/country foil, the garden of confrontation and knowledge, the journey of maturation, the magical tides of time, space, and dreams. Each has tried to retain fairy tale within fantasy.

The question arises, with a growing trend toward variation on the story: when is a remodelled version no longer the same tale? Whether the variations are textual, with realistic or fantastical elaboration, or visual, as in the contemporary plethora of picture books illustrating Beaumont's basic story, "Beauty and the Beast" is still identifiable by its core elements. Each year adds more versions: Anne Carter's retelling illustrated by Binetter Schroeder in 1986; Mary Pope Osborne's adaptation illustrated by Winslow Pinney Pels in 1987; the popular 1987 CBS television series about a misfit in underground New York who loves a beautiful lawyer.

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. Living things change. Printing and reproduction have not frozen these tales. Before printing, every telling varied around a central pattern. Now multiple printed and illustrated versions vary around a central pattern. Acting, dancing, filming, painting, cartooning have not decreased the imaginative power of the story.

Roger Sale in *Fairy Tales and After* seems to idealize the oral tradition as a high point after which the literary became self- and audience-directed. The old tradition bearers, Sale claims, shared "a power that has been lost or debased in the latter days" (45). Yet there is little evidence that storytelling in non-literate cultures is not audience- and self-directed. Texts do not include body language, tempo, nuances of successful or unsuccessful adjustment. Storytelling at its best has always been a sophisticated craft, whatever the medium. The technological era is similar to the oral tradition in many ways. There are simply too many parallels across time among storytellers, whether they are talking, singing, acting, writing, painting, or dancing, to identify some set point of development or deterioration in the total artistic spectrum.

Jane Yolen contends in her provocative essay "American Cinderella" on Disney's version of "Cinderella" that "the magic of the old tales has been falsified, the true meaning lost, perhaps forever (in Dundes 303). Although she cites persuasive evidence from current media, the effects of mass market dissemination on the shaping of a story may not justify such a sense of doom. We have developed a fairy tale about fairy tales, that in print or on film they become culturally, textually, and graphically fixed. Some critics, including J. R. R. Tolkien and Bruno Bettelheim, have even deplored the illustration of fairy tales as further limiting them to a frozen confine (Tolkien 95; Bettelheim 59–60). Of course, what can become fixed is, by implication, fixable, perfectable. The version of the tale closest to the oral tradition, or most compatible with a set theory, or best suited to an aesthetic definition, or simply dearest to a childhood memory is the truest. This assumption of an ideal, in either form or meaning, is not necessarily a bad thing and may in fact figure in the story's perpetuation. Yet the power of radically different versions, the elastic nature of story, is undeniable and common to printed as well as oral versions.

Following this tale through its first centuries of printed history, in the countries that shared the earliest and greatest impact of its publication, shows that literary versions have varied in storytelling patterns reflective

of oral tradition. Certain central elements of structure have supported a range of differences in style and meaning. Stories pass back and forth between oral and literary traditions, are told, written down, read, remembered, retold. Books go in and out of print. Celluloid deteriorates, the image from which it is made falls out of fashion. A film is considered old after 10 years. A book is considered old after 25 years, rare after 75. Over the course of a hundred years, literary versions differ substantially. By folkloristic standards that is a short time. We have barely arrived at a point when enough time has elapsed to allow perspective on a story's development in literate societies. Cartoon versions can make a story affecting—or disembowel it. The criticism of popularized versions is sometimes justified. But powerful new forms accompany them as well. There is also the growing factor of mass production; as more of everything becomes available, good as well as bad, quantity itself comes under fire as potentially depersonalizing. Many criticisms of cheap, gutted, or bowdlerized versions seem based on an objection to something originally commonplace—now accepted because of age and tradition—becoming newly commonplace.

Folktales are not always profound or even coherent, much less moving. No telling is above modification. Wilhelm Grimm's tidying up tales to suit society had an impact as pervasive as Disney's. And the Grimms, needless to say, didn't "fix" them, either in the sense of freezing them or in the sense of achieving a terminal ideal. It was the Grimms' versions that touched off rebellious new forms such as Anne Sexton's fairy tale poetry or Tanith Lee's fictional reworkings. The strong story is greater than any of its tellings. The core elements remain because they are magnetic to each other, structurally, and to people, variably but almost universally.

To some extent, scholars of the fairy tale have added their voices to the storytellers. Interpretations vary as widely as versions of the tale: Freudians, Jungians, Marxists, feminists have all attributed different meanings to it. Usually these meanings are both insightful and contradictory; sometimes they are limited by an attempt to fit story into theory rather than generate theory from story; and often they do not take into account the tale's multiple variants. Whether it appears in the form of a Buddhist moral tale, a Scandinavian folktale, a French romance, an English chapbook, or an American picture book, "Beauty and the Beast" has a nucleus of elements that has survived cultural, historical, economic, and aesthetic change. The flexibility of the metaphor allows for a range of adaptation and interpretation. The story has outlived many theories and will outlast many more.

Notes

¹Hearne, *"Beauty and the Beast": Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale* (U of Chicago P, 1989) explores the origins and variations of the tale through two and a half centuries.

²"Notes," Library of Congress catalogue printout under most "Beauty and the Beast" entries.

³I have examined the area of publishing economics and its impact on fairy tale dissemination in a paper called "Booking the Brothers Grimm: Art, Adaptations, and Economics," *Book Research Quarterly*, Winter 1987, 18–32.

⁴These two remarks were among many written in response to several school library sessions in which a librarian read aloud different picturebook versions of "Beauty and the Beast."

⁵The tale of "Cupid and Psyche" had also inspired a religiously charged novel by C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1956), with an ending dominated by Christian mysticism.

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