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Living Fairy Tales: Science Fiction and Fantasy's Visionary Retellings of "Beauty and the Beast"

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LIVING FAIRY TALES:
SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY'S VISIONARY RETELLINGS OF "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST"

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Preface

Science fiction and fantasy have been my reading materials of choice since I was very young. Among the first novels that I read were *The Hobbit* and the youth science fiction of Robert A. Heinlein. While I enjoyed reading widely in all genres as a child, science fiction and fantasy remained the staples of my reading. Science fiction especially held a special place in my heart because it seemed to me that someday the world could reach the heights that were described in those novels.

As an adolescent and entering college, I expected to go into a career in mathematics or one of the sciences. Most of the people that I spent significant amounts of time socializing with, and the people that I still spend my time with, had similar career paths planned. My interest in the sciences did not suddenly depart when I realized my preference for literature as a field of study. Science fiction manages to merge my interests in those two fields in a creative and socially meaningful fashion.

Among the mathematicians, scientists, computer scientists, and engineers that make up my social circle, science fiction is a major center of our social framework, and it has many appeals. My friends and I often watch science fiction shows, and we tend to read many of the same science fiction novels for pleasure reading in what spare time we have. Discussions of these stories feature as a major part of our social interactions. Foremost among the appeals of science fiction for me, and for many of the people with

whom I discuss it on a regular basis, is the visionary nature of science fiction. Among the scientific community, we are always asking, not only what we know now and can do now, but also what we could discover and what we could do in the future. This concept not only shows up in the science of science fiction, but also in the social atmospheres and milieus depicted. The genre not only shows what humanity could be, it tends to be a genre that shows a humanity that could and probably will eventually be a truly open and accepting one. This is something that strikes a note for me personally.

Science fiction and fantasy are not genres that are well represented in the academic study of literature. I hope to bring these two fields into a closer association through this project and future work. Science fiction and fantasy both have an incredible capacity for valuable and visionary social commentary, and I believe that they deserve to take their proper places in the ranks of academic literary studies.

Introduction

"Beauty and the Beast" is a fairy tale that has captured audiences in various formats for centuries. In her study of the fairy tale, *Beauty and the Beast, Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale*, Betsy Hearne informs her reader that like many pieces of folklore and mythology, this fairy tale has "adapted constantly to reflect new variations of culture and creativity" (Hearne 1). Science fiction and fantasy are prime examples of one of the environments in which folklore has been adopted and evolved to suit the purposes of the authors and keep the body of folklore alive. In his volume *On SF*, Thomas M. Disch, famous science fiction author in his own right, tells his reader that "As mythmakers, science fiction writers have a double task, the first aspect of which is to make humanly relevant--literally, to humanize--the formidable landscapes of the atomic era. [...] The second task of sf writers as mythmakers is simply the custodial work of keeping the inherited body of myth alive" (Disch 22-23). Science fiction generally combines these two tasks: it not only continues to bring life to old myths, it brings them into the present, and to some extent, into the future. Fantasy is also an important genre in keeping the body of myth alive, as Disch mentions when defining what he means by science fiction in this specific passage. Here, he also includes many works that would generally be classed in with the genre of fantasy as part of the body of the genre of science fiction. The evolution of the stories that we hold most dear as a society is one of the most important aspects of science fiction and fantasy as genres that go against the

cultural norm. I will consider three modern adaptations of the story alongside the original Marie Le Prince de Beaumont version of the story: Disney's film *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), Tanith Lee's science fiction novella "Beauty" (1983), and Mercedes Lackey's fantasy novel *The Fire Rose* (1995). In this thesis, I will exemplify how science fiction manages to best take on the role of bringing folklore such as “Beauty and the Beast” into not only the present, but also the future, through its visionary way of looking at the world.

Fairy tales are constantly evolving, and "Beauty and the Beast" is no different from any other fairy tale in that respect. Betsy Hearne's book gives a good history of the evolution of the fairy tale up to the modern day, but science fiction and fantasy are the genres that seem to be developing the message given by fairy tales in the modern world. The Jungian fairy tale interpreter Marie-Louise von Franz, in her book *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, writes that, fairy tales "represent the archetypes in their simplest, barest, and most concise forms" (von Franz 1). A fairy tale like "Beauty and the Beast" can be a starting point for a social criticism that will be effective because it is a story that resonates with everyone in its most fundamental forms. In her explanation of the all-encompassing nature of fairy tales, von Franz says, "We have written tradition for three thousand years, and what is striking is that *the basic motifs have not changed much*" (4). She argues that the "same theme, in thousands of variations, came up again and again in French, Russian, Finish, and Italian collections" (5-6). Through this it is possible to see that her claim that these are pervasive stories is very much the case. By choosing to use fairy tales as the basis for their works, authors choose to make a statement that will resonate with a story that everyone knows, and the differences between what they write

and the original recordings or culturally mainstream versions that we have all been exposed to will be what pops out at the reader the most.

This thesis considers three modern adaptations of Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's literary version of "Beauty and the Beast" was published in 1756. It is one of the early recordings that we have of the story. Hearne states that, "Although Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve's 1740 version of 'Beauty and the Beast' was the first, Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's 1756 version became the classic model for most later works" (Hearne 21). This version of the story is the one that compares the most clearly with Tanith Lee's novella "Beauty," and so it is the one that I am going to consider here.

The Disney film is the mainstream cultural version of the story. It does not take many risks, and, while the story deviates from the Madame Marie Le Prince the Beaumont original, the general messages given by the story are not that far from those in the version of the story from the 1700s. Lee's and Lackey's stories both criticize the mainstream societal view of the story, though in very different ways. Lee's "Beauty" is a work of science fiction published in 1983, eight years before the Disney film. The two works are not in direct dialogue with each other, but Lee is critical of mainstream societal views in "Beauty." Overall, the subject matter that Lee focuses on is completely separate from that which is brought into focus in both the Disney and the Lackey. Instead of dealing directly with notions of abuse the way that Lackey's novel does, the Lee novella handles the concept of adulthood and autonomy. Lackey's *The Fire Rose* was published in 1995, four years after the Disney film, and it was written in direct dialogue with it. Lackey's novel responds to many of the potentially problematic messages and ideas presented in the Disney film.

The major differences between the two works can be viewed through the lenses of their respective genres. Lee's "Beauty" is a work of science fiction, which can be seen as looking into the future and the possibilities that come with that future. In his article "The SF of Theory: Baudrillard and Haraway," published in *Science Fiction Studies*, Istavan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. says that "SF has become a mode of discourse establishing its own domain linking literary, philosophical, and scientific imaginations, and subverting the cultural boundaries between them, and in its narratives producing and hyperbolizing the new immanence" (Csicsery-Ronay 388). Science Fiction projects our world into the future, and it shows the ways that that world could evolve based on the present and the past. Lee's work fundamentally seems to follow these ideas.

Lackey's *The Fire Rose* is a work of fantasy. While the genres of science fiction and fantasy have been very closely linked, they have a certain degree of fundamental difference. In her book *In Defense of Fantasy, A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945*, Ann Swinfen writes a chapter that deals with social and political idealism in the genre of fantasy. She says early in this chapter that "Social and political idealisms [...] are idealisms of this world. In order to remain relevant to the contemporary reader within the framework of his daily life, works in this genre may not stray too far from [...] reality" (Swinfen 190). *The Fire Rose* is set in 1906 near the San Francisco Bay Area, and it uses the crucial historical disaster of the 1906 earthquake and fires as a major part of the narrative. Fantasy like Lackey's novel provides strong ground for social critique, but it more often projects its stories into the past, and so, unlike science fiction, it fundamentally restricts the possibilities present for the characters. Some fantasy, like *The Fire Rose*, is fundamentally fantastical historical fiction, and there

are certain social restrictions that are by the very nature of history present in this story. For example, there are certain social norms that the character of Rosalind Hawkins cannot escape from as a woman in the early 1900s. In the conclusion of this chapter in Swinfen's book, she says, "Those views of society which are expressed with such remarkable consistency by so many of the writers of serious modern fantasy arise from a desperate dissatisfaction with contemporary life, a need to break free and realize full human potential" (229). The use of the fantastical in a novel like Lackey's allows the rearranging of the power structures that would have been present in the period that her book is set. Through the tools and settings available to the genres of science fiction and fantasy, both of these works provide insightful and visionary explorations of the story of “Beauty and the Beast,” continuing the living tradition of this fairy tale.

Chapter 1: Beauty's Fathers

In all of the versions of "Beauty and the Beast" that I am considering, the relationship between the Beauty character is a key and formative relationship at the beginning of the story. In every version but Lee's, there is a certain element to their relationship that is emotionally incestuous, as the Beauty character takes on the role of wife and mother to her father. In all of these cases, that relationship between the Beauty character and her father is what motivates her to go to the home of the Beast character, and it is also what holds her back from her relationship with the Beast character. One of the main motivations behind the story seems to be for the Beauty character to grow up and move away from the grasp of her father, thus escaping the unhealthy relationship with her father, who should be the one taking care of her, for the healthy relationship with the Beast character. Both the science fiction and the fantasy version of the story that I am considering use this relationship as a means of socially critiquing the messages that are found in the Beaumont and Disney version of the tale. It is only in the science fiction version of the story that this story begins to take on a new shape, one where leaving the home is no longer an escape from the emotionally damaging relationship with the father, but instead a leap into adulthood for the Beauty character.

In Marie le Prince the Beaumont's 1756 version of "Beauty and the Beast," Beauty is shown as being very close to her father and caring deeply for him. Because she

is without a mother, and both of her sisters are more interested in the pleasures of a wealthy lifestyle, Beauty has basically become the female head of household in the story. She has taken over the role of her dead mother, and she now takes care of her father to some extent, creating an emotionally incestuous dynamic. One of Beauty's driving desires and sources on conflict in her relationship with the Beast over the course of the story is her relationship with her father and the fact that he is, to some extent, dependent on her.

Beauty's relationship with her father is first presented as potentially incestuous when her courters are being discussed. When Beauty rejected the men who courted her, she "told them she was too young yet to marry, but chose to stay with her father a few years longer" (Beaumont 46). She stays with her father explicitly over potential husbands. In a similar vein, when her father lost his fortunes, and she could have escaped sharing that fate by accepting the suit of one of her many suitors, instead of marrying, "she told them she could not think of leaving her poor father in his misfortunes, but was determined to go along with him into the country to comfort and attend him" (47). This level of devotion was probably meant to show that Beauty was a good and kind daughter who cared deeply for her father, but at the same time, it casts her as the responsible adult female in his life: she has taken on the role of female head of house, or become the mother to the family. In the country, Beauty labors to take care of the entire family, a duty which is supposed to be that of the parents to the children. While her brothers also work hard, it is alongside their father: Beauty has no other assistance in running the household.

Her father also sees her very differently from how he sees her sisters. This is, of

course, partially a factor of how she behaves, but he thinks that she "far outshone her sisters, in her person as well as her mind, and admired her humility and industry, but above all her humility and patience" (48). These are more the descriptors of what would be expected and appreciated in a wife than in a daughter. This entire dynamic is one that eventually must be replaced by the one with the Beast, but it is Beauty's father, not some other suitor that the Beast must war with in Beauty's affections.

Beauty sacrificing herself for her father by going to the Beast in his stead is not an act that should have had to be performed by a child for a parent. It is supposed to be the duty of the parent to protect the child, but in the story, Beauty takes on the role of protecting her father, behaving more as his parent. When she is telling her sisters of her decision to go to the Beast in her father's stead, she says, "I am very happy in thinking that my death will save my father's life, and be a proof of my tender love for him" (54). Beauty has given all of her love and devotion up to this point in her life to her father, and the possibility of a future beyond her devotion to her father seems impossible. What she expects to be her final act is to sacrifice herself for her father, which seems more like the act of a parent of a wife. She also arranges for her father to marry off her sisters, which is a moment where she is taking on the role of female head of household, or possibly mother to her siblings. She arranges for him to "consent to their marriage, and give them fortunes" (55). She is basically setting up the household so that it can run without her.

When she is staying with the Beast, all of her thoughts are at first of her father. Upon first entering the library in the Beast's palace, Beauty is given the possibility to have any wish in that place fulfilled. What she wishes for is "to see [her] poor father, and know what he is doing" (58). She worries about him without her to help him, and her

devotion to him keeps her focus from staying on the Beast. As the Beast tries to court her, she is instead being concerned for her father, to the point that when he asks her to stay with him, she wants to return to her father for a while. Because she has been watching over her father in the mirror, "she had seen [...] that her father had pined himself sick for the loss of her, and she longed to see him again" (61). Her father's behavior after she has left him to stay with the Beast sound more like those of someone who is lovesick than those of someone whose daughter has grown up and left home. She tells the Beast, "I have so great a desire to see my father, that I shall fret myself to death, if you refuse to give me that satisfaction" (61). While this scene in the story shows that Beauty is still very wrapped up in her father, it also foreshadows the fact that she will eventually choose the Beast. She asks him to "only let [her] stay a week with [her] father, as he is alone" (61), and she promises that she will then stay with the Beast. Through going to live with the Beast, the hold that her father had over her is beginning to weaken.

The interaction between father and daughter when she returns to visit him is not one that seems terribly like that of a father and daughter either. She is transported to her father's during the night, and when her arrival is discovered in the morning, her father "held her fast locked in his arms above a quarter of an hour" (62). It is revealed shortly that when "Beauty began to think of rising, [she] was afraid that she had no clothes to put on" (62). This interaction between Beauty and her father seems more like an interaction between lovers when it is revealed that she was not dressed while he was holding her for long.

At the end of the story, while Beauty's father is brought by the fairy to see her

marriage to the Beast, now the Prince, he is left out of the final discussions, where the sisters are punished and Beauty and the Prince are married. He has been replaced fully by the Beast in Beauty's affections at this point, and she takes on the more appropriate relationship to the Beast who she is marrying.

The entire interaction between Beauty and her father brings the attention of the reader to the level of choice present in Beauty's decision to go to the Beast. While she makes the choice against the will of her father, because of the fact that he is somewhat dependent on her, and she has in some ways taken on the role of his wife, and the mother of the family, she seems to have taken on the duty of taking care of the family, including her own father, that belongs to the parents. By this reversal of responsibilities, Beauty acts in ways that seem as though they will not be at all beneficial to her.

In the Disney film *Beauty and the Beast*, Belle's father's dependency on her is continued from the original Marie le Prince de Beaumont version of the tale. Disney trivializes the incestuous possibilities of the relationship between Bell and her father by bringing humor into the situation. Belle's father, Maurice, in the Disney film is a mad inventor, so it seems obvious that the much more down to earth Belle must take care of her poor, old, crazy father. All the same, the fact that he is truly the one who should have a duty to protect her makes her sacrifice for him and his dependency on her one of the many things in the Disney film that is a potentially disturbing theme that is made humorous, and thus supposedly harmless.

In the first scene where Maurice appears, he is shown going off and leaving his daughter behind to take care of the house, while he goes to show his invention at a fair.

This behavior of leaving his daughter in charge of the house is one that places her further into the role of the female head of house than she was before. After leaving home, he shows himself to basically be incompetent and childish in his behaviors: he gets lost in the woods, does not pay attention to the reactions of his horse, and ends up abandoned and chased by wolves. Through all this, he does not quite seem to know what he is doing. Through portraying Belle's elderly father as childish in behavior, the Disney film makes him seem to have taken more the role of Belle's child than that of her husband. In his initial interactions with the Beast and his transformed servants, Maurice is also depicted in a childish manner: playing and joking with the talking household goods, cowering in fear before the Beast, and repeating himself. The final image of that scene, where the Beast carries Belle's father away, is one that also reinforces his childlike image. The shadow that they cast on the wall is seen, though they themselves are not, and Maurice's shadow looks like that of a small child being held under the armpits by the much larger, seemingly adult sized, Beast (Disney).

In having to rescue her father, Belle shows that she feels the need to take responsibility for the care of her father. She has basically claimed the role of his parent in choosing to look after his well being in this way. When Belle is faced with the Beast upon finding her father imprisoned and ill in his castle, she only shows a moment of active fear, unlike Maurice. Immediately, she is attempting to reason with the Beast and get him to release her father. When she is faced with the fact that the Beast does not seem to want to listen to her pleas, she says, "Please, I'll do anything" (Disney). She is willing to give anything for the sake of protecting her father, a sentiment that seems more in keeping with her motherly role towards him than the duty of being his daughter. She

completely ignores her father saying, "No Belle, I won't let you do this" (Disney), and she takes it upon herself to take his place because it is the only way to save him. Despite the fact that Belle is his daughter, and Maurice should have the responsibility to take care of her, it is Belle who feels the need to be the one to care for her father and make sure that his needs are fulfilled even if she is hurt in the process. Even though Maurice, like Beauty's father in the Beaumont version, does protest Belle taking his place with the Beast, those protests are ignored easily because she has taken on the role of a mother figure to her own father. This scene makes her father seem weak and irresponsible, and again, like a child to her. Beauty's largest cause of upset when the Beast throws Maurice out of the castle is that he did not allow her the chance to say goodbye, since she is never going to see her father again as far as she knows (Disney). This is reminiscent of the desire for a parent to say goodbye when a child leaves home.

The next time Belle sees her father in the film, it is after she and the Beast have developed the beginnings of their relationship. Her only concern that mars her happiness living with the Beast at this point is her desire to see her father again (Disney). She has already begun to replace Maurice with the Beast in her affections, but the only thing that keeps her from being perfectly happy to just continue on with the Beast is her lingering feeling of responsibility to care for her father and her love for him. When the Beast shows her her father in the magic mirror, she sees that he is sick, and this is what triggers her plea for the Beast to allow her to return to her father, at least for a while. She feels that she needs to take care of Maurice, and that supersedes any connection she may be developing with the Beast. She does not think to reassure the Beast that she cares for him, instead insisting that she needs to go to her father and care for him because he is ill.

Her father is an adult, who should be able to care for himself at this point, but nonetheless, Belle feels that it is necessary for her to care for him over anyone else that may need her.

When the men from the insane asylum come to take Maurice away under the guidance of Gaston, Belle again takes the role of her father's protector. While Maurice plays right into the hands of the plotters, Belle does the only thing that she can think of to get them to leave him alone: she shows them the image of the Beast in the magic mirror (Disney). This act shows that she would protect her father over even the Beast, who she has been shown to already care about deeply at this point. She is willing to sacrifice her potential relationship with the Beast, and her own possibility at a fulfilling life to save her father.

It is only at the end of the film when both Belle and Maurice are given solid connections with people who it is appropriate for them to make that connection with. During the final scene of the film, when Belle finally has expressed her love for the Beast, instead of being ignored, like in the Beaumont version, Maurice seems to be beginning a relationship of some sort with Mrs. Potts, the servant to the Beast who had been the teapot. It is not until this final scene that Maurice really becomes no longer fully dependent on Belle, and Belle is able to move forward with her life as a person who does not have the responsibility for someone she feels that she must care for.

While the potentially incestuous tones of the Disney film are much more subtle than those in the original Beaumont version of the story, there is still an inappropriate, mother-son relationship between Belle and her father. She is again placed in a position of responsibility towards her father in such a way that the natural progression of her

relationship to the Beast is severely hindered by her relationship with him because she is willing to drop everything with the Beast to go to him when she believes that she needs him. As in the Beaumont, her relationship with the Beast is one of the things that does eventually help to resolve the inappropriate dynamics and flow of responsibility between her and her father.

In the science fiction and fantasy versions of the story that I am considering, this emotionally incestuous relationship that is present in the Beaumont version and the Disney version, which represents a culturally more mainstream interpretation of the tale, is critiqued. They take very different approaches to it, one showing the aftermath left by the father being dead at the beginning of the tale, leaving his impact on the Beauty character magnified, and the other showing the relationships in a potentially healthy interaction.

In Lackey's novel *The Fire Rose*, Rosalind Hawkins, the Beauty character, has her relationship with her father set entirely in the past. At the opening of the novel, she is left with nothing but his debts and with no means to care for them. In many ways though, it is implied that she had been to him as the other Beauty characters were to their fathers. Lacking a living mother, she had become female head of household, and upon her father's death, she basically became like his widow. This abandonment of responsibility by her father, and his death cause her to have to take the job with the Beast. More so than in the Beaumont or the Disney, Rosalind is forced into her position because of the actions of her father.

At the beginning of the novel, Rosalind is depicted as being in a very vulnerable position: "The home that had once been her sanctuary was now under siege — and no longer hers" (Lackey 7). The fact of her legal dependence on her rather deadbeat father has caught up to her now that he is dead. She is faced with the people who have come to collect his death, and she must continue her responsibilities towards him even after his death. Without the intervention of the actually fatherly figure of her professor, she would have been unable to do anything other than wait because all of her options were removed from her life by the fact that she had taken on the responsibility for her father. Considering her situation, she tells Professor Cathcart that her father left her "Nothing but a stack of unpaid bills and this house — which has been seized by the creditors. [...] They have graciously allowed me to retain my personal possessions — excepting anything of value, like Mama's pearls" (8-9). Even with him dead, Rosalind is forced to take responsibility for the irresponsibility of her father during his life.

During her dinner with Professor Cathcart, more of Rosalind's relationship with her father is revealed. When her father was in economic trouble, instead of him having to deal with the consequences, "she had chosen to economize on her gowns as well as in other household matters" (11). Even though her father was entirely at fault for all of their losses because he continued to put his money into an endeavor that he knew to be bad, Rosalind "Had not had the heart to reproach him. 'I only wanted to give you what you should have had, Rose,' he had said plaintively" (13). Her memory of her father casts him as immature, and even though she knows that he was the one in the wrong, she cannot cast blame on him because on some level, he was the child in their relationship.

Because she was left in the position that she was by her father, Rosalind has no

options before Professor Cathcart gives her the letter from Jason Cameron, the Beast character. When she reads the letter, "she already felt the heavy, cold hand of Fate upon her sleeve. She would go to this man, this Jason Cameron. She would take this job. After all, she had no choice" (17). Because of her relationship with her father leaving her penniless and responsible for the mess he left behind, she can no longer do as she pleases with her life and continue working on her university degree. Jason Cameron's offer is made to fit her, and there is no other option for her but to take it. The actions of her father sacrificed her to this life and made it so that she had to take this unknown position from a man that she has never met.

Before actually leaving Chicago for the west coast, Rosalind spends several pages contemplating suicide because of the situation that her father has left her in and because her father has left her. When contemplating the possibility of suicide, she eventually decides that she will go to the West Coast and see how it went, and if she was still in despair, then she had a plan: "*I could go to the Opera House when Caruso sings there*. That would be a setting worthy of the Romans, and properly poetic as well" (23). Considering the fact that in many of the tragedies where suicide is committed that come to mind for the western reader are situations where one or both lovers commit suicide because of the death of the one that they loved, this contemplation over suicide at the loss of her father brings a certain degree of the emotionally incestuous feeling into the novel alongside Rosalind's role as female head of household when her father was still alive.

Like in Beaumont and Disney, the role of the father is an inverted one, where Rosalind is, in fact, the one of the two of them who has taken on the responsibility for the household and their lives. Because the novel starts with the death of her father, the entire

novel can be seen as an examination of how she moves beyond the situation that her father left her in. Rosalind's father is not as explicitly associated with her having to go to Jason Cameron's home, since she is not going there to take his place, but without his irresponsible behavior, she never would have had to contemplate taking on employment and never would have had to go to the job with Jason Cameron. Her father failed in his responsibility to take care of her, and Rosalind is still very wrapped up in her attachment to him at the beginning of the novel. Her relationship with Jason is one of the things that will allow her to move forward from the death of her father and the loss of the most important relationship in her life up to the point that she met Jason.

The situation in Tanith Lee's novella "Beauty" differs from the one in the other three versions of "Beauty and the Beast" presented here in that the relationship between Estár, the Beauty character, and Levin, her father, seems to actually be one that follows the correct attempts at directions of responsibility. While Levin does give up his daughter to the Alien, the Beast character in this novella, he does not do so without serious consideration or without the serious offer of trying to fight the summons made by the Alien if Estár wants that of him. There is distinct adult conversation between them on this matter. For Estár, leaving her father to go to the Alien is not a matter of leaving an emotionally incestuous or reversed relationship between father and daughter, instead, it is about Estár growing up.

At the beginning of the novella, Levin is shown as being very protective of and worried for Estár. In his descriptions of his daughters, she is the only one who he still seems to see as a child. When he thinks of Estár, she "filled him with a peculiar fear.

Her life would never be simple, and perhaps never happy. He did not like to think of her, maybe far from the shelter of the house, the shelter he could give her" (Lee 169). He is concerned because she is still a child who is dependent on him, and unlike her sisters, she has seemed unable to find her place in the world. This construction is one that seems to fit with Lee's overall reversal of many of the roles in the story. The novella critiques the black and white nature of the scenarios in the original fairy tale, and through these sorts of portrayals, it shows that people can be forced into doing hard things to people that they care about without them meaning those people ill or being irresponsible.

Estár's childishness in her relationship to her father is also shown in her form of address to him. She calls him Papa, while "His other daughters called him by his name, graciously, allowing him to be a person, not merely an adjunctive relation" (169). By calling him by a name that sounds somewhat childish as well as not addressing him in the same way as her more adult sisters, Estár is cemented as the one of Levin's daughters to still be a child, and through the lens of her father's worries, it is clear that she needs to grow up so that he will not be concerned for her as he grows old.

When Levin presents the rose of the Alien's summons to Estár, he tells her that he will do everything that he possibly can to make it so that she does not have to go. The first signs that Estár is, in fact, beginning to take the steps to grow up because of these summons and her eventual relationship with the Alien is shown in her reaction to her father's offer: "You'd do [anything]. I know. You're marvelous, but there are limits. It's not as if I'll never see you again. And, I respect your judgement. I do. To choose me" (173). Estár chooses to go, even though her father honestly would do everything within his power to help her stay if she asked it of him. They both know that it is inevitable

what will happen in the end, but he is willing to try, and she is mature enough to know to tell him not to so that she can move into the world on her own.

When Estár returns to visit her family, Levin contemplates the changes that have taken place within her. He notices that "she seemed more sure, quieter, more still, more absorbent, more favorably aware of them than ever in the past" (189). This visit shows that Estár has managed to mature in her time with the Alien, and to Levin, this is seen as a good thing. Through her experiences, she has been able to come closer to them and be more comfortable than she had been before. Levin also plays the role of the father concerned for his daughter who is growing up and entering into a relationship during this visit home when, during a conversation with Estár on the nature of her relationship with the Alien, he says, "I'm asking if you are in love with him" (190). This is the question whose answer will eventually take Estár fully away from her family, but Levin knows that she needs to become an adult, and he helps her along that path as much as he can.

During her final visit home, Levin shows a certain sense of nostalgia because he knows that he is finally losing her for good. When he receives the news that she is about to go back to the home of the Alien, "Levin recollected, not wanting to, the story of lemmings rushing in blithe tumult toward the ocean to be drowned" (200). This is the first time where Levin does not seem to actually see the direction that his daughter is going in. She is moving towards the adult relationship that will completely move her beyond the bonds of childhood, but for the first time, he is afraid of that because he knows that it really does mean that he is going to lose her for good. This moment where he realizes this foreshadows the fact that Estár is not genetically his daughter, or even human, that is revealed when she finally returns to the Alien.

It is revealed that Estár was placed to eventually be brought back to the fold of her actual alien race. Throughout the story, Levin has cared for Estár as his child, even though the reader learns that she is in fact not genetically his at the end of the novella. The fact that Levin and Estár are family in their behavior, and they are able to have a healthy father-daughter relationship, if not the closest one imaginable, sheds a positive light on adoptive families. It is clear that in the end though, Estár's adoptive family cannot understand her.

The defining nature of the relationship between the Beauty character and her father, and by extension her family, is a major aspect to all of these versions of the tale. The emotionally incestuous relationship, where the Beauty character becomes the adult and her father the child in the first three versions can be seen through the lens of Tanith Lee's novella "Beauty," which shows that that relationship between father and daughter is not necessary for dealing with the situations present in "Beauty and the Beast." Lackey's novel shows the effects of the father's immaturity and irresponsibility extremely magnified because of his death and all that that entails. Lackey is the author who most explicitly shows that the relationship between the Beauty character and her father is what forces her to go to the home of the Beast. By considering the relationships in these two works, it becomes more possible to see the imperfections in the relationships that are depicted as being good in the Marie le Prince de Beaumont version of the story and the Disney film.

Chapter 2: Sisters and Rivals

In all of the versions of the "Beauty and the Beast" story that I am considering here, the Beauty-character's realization of her affection for the Beast-character stems from an external source. In the original, Madame le Prince de Beaumont, version, as well as in Tanith Lee's novella "Beauty," this triggering experience is brought on by one or both of the Beauty-character's sisters. A similar external role is played by the rival characters in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and Mercedes Lackey's novel *The Fire Rose*, which responds to it. In each of these cases, the science fiction or fantasy retelling of the fairy tale reflects flaws or oversimplifications in the version of the story which they echo. Through their retellings, they examine the nature of people as more than just good or evil but instead having complex motivations.

In the original, Marie le Prince de Beaumont, version of "The Beauty and the Beast," Beauty's realization of her affection for the beast is triggered by the spiteful manipulation of her sisters. While Tanith Lee also uses the intervention of Estár's sisters to trigger her realization of feeling for the Alien in her novella "Beauty," they do it out of kind, sisterly affection. Both of the interventions on the parts of sisters cause the Beauty character a good deal of pain, whether they were meant to be helpful or not. Lee's story provides a commentary on the fact that well intentioned interventions can cause harm and ill intentioned ones good as a criticism of the polarized view of good and evil presented

in the Beaumont version of the story.

From the very beginning of the Beaumont version of the story, Beauty's sisters are described as inferior to her. They "had a great deal of pride, because they were rich. They gave themselves airs" (Beaumont 46). The sisters are set up in polar opposition to Beauty from the beginning of the story. While they are prideful, she is modest, and where they take on airs above their station, she takes on behaviors more modest than her own. There is a certain since of setting up morality through the comparison between the sisters and Beauty. When the family loses its fortune, the sisters courters "slighted and forsook them in their poverty" (47). In the same situation, "Several gentlemen would have married [Beauty]" (47). This pattern of just desserts is one that carries on throughout the story.

The comparison between Beauty and her sisters arises again when they are requesting gifts of their father. Her sisters "begged of him to buy them new gowns, headdresses, ribbands, and all manner of trifles" (49). They are shown as very materialistic, while Beauty is shown as being considerate of her father and the fact that it is unclear exactly what has become of their fortunes in her request. Instead of asking for something extravagant like her sisters, she asks for a rose, "lest she should seem by her example to condemn her sisters conduct, who would have said she did it only to look particular" (49). Not only does Beauty not wish to impose upon her father's willingness to bring them gifts because of their possibly renewed fortunes, she is considerate enough of her sisters to not make them look inferior.

When the father comes back after meeting with the Beast and being forced in to an agreement where either he or one of his daughters would have to come and stay in the

castle because of the rose he plucked for Beauty, Beauty's sisters make a great production of their misery over what happened to their father, but they are not willing to do anything about it. Beauty is instead resolved to take her father's place, and so is not at all upset for him. Despite the fact that they accuse her of being a bad daughter, she is still kind to them. Beauty tells their father "that two gentlemen came in his absence, and courted her sisters; she begged her father to consent to their marriage, and give them fortunes, for she was so good, that she loved them, and forgave heartily all their ill usage" (55). The sisters feel no such sympathy for Beauty, not even really feeling worried or concerned for her when she heads off to her fate with the Beast: "These wicked creatures rubbed their eyes with an onion to force some tears when they parted with their sister" (55). These attitudes are reflected in the eventual life partners that they will end up with.

Both of Beauty's sisters married husbands who were good matches to them by the morality of the story. The result of this is that "They were both of them very unhappy. The eldest had married a gentleman, extremely handsome indeed, but so fond of his own person, that he was full of nothing but his own dear self, and neglected his wife" (62). The sisters were supposed to be beautiful, though not as beautiful as Beauty, but they were not caring towards anyone other than themselves, so the elder sister being unhappy because she had married a man with the same traits seems a just result. The other sister had met a similar fate, though one that mirrored a different aspect of the personality of the sisters: "The second had married a man of wit, but he only made use of it to plague and torment everybody, and his wife most of all" (62-63). All of the children of the family are well educated, and the sisters, like Beauty, had attended many scholarly pursuits, being married to a man of wit who spurned and abused her seems appropriate

for the second sister, since it is similar to how Beauty's sisters behave. Beauty's sisters do not take well to the fact that she is happy: "Beauty's sisters sickened with envy, when they saw her dressed like a princess, and more beautiful than ever, nor could all her obliging affectionate behavior stifle their jealousy" (63). This jealousy causes them to try to sabotage Beauty's relationship with the Beast because they are envious of her life.

When her sisters, acting under pretense of false affection, convince Beauty to stay with her family for longer than the span she promised the Beast, she begins to reflect on her feelings for the Beast. She is worried about the "uneasiness she was likely to cause poor Beast, whom she sincerely loved, and really longed to see again" (63). Up to this point in the story, she had been denying the Beasts love for her, but her affection is beginning to break through that because of the prolonged absence from his presence triggered by her sisters.

In the end, it is the comparison between her relationship with the Beast and her sisters' relationships with their husbands that cause Beauty to see that she actually does want to be with the Beast. She asks herself, "Why did I refuse to marry him? I should be happier with the monster than my sisters are with their husbands, it is neither wit, nor a fine person, that makes a woman happy, but virtue, sweetness of temper, and complaisance, and the Beast has all these valuable qualifications" (64). While this does not seem a great revelation of romantic love, it is the interaction with her sisters and the fact that they separated her from the Beast for longer than their agreement that causes Beauty to realize the romantic potential between herself and the Beast and thus break his curse.

While the general outline of the family structure from the Beaumont is paralleled

in Lee's novella, Estár's sisters are shown to be good human beings in their own right. Even though they cause Estár pain through some of their interactions, it is not because they are spiteful or evil people. In many ways, the situation between her sisters and Estár is to some extent reversed than that between Beauty and her sisters in the original Beaumont story. None of the characters in Lee's novella is purely good or purely bad. They are all people who sometimes have better judgment than others.

The three daughters in Lee's novella are described in relation to their names. The eldest is "Dark slender Lyra with her starry eyes and her music--well named" (Lee 168). Similarly, his second daughter is "Joya, much darker, ebony skinned and angel-eyed, full of laughter--well named too" (168). Both Lyra and Joya are described in terms of positives and are associated with their names. This sets them up to fit in the society that they are actually a part of. They are the daughters of Levin who he is capable of understanding. The youngest daughter, the Beauty character of the novel is the one who is described as not fitting: "Estár, with her green brown hair the color of the summer oak woods, and her unrested turbulent spirit--ill named for a distant planet, meaning the same as the Greek word *psyche*" (168). Unlike the Beaumont version of the story, it is Estár who is seen as not as good or as fitting as her sisters. She is a special daughter in that she is the only one that Levin had with a woman instead of through some vague, unexplained scientific process. Estár is clearly different from her sisters, but in this version of the story, they seem to be the good ones from the beginning, though they have flaws, and Estár is not a bad person either, just strange.

In the request of the gifts, it is again shown that Estár is the sister out of place. While the requests of both of her sisters are extravagant, Estár's request for "a grown

rose" is the one that turns out to be the most unreasonable or difficult for her father to pursue (169). Her request is immediately followed by protestations of difficulty by her sisters. The request for the rose is foreshadowing for the fact that Levin will bring back the Alien rose that is a summons that he must give to one of his daughters. When he returns with the green rose, he has to think about all of his daughters and decide which one it would be the most appropriate to give it to, despite the fact that the answer has already been given to him by their requests. When he considers the possibility of sending Lyra away, he knows that he should not because "She promised so much to herself, to her world. And she was, besides, in love" (171). Lyra is very much alive in their home: it is a place that she can be beautiful. His contemplation of Joya is similar because she is pregnant: "And to send Joya away, two lives now--No! No, no" (172). Joya is also alive and in her element in Levin's home. It is Estár who is the one who is out of place, and so she is the one who must be sent away with the summons. When he thinks of her, Levin thinks that "She was tall and slim, and almost a stranger" (172). She is still put in contrast with her sisters, as Beauty was in the Beaumont, but if there is a good sister in the story, it is not Estár.

It is Joya, in the novella, who pushes her to actually think about whether or not she has romantic feelings for the Alien. When she is returning to the home of the Alien after having visited with her family, Joya gives her a pair of earrings and tells her to "Wear them for him" (192). She addresses the concern, that Estár's entire family has been dancing around for the whole visit: that Estár is in love with the Alien. She does not express disgust or displeasure at this fact, but she does give Estár something to wear that is flattering and makes her think about what might be a problem in her potential

relationship with the Alien. Joya advises her to "make him let you see him" (193), pushing Estár to face what would be the largest problem with her relationship with the beast as far as they understand it. Estár accuses Joya of "trying to make [her] go to far" and wanting "to spoil--something" (193). What Estár accuses Joya of is what Beauty's sisters actually did in the Beaumont version of the story, but Joya, who is overall a good person, really does just want to help her sister. Despite Joya's desire to help, this leads to a very painful episode for Estár after having seen the Alien. Overall though, it is Joya's prompting that leads her to eventually acknowledge and understand her love for the Alien.

The rival characters in Disney and Lee's works play a similar external role to the sisters in the Beaumont and the Lackey, but they also clearly serve a different purpose. The Disney film simplifies the family dynamics of the story in many ways, not giving Belle any siblings and making her father less competent. The removal of her siblings means that Belle is not placed in direct comparison with her sisters as the good sister as well. Gaston, the rival, is placed in the movie as a comic figure, and he comes out the worse in comparison with the Beast. He was never truly in competition with the Beast, since Belle found him repulsive to begin with. Lackey uses the rival character to a much more sinister effect. By removing Rosalind's, the Beauty-character's, sisters, Lackey effectively isolates Rosalind even more throughly after the death of her father. This isolation shows that she clearly has no options other than going to the home of Jason Cameron, the Beast-character. Stephen du Mond, the rival character, is used as a lens through which Gaston can be perceived. He is by far the darker of the two characters,

and his cruel and inhumane tendencies are much more openly perceptible than Gaston's.

In both the Disney film *Beauty and the Beast* and Mercedes Lackey's novel *The Fire Rose*, the figure of the rival to the Beast is used to trigger the realization of the relationship between the Beauty and the Beast of the adaption of the story. In the Disney film, Gaston, the rival character, is depicted in a humorous, light-hearted fashion, but some of his actions, despite their humorous presentation, are distinctly more sinister than they seem in the context of the film. Lackey's portrayal of Paul du Mond, the rival character in her novel, shows the darkness of his character in a much more honest fashion and exposes the Disney depiction of Gaston as false.

When Gaston first appears in the Disney film, he has just shot down a goose. His sidekick, Le Fou, heaps praise on him about his hunting ability and parallels it to Gaston's luck with women. He promptly declares that he will marry Belle, and he puts it in the context of her being the best because she is the most beautiful (Disney). By setting this scene to upbeat, rising music, Disney focuses the attention of the scene on the comic aspects of Gaston's character. Gaston chooses Belle because of her beauty, and while that may seem like a rather shallow reason to decide that he wants to marry someone, that is more emphasized than the fact that Gaston has basically declared that he does not care about Belle's feelings about him. His actions in this scene show him to be extremely self-centered and inconsiderate of others around him. He assumes that there is nothing that she could find objectionable about him, while she is singing about how she does not like the provincial life that he is tied to by the fact that he is clearly a hunter.

Gaston continues this trend when he proposes to Belle. In the proposal, he is already assuming that she will say yes, despite the fact that she consistently moves away

from him and seems uncomfortable. His assumptions about how his marriage to the version of Belle that he has constructed in his head involves "rustic hunting lodges" and "six or seven strapping boys like [him]" (Disney). While Belle has already been shown to be an intelligent young woman with romantic and adventurous notions, Gaston is determined to cast her into the role of the stereotypical provincial housewife who would cater to his every whim. He clearly has no respect for her as a person at all during this scene, and when she kicks him out of her house, rejecting him so clearly that even he can comprehend her rejection for what it is despite his megalomania, he is not dissuaded from his notions that he will find a way to make her marry him. At that point, embarrassed and angry, Gaston forgets the polite pretense of asking Belle to marry him and determines that he will have her as his wife, whether she wants to be or not.

This determination to marry Belle even though she does not want him is shown further in his plot to have her father, Maurice, institutionalized despite the fact that he is completely harmless. This plot is started during the song "Gaston," where the titular character of the song is glorified in his boorish and macho ways. Gaston behaves poorly throughout this scene: sulking while holding the place of the entertainer, hitting the person who is trying to cheer him up, shooting indoors, and generally just being a negative stereotype of provincial masculinity. At the same time, he is being praised for all of these behaviors, and even encouraged in them. Not only is Gaston self-centered, most of the people around him have bought in to his megalomania. He begins to introduce the idea of forcing Belle to marry him through the threat of institutionalizing her father with the notion that he has been thinking, which Le Fou retorts is somehow dangerous, followed by Gaston's agreement (Disney). This anti-intellectualism puts them

at cultural odds with Belle and her inventor father. The idea that they think that thinking is dangerous is part of what leads to the conclusion that institutionalizing a harmless old man like Maurice is a good idea as a means to what Gaston wants.

After all of his other manipulations, when presented with the Beast as a rival for Belle's affection, which he did not ever even have to begin with, Gaston decides that the Beast must be killed, and he rather successfully manipulates the villagers into forming a mob to go after the Beast by positing him as a threat to them and their children and their village despite Belle's protests. He goes so far as to lock Belle and her father in the basement of their own house so that they cannot get in the way of his plans. He rides off, leading the mob, holding the mirror with the image of the Beast in the place of a sword (Disney). This is one of the places in the movie where the fact that Gaston is not a good or humane man is emphasized, but at the same time, he is given rather heroic music, and he rides off on horseback, holding a mirror like a sword. The fact that he is using the mirror with the image of the Beast puts them in direct counterpoint: while Gaston is the character with the outer countenance of a human, and the Beast is the one with the outer beastly form, their inner selves are on some level reversed.

Gaston shows his lack of honor and treacherous nature one last time in his final battle with the Beast. Not only does he begin by attacking the Beast even when he does not match the fight, he then proceeds to try to kill the Beast again after the Beast has already won and spared his life. While Gaston's original attack on the Beast is what triggered Belle to realize just how much she cared about the Beast, it is this near death experience for the Beast that finally causes her to act on her feelings towards him. By placing the Beast in direct comparison to Gaston, and by nearly losing the Beast, she

admits her love to him.

From his actions in the film, Gaston basically wants to kidnap and rape Belle, even though he situates these desires in the context of marrying, or owning, her as a beautiful object. Despite this, he is not depicted in a light that makes him truly disgusting in the Disney film. Instead, he is humorous because of the context of the music and his outrageously boorish behavior. Paul du Mond, in Lackey's novel, is clearly a criticism of this lighthearted depiction of Gaston. He shares many characteristics with Gaston, though not all, but he is not removed from his status as a rapist and a disgustingly evil person.

From very early in her acquaintance with Paul du Mond, Rosalind Hawkins, the Beauty of Mercedes Lackey's novel, describes him as the "so-superior secretary" and feels that "if she met him, she was rather it was on neutral ground rather than in her own rooms" (Lackey 70). On some level, Rosalind, who is generally portrayed as a perceptive and intelligent character does not entirely trust Paul du Mond, even though they share an employer, and he has given her no real reason to distrust him at that point in the novel. Jason Cameron, the Beast, is slightly more aware of the dangers that Paul du Mond presents early in the novel. In a discussion with one of his Salamanders, he describes Paul as "A dangerous fool and therefore not to be trusted, and I do not trust him with anything of importance" (81-82). Paul du Mond's connection to Jason is actually stronger in this work than his connection to Rosalind, as he is Jason's employee and apprentice. He had been disappointed by du Mond's sense of entitlement and unwillingness to put effort in to his work. Throughout the novel, the fact that du Mond feels that he is entitled to power is something that will cause problems for Jason and Rosalind. For all that du

Mond seems a bit of a bad character early in the novel, it is still rather shocking when his atrocious behavior later in the novel occurs.

Paul du Mond tries to create a rift in the interaction between Rosalind and Jason from very early on in their acquaintance. When Rosalind accidentally meets him on the grounds of Jason's estate, near the paddock where she is observing Jason's horse, he tells her several less than flattering things about Jason. Many of them sound as though he is trying to give her helpful warnings, such as telling her that "[Cameron] likes to own people as well as things; he likes to control them. When he can't, he prefers to make certain no one else ever can or will" (91). Combined with his false charm and Rosalind's observations of the situation and experiences as an employee of Jason, these comments seem rather false. Rosalind observes to herself that "She knew many, many men who, to prove that they could, would have 'broken' a horse like this one. She guessed that Paul du Mond was one of them" (91). Du Mond seems to be projecting many of his own negative qualities and and sources of failure on to Jason in an attempt to make him look bad out of resentment because Jason will not give him what he wants, which is something he could obtain if he was only willing to put the work in to it. The very fact that Paul du Mond and Sunset, Jason's horse, despise each other is not a point in his favor: Cameron remembers that the person who gifted him with the stallion said that "the stallion was supremely sensitive to personalities and would be a good way to measure whether someone could be trusted" (100). Sunset plays a recurring role in the novel, and he is often in direct opposition to Paul du Mond as a representative of Jason.

The first time that the story is presented from Paul du Mond's perspective, it becomes supremely clear that, not only is he a rather nasty specimen, but he he knows

that and does not care. When he is thinking about his interaction with Jason, he thinks that "Cameron *should* fear him; he had more ambition than the Firemaster, and fewer scruples" (107). In the same thought process, he contemplates the possibility of killing Jason: "if there was a chance to kill when the prey was unaware of the hunter's presence, *that* was the best moment to strike" (108). Du Mond has no sense of honor, and he knows it, and he does not think that having it would be a good thing at all. In fact, he mocks Jason for his sense of honor. Through the early depictions of Paul du Mond, he seems almost devoid of normal human feelings. He is purely manipulative, trying to shape his world to himself without a care for the others around him unless it is useful to him. This general self-absorbtion is very much reminiscent of Gaston in the Disney film, though du Mond's version of the self-involvement is a lot more subtle. This first look in to du Mond's psyche is also the first time that his darker pastimes are hinted at. When he is thinking about his visit to San Francisco, he considers that "Perhaps when he had broken free of Cameron, he'd make his amusements permanent . . . Then again, perhaps he'd better not. Slavery was illegal" (112). It is fairly clear in the context of the passage that the amusements that du Mond is referencing are sexual in nature, and with the mention of slavery, du Mond enters into a potentially far more dubious situation with his behaviors.

Du Mond participates in such unsavory activities as cockfighting and whoring. The whoring is what brings his further unsavory nature to light and foreshadows his later threat. Du Mond makes a pastime of breaking girls who were brought to San Francisco to be prostitutes under false pretenses: "It was his job to break them like untamed horses; to prove to them that not only did they have no choice in their new profession, but that he

was infinitely worse than any customer they were ever likely to service" (124). The entire set up of du Mond being a breaker makes it clear that he enjoys being a rapist and has no moral quandaries about it, possibly because he seems to have no moral quandaries. During this chapter, it is also shown that Paul du Mond is bigoted and resentful towards Rosalind in particular: "He'd like to see her embarrassed, or better still, humiliated. He'd imagined her prim little face superimposed on Lupe's last night. He'd like to have a chance to break *her*. Damned women, thinking they had a right to careers, taking money out of a man's pocket to do so, getting ideas about equality" (127). Paul du Mond sees women as objects, to be possessed or not, much the way Gaston does in the Disney film, but Paul's perspective on them is much more obviously sinister, considering the fact that it is explicitly framed by the notion of enjoying breaking women through rape.

Paul du Mond becomes heavily involved in the drugs and sex carried on in the magical circle of Jason's main magical rival. This style of magic is portrayed as being extremely distasteful and high in risk, but it requires less actual work than learning magic properly. For the final stage of his rise to this sort of power, du Mond requires a virgin vessel, and this is when he finally brings his animosity towards Rosalind into action. He decides to kidnap her so that he can rape her for the rite that he wishes to perform. This is a much more obvious connection of his behaviors to rape than the one made in Disney with Gaston. The attempted kidnapping by du Mond, and his resulting death by Jason's fangs cause Rosalind to need time apart to process, but eventually those very events are what cause her to bring herself closer to Jason. In the scene of the attempted abduction, Paul du Mond and Jason both show animalistic moments. In the end, it is du Mond who comes across as the more beastly of the two though.

Chapter 3: Transformations

Among the most crucial scenes in any version of "Beauty and the Beast" is the one where the Beauty accepts the Beast for himself and shows that she loves him. Hearne supports the idea that "The climax of the story is Beauty's love of the Beast himself, not the transformation and marriage, which is anticlimactic if pleasant" (Hearne 134). In older and more culturally mainstream versions of the text, however they are presented, a scene of transformation directly follows this confession or admission of love on the Beauty's part, so that the Beast is a handsome prince who it is acceptable for her to marry. In some ways though, this very transformation detracts from the impact of the story: perhaps it is not actually possible for love to flourish between two people regardless of differences and flaws.

In both Tanith Lee's "Beauty" and Mercedes Lackey's The Fire Rose, the transformation scene never occurs, and thus the emphasis is left even more strongly on the internal message: that love of the person inside is more important than the physical characteristics of that person. This makes these retellings of the original story into powerful living texts that bring the message of the tale into the current day. Through both of these interpretations, the reader is able to consider what makes someone a person. Because of their dates of publication, and how they handle the story, each of these works is best considered in the light of the earlier work with which they are the most clearly linked.

Tanith Lee's "Beauty" was published in 1983, before Disney's film version of *Beauty and the Beast* was even planned, is clearly in direct dialogue with the 1756 version of the tale written by Beaumont and various direct retellings of the story that had occurred since. Mercedes Lackey's The Fire Rose, published in 1995, four years after the Disney film, is clearly much more closely tied to the mainstream cultural version of the story presented by Disney. While the Disney film deviates from the original tale a good deal, it is still deemed necessary for the transformation into a beautiful or handsome prince to occur for the tale to be complete.

By comparing the confessions and transformations, or lack thereof, in these texts, the sentiments and meanings that are imbedded in the science fiction and fantasy versions of the tale being examined here become more clear. Each version of the text has its own reasons behind the staging of these scenes, and the methods with which those scenes are staged say a great deal about the message that is being created about love and relationships.

In Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's 1756 version of the tale, there is a good deal of build up to the confession of love that leads to the transformation. Beauty's reasons for loving the Beast are put into moralistic terms, and they are very consistent with other fairy tales of the same period. While she is considering her reasons to marry the Beast, she comes to a conclusion about the reasons that a person should be loved that seems to be an important part of the message of this version of the story. She claims that "it is neither wit nor a fine person in a husband, that makes a woman happy; but virtue, sweetness of temper, and complaisance" (Beaumont 64). This right here is the most

important conclusion that Beauty reaches in her understanding. Through this sentiment, it is clear that Beauty loves the Beast because of who he is and how he acts, instead of because of anything to do with his outward form.

Despite this conclusion, which leads to Beauty's love for the Beast, Beaumont does not actually carry this message through to the very end. At the moment of full acceptance of her love, which should be the powerful point where the message that love should not be constrained by such things as physical appearance, is presented, the Beast transforms into a beautiful prince. Instead of marrying the simple, gentle Beast that she had fallen in love with, Beauty is rewarded with "one of the loveliest Princes that eye ever beheld" (66). This Prince is closer to what would have been expected for Beauty, but he does not continue the message that physical form is not an important constraint where love is concerned. In fact, the very existence of the transformation in the Beaumont version of the text seems to undermine the argument that is presented earlier. If the transformation is necessary for Beauty to marry the Beast, then perhaps love can only be truly reached between people who share the same desirable outward traits.

Despite the fact that the message is undermined, the original message is contained in the fact that Beauty fell in love with the Beast as the Beast. This is a concept that carries through very heavily to the science fiction and fantasy stories that will be considered here.

Tanith Lee's novella "Beauty" follows the same general path as Madame Le Prince de Beaumont's "Beauty and the Beast," but the crucial scene of the acceptance of the Beast by the Beauty is not followed by the transformation scene that was deemed

necessary in the Beaumont version. Many of the differences between the two texts could probably be attributed to the time at which they were written, since Beaumont's text was constrained by what would have been viewed as socially acceptable at the time that her story was written. Another way that some of the differences could be attributed is to the fact that Lee's story is science fiction, since the pivotal difference in the story revolves around the alien nature of the central characters, but the fact that the Beast is an alien in this version is only a way to create him as the Beast. Lee's novella instead projects into a possible future, and in this future, it is able to deal with the most crucial moment of the text without the burdensome transformation sequence directly following it. This definitely strengthens the impact of the love between Beauty and the Beast.

The culture that Lee depicts in "Beauty" is one that is very sexually liberated. Estár, the Beauty of this version of the story, is in fact encouraged to consider the love that she holds for the alien Beast in a physical light by one of her sisters, Joya. The aspect of appearance is still considered one of the most important ones in this version of the story though. The only problem that Joya foresees for Estár in a relationship with the Beast is the "way they look" (Lee 193). The alien race that the Beast is a part of is supposed to be hideous to human eyes, and this is considered the worst thing in a relationship between Estár and the Beast. At the point that this occurs, Estár's first visit home, Estár has not actually seen the Beast without his disguising coverings yet.

When Estár goes to watch the Beast swim, so that she can see him in his actual shape for the first time, the first mention of the duality of the Beast nature of Estár and the Beast occurs. When she enters the space of his pool she feels that "she herself was the alien, at this instant" (197). This duality leads the reader to question what really

defines the Beast as beastly. In the case of the Alien and Estár, he is only defined as the Beast because they are on her world, and thus he is the one out of place. When Estár first actually sees the Beast without his shielding coverings, she runs, leading the reader to assume that the Beast was so hideous that she could not stand to look at him. This choice to go home, and the reactions that Estár faces from her family, continue to encourage this interpretation.

When Estár returns to the Beast, the missing piece of her encounter with the Alien is finally revealed. After a long, god-like description of his appearance, she reflects upon the fact that, "she herself, of course, had run from this very thing. Not his alien hideousness--his beauty, which had withered her" (202). She is actually intimidated by him: in her mind, it might have been acceptable "to give herself to one physically her inferior [...]. But not to offer herself to the lightning bolt, to the solar flame" (202). Making the Alien beautiful allows Lee to turn around some of the ideas that the reader came into the story with: the Alien is in no way inferior to Estár, and through his appearance, he might even be construed as superior. It is in this state, where she is feeling inferior and unwilling to even attempt to express that she loves him, that he finally brings in the final aspect of the turnaround of the Beauty nature and Beast nature shown in this story.

Estár, like all of the other young people who had been brought in by the aliens with their roses, is revealed to actually be a child of the alien race, a race that would have died out without using a strategy of transplanting their own children into other cultures. This revelation makes it clear that fundamentally, Estár and the Alien are the same internally, thus rendering any need for a physical transformation obsolete. While these

transplanted children had the appearance of the race into which they were transplanted, in the long run, "[their] essence resembled only the essence of [their] parental race" (205). Despite the differences in appearance, the most important aspect in the love and similarity between these children and the parental alien race is that they are the same on the inside: they have same sort of soul. This directly hails back to the great epiphany of the Beaumont version of the story: the love between the Beauty and the Beast is based on who they are, not how they look.

The transformation that occurs in Lee's version of the story is not physical, and it is not the Beast's. Instead the transformation is one of the soul, for Estár, the Beauty. When she had begun to show that she was not suited to her adopted life, "they had released her from her unreal persona, or let her release herself" (207). It is the meeting of two souls that are well suited to each other that is the most important part of this story: their external shells are irrelevant. They share a nature that binds them together, and that is the true cause of their love, whatever their appearance. Lee's version emphasizes the ideal of love due to the people as they are: by not having any physical transformation, it is emphasized that the external is not the important part of the relationship.

The Disney version of Beauty and the Beast shows the culturally mainstream interpretation of the story. It bears a striking resemblance and contrast to Mercedes Lackey's novel *The Fire Rose*, which was published four years after the Disney film was released. The contrast and similarity between the acceptance scenes, followed by Lackey's lack of transformation scene shows a fundamental difference between the imagining of the world that is present in Lackey's novel and in mainstream culture as

represented by Disney.

In Disney's version of the love and transformation sequence, a third element is introduced: the other suitor. This adds a dramatic element to the realization of Beauty's love for the Beast. Belle, Disney's Beauty, has an obvious and strong reaction to seeing the man who is pursuing her attempt to defeat the Beast, and her reaction proves her love for the Beast. She does not seem to even care that the other man, obnoxious though he may be, has fallen from a great height after trying to kill the Beast.

Like in the Beaumont version of the story, it is her kiss that returns the Beast to his human form, right at the moment before it would no longer have been possible for him to do so. The use of the rose as a timekeeper for when the Beast would last be able to transform is another addition of the dramatic to the scene. While in Beauty and the Beast it is clear that Belle falls in love with the Beast while he is still the Beast. The transformation of the Beast into a beautiful Prince is one of the most important and glorified moments in the movie. There are many reasons that the producers of the film could have chosen to continue to enforce the concept of the transformation which was beginning to be explored and discarded in contemporaneous literature. The film was aimed at children and needed to be considered acceptable for them. It was also an interpretation of the story that looked to the past instead of the future, in contrast to the general looking into how things can change or how things are wrong that is present in science fiction and fantasy. There is an innate message in the necessity of the transformation that is concerning though: it implies that beautiful people should be with other beautiful people. While it also emphasizes that those people should be compatible with each other and good, there is still a strong emphasis placed on their appearance due

to the transformation. This emphasis on appearance and its importance to the nature of a person is one of the things that Lackey's novel resists and argues against by not containing a transformation at the end.

The other suitor presented in Lackey's *The Fire Rose* is a much darker one than the one presented in Disney's Beauty and the Beast. Paul Du Mond, formerly the secretary and apprentice to Jason Cameron, the Beast of the The Fire Rose, attempts to kidnap and rape Rosalind Hawkins, or Rose, the Beauty of the novel. At this point in the story, Rose has already acknowledged that she loves Jason, despite the fact that he is stuck in the form of a Beast. When Jason kills her attacker, it terrifies and worries Rose because it is the first time that she has seen him take actions that seem to mirror his outer form. Here Jason is struggling with not becoming the Beast on the inside: "it had not been Jason who had looked up at her with the uncomprehending eyes of a beast. It had been the werewolf, the loup-garou, and she did not know it at all" (Lackey 386). At this point, Jason sends Rose away to protect her from himself: he has decided that he is not human enough to be worthy of keeping her with him.

Rose spends a good deal of time after having been sent away thinking about the fact that "there are men with the souls of beasts" (391), and she wonders if that is in fact worse. Her general opinion in the novel is that the men who are beasts on the inside are far worse than the ones that are only beasts on the outside. At the same time, Jason is feeling horribly guilty about what he had done.

To reach their final resolution, Jason and Rose are faced with a second villain, or another man with the inner nature of a beast: Simon Beltaire, Jason's rival in the realms

of magic instead of the realms of love. Beltaire is perfectly prepared to destroy San Francisco to attain what he wants, and to keep themselves and many innocents from destruction, Rose and Jason must come to terms with each other and deal with their own respective humanities. When she is arguing with Beltaire about helping the people who have been devastated by the earthquakes and fires, Rose has one of her first moments of realization that despite Jason's moment of loss of control, she trusts him: "I would rather take my chances beside Jason Cameron than with you. I have a feeling that I would be much, much safer" (423). When Jason arrives soon afterwards, she thinks only of his safety, warning him to leave, since Beltaire truly only wants to destroy him. Clearly, at this point, her trust in Jason has been reaffirmed. Only through their trust and their ability to work together are Rose and Jason able to make it out of the situation alive, but in doing so, they also destroy Jason's only known chance to regain human form. This is clearly not a conventional romantic rescue, while Rosalind needed Jason's assistance for them to be able to get free, neither of them would have survived the confrontation without the other's skills and aid. To both of them, the survival of the other is clearly more important than whether or not Jason's appearance matches his behaviors. At this point, before they can dig themselves into a deeper mess of misunderstandings again, Master Pao, a mentor and friend to both of them, steps in to remind Jason that, "You are in love with Rose; she with you. You are compatible, all will be well" (428). They have finally gotten to the place where it does not matter that Jason is the Beast on the outside because Rose knows who he is on the inside, and that is who she loves. They have both decided that his lack of ability to change back into his human form is completely irrelevant to their relationship.

At the very end of the novel, Rose is considering Jason from the window. She thinks that if they travelled, some of the people in far off places would think him not as strange in appearance as he actually was. In fact, she thought that the only real difference that they might notice was that he was "*a great deal kinder than most. The beast has a truly human heart.* And in the end, that is all that matters" (433). By comparision, the men who have the hearts of beasts, du Mond and Beltaire, have both met their rightful end by the end of the book. It is the people who are good people who are rewarded with life and love, even though Jason will never truly regain his human form. In the end, it is not actually important.

In both Lee and Lackey's retelling of the story, the focus of the relationship between the Beauty character and the Beast character is refocused on the emotional relationship between the two of them. It is shown that the important aspect of their relationship is not that of the physical, and that continues to be reinforced up to the very end of the story. By removing the transformation of the Beast in their retellings, they take away the mixed message that love should not be based on the outer form, but that for love to be fully achieved the outer forms must match that is present in earlier and more socially mainstream versions of the text. They also both show that it is entirely possible for people to be the actual Beasts, and that the outer form of a person does not necessarily echo their inner self.

Conclusion

The genres of science fiction and fantasy are not alone in their rewriting of fairy tales. Angela Carter's volume of rewritten fairy tales *The Bloody Chamber*, published originally in 1979, is a good example of a magical realism take on the rewriting of fairy tales. While Angela Carter's retellings of fairy tales clearly try to expose problems in society, many of her retellings do not reinforce how these problems can be solved, something that is present in both the science fiction and fantasy versions of the story. Carter's retelling of "Beauty and the Beast," "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon," is, in fact, one of the more conventional of the stories in her volume. It is followed by a less conventional version of “Beauty and the Beast” which is clearly not based directly on the Beaumont version of the story, but that story, “The Tiger’s Bride,” also fails to reach past the notion that the Beauty character and the Beast character must conform to the same world to have a successful relationship. “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” reinforces the problems with the emotionally incestuous relationship between the Beauty character and her father, and her relationship with the Beast is to some extent dependent on his transformation. Overall, this story is a good example of how the genres of science fiction and fantasy handle retellings of fairy tales in a way that is more exemplary of the living traditions of mythology and folklore that exists through retellings.

Like fantasy, this retelling of the story starts in a place with the constraints of a patriarchal society. The Beauty character is on some level her father’s possession by

nature in this sort of setting. In "The Courtship of Mr. Lyon," the father thinks of his daughter in the following way: "his Beauty, his girl-child, his pet" (Carter 41). With the fact that she is waiting for him at home and taking care of him at home, as implied by the introductory paragraph, this tone of his towards her can be seen as mirroring the emotionally incestuous tone that can be found in Beaumont and Disney and critiqued in Lackey. At the same time, Beauty "was possessed by a sense of obligation to an unusual degree and, besides, she would gladly have gone to the ends of the earth for her father, whom she loved dearly" (45-46). Here it is clearly seen as Beauty's duty to care for her father, even if that means sacrificing herself for his stupidity. And when Beauty returns to her father, after her first stay with Mr. Lyon, the Beast, she continues her role as her father's wife-figure. He assembled "a whole new wardrobe for his darling, so she could step out on his arm" (48). This is a role that is normally taken by a man's wife, or at the very least a woman that he is considering marrying. It is implied that his daughter replaced his wife when his wife died because of the context. There is never really a critique of this relationship between father and daughter in the story, though the fact that Beauty eventually does remain with Mr. Lyon does imply that this is not the long term relationship that should be maintained.

The matter of the transformation of Mr. Lyon is also not something that is handled in a way that even considers that his outward form might not be the important part of his plausible relationship with Beauty. When Beauty first encounters Mr. Lyon, she fetishizes him, but she also distances herself from him. When she first encounters Mr. Lyon, "She found his bewildering difference from herself almost intolerable; its presence choked her" (45). At this point in the story, she considers herself to be "Miss

Lamb, spotless, sacrificial" (45). While she has also thought about the fact that he is a beautiful lion in this passage, she is not at all interested in him in any way that does not invoke fascinated terror.

In the form of the Beast, she sees Mr. Lyon as to some extent threatening her with rape, though it turns out that it was a false worry. When he was bidding her goodnight, "he flung himself at her feet and buried his head in 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" (47). This passage seems to discount the possibility that a girl who was basically placed in the care of a man who was not known to her or her family could be raped while under his power because clearly nothing bad has happened in this situation that seemed to be headed in that direction. This overall does not send the message that placing Beauty in this situation was actually dangerous to her person. Another way of reading this situation is that the character of Beauty is justifying away her rape as something else. If this scene is indeed representative of rape, then the fact that Mr. Lyon and Beauty end up together in the end of the story becomes a much more disturbing situation.

When she leaves to go back to her father for a time, it becomes clear that Beauty cannot actually see past Mr. Lyon's differences when contemplating a relationship with him. While they were parting, "It was in her heart to drop a kiss upon his shaggy mane but, she could not bring herself to touch him of her own free will, he was so different from herself" (48). Instead of seeing the man inside the form of the Beast, Beauty is completely focused on the form of the Beast that Mr. Lyon bears. She cannot truly

acknowledge how she feels towards Mr. Lyon as a person until the final transformation because until that point she does not actually see him as a person.

The ending of the story seems to place Beauty and Mr. Lyon into a normative structure. The scene that they are shown in is one that seems as though it could be one that any couple took part in: "Mr and Mrs Lyon walk in the garden; the old spaniel drowses on the grass, in a drift of fallen petals" (51). The facts that they become such a normal couple and are only married after his transformation show that Beauty does not actually seem him as the person under the Beast. While she is upset when he is dying, and promises not to leave him, her promise does not seem entirely trustworthy on this point, as she had promised to return to him from her visit to her father before, and had gotten too caught up in her affairs concerning actual humans, especially her father.

While it is possible to become aware of a potential problem in relationships because of this version of the story: that people do not necessarily see each other as anything other than the outer shell, there does not actually seem to be a resolution to this issue. While perhaps the transformation is meant to be Beauty finally being able to see Mr. Lyon for who he actually is, it does not seem that way from the perspective of the reader, instead they fall into a normative relationship pattern without actually having learned from the experience that Mr. Lyon faced or having a real relationship with each other treating each other as people. On some level though, this version of the story seems to come out of a more adult version of the mindset that produced the Disney film. While Carter's story does not trivialize or ignore the problematic issues present in the story, it does eventually end up creating a socially normative conclusion.

In contrast, Tanith Lee's novella "Beauty" and Mercedes Lackey's novel *The Fire*

Rose both demonstrate problems of identity and show strong resolutions for them. In both of these works, the Beast character does not transform in the end, and that fact is especially important to the notion that personal identity is far more important than the outer shell that someone bears. Rosalind, in *The Fire Rose*, accepts Jason Cameron as a person and marries him despite his outer form, and that is an important show of understanding and acceptance that should be maintained in society. Tanith Lee takes this a step further when she makes Estár of the same race as the Alien, just in a different outer shell. Estár and the Alien are more like each other than they are like the other characters in the novella, even though they have different outer shells, and this similarity of temperament is the true foundation of their relationship. Angela Carter's short story does not actually change much from the message that is given in the original story and the culturally normative Disney. Instead she reinforces that the similarity of outer appearances is important in the relationship between the Beauty character and the Beast character.

Overall, in the genre of retold fairy tales, it is the science fiction and fantasy retellings that bring the stories the most into the present and even the future in terms of their social and cultural relevance. Fantasy retellings, such as Lackey's novel, are excellent at showing the problems inherent in the society, and looking into the present and the past and showing how these problems can be handled differently. Lackey's novel is a scathing critique of the trivialized issues in the Disney film of *Beauty and the Beast*, and through that lens, Lackey shows the flaws in society that the Disney film plays up to very clearly. She is not afraid to blame Rosalind's father for Rosalind's problems because of his inappropriate emotional relationship and use of her. She is also willing to take the

step to show that it is not the external aspect of the person that counts, but the internal.

Tanith Lee's science fiction novella, like many works of science fiction, is able to show ways that the world could improve, and it critiques the views of the original work and brings them forward by removing the polarities of good and evil in the characters. In Lee's work, there can be problems in a family that occur between rational and sensible adults because of circumstance, but those problems can also be resolved. Lee is the only one who empowers her Beauty character not only to choose to stay with the Beast character without the guilt of the father, but she turns that move into one that signifies reaching maturity and stepping away from the family that has supported her until that point, though not completely abandoning them.

Fundamentally, this fairy tale deals with the position of women and their sexual roles in society. The reason that many of the tensions that were present in the other versions of the story have been resolved in Lee's novella, is that "Beauty" is set in a world where the gender barrier has been overcome. Lee's version of the story does not consider merely women, but people in general. Estár happens to be a woman, but it is not crucial to her character. In this world beyond gender, where gender has become a trivial concern, the emotional compatibility of two people is all that matters in their relationships. There are relationships between members of the same gender in the background of Lee's novella, and they are not considered at all strange. The relationship between Estár and the Alien is there because they were placed together as emotionally compatible beings. It is through these genres that fairy tales, mythology and other folklore are able to remain living and relevant works.

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