Rose Daughter Short Guide

Rose Daughter by Robin McKinley

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BOOKRAGS

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Overview

The classic version of "Beauty and the Beast" was written by Madame le Prince de Beaumont in 1756. This story of learning to look beyond surface appearance, of a young girl coming to see that her beast bridegroom is really a prince, has resonated throughout Western culture. Rose Daughter is a much richer version of this tale than McKinley's earlier Beauty. The characters are more fully developed, there is an atmosphere of genuine mystery, and the love that develops between Beauty and the Beast is more mature. Some have found the lengthy discussions of roses and gardening a distraction from the plot, but the rose is a complex symbol, and Beauty's love affair with the earth is deeply connected with her love for the Beast. Rose Daughter is a satisfying exploration of the necessity of love, faith, and kindness. It received acclaim as both an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and a Booklist Editor's Choice.

About the Author

Born in 1952 in Warren, Ohio, Jennifer Carolyn Robin McKinley spent her childhood on the move. She and her mother, Jeanne Carolyn (maiden name Turrell), followed her father, William, a naval officer, from posting to posting. Because she was always being uprooted, she found her security in books. Indeed, she claims that the story of her life is told in her reading. For instance, she read Andrew Lang's The Blue Fairy Book in California, C. S. Lewis's Narnia books in New York, J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings in Japan, and T. H. White's Once andFuture King in Maine. McKinley's household was a bookish one, and like that of many authors, her interest in storytelling was inspired by her reading. In particular, Sara Crewe, the heroine of Frances Hodgson Burnett's A Little Princess, a wonderful teller of tales, made McKinley want to tell stories.

McKinley has long been interested in fantasy and adventure stories, but with a strong revisionist bent. As she notes in her acceptance speech for the Newbery Award, she was frustrated by the lack of active roles for women in these stories, and she decided to create some. After graduating with a degree in English from Bowdoin College, she settled down to write. While taking a break from working on some stories that would eventually be shaped into the Damar novels, McKinley watched a television adaptation of "Beauty and the Beast" which irritated her tremendously. As an exercise, she decided to write a short story to "get it right." That short story became her first book, Beauty, an ALA Notable Book.

Following that, she wrote a couple of short-story collections and her award-winning Damar novels. Equal parts Kipling and Tolkien, these latter books feature strong female characters who have splendid adventures to rival those of any male hero.

During this period, McKinley's life underwent some major changes. She had been living in Maine, in a lilac-covered cottage that was her first real home. In 1991, she moved to England to be with her husband, the writer Peter Dickinson, but it took four years before she could bring herself to sell her cottage. At that vulnerable moment, a friend asked if she would consider writing a short-story version of "Beauty and the Beast" for a picture book. Believing she had said all she had to say about that story in Beauty, she declined. But on a plane trip from New York to England, she had a halfvision that brought the following words to her mind: "Her earliest memory was of waking from the dream. It was also her only clear memory of her mother." For some reason, McKinley knew this had something to do with "Beauty and the Beast."

She decided to attempt the short story after all, and six months later she had another novel based on "Beauty and the Beast." She describes the experience of writing it as feeling "possessed." The story had always appealed to McKinley; she remembers it from her childhood as the only fairy tale in which the heroine does "something rather than drooping like a tulip in a vase and waiting to be rescued." During McKinley's major life changes, the story tapped into her grief at losing her cottage and her sense of making a new start in England, where she was learning to love and to grow roses.

McKinley has never troubled herself overly about the age of her audience. As she says, she writes her books "for the people who want to read them." Deerskin was published as an adult fantasy because of its mature subject matter, but it, and all of her fiction, is popular with both young adult and adult readers. McKinley dislikes the way child readers and children's books are often patronized. Good books are good books, no matter the age of the protagonist.

She is also passionate about the value of fantasy literature and resists charges of escapism: "Good fantasy talks about our deepest inner selves, about the dreams and longings and hopes and fears and strivings that make us human. The great thing about fantasy is that you can drag dreams and longings and hopes and fears and strivings out of your subconscious and call them 'magic' or 'dragons' or 'fairies' and get to know them better."

Setting

As the inspiration for revisiting this story came in part from McKinley's loss of her Maine cottage, and from her discovery of gardening, it is not surprising that the setting is important in Rose Daughter, nor that the garden is at the heart of the novel. Not since Frances Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden has there been such a profound appreciation for the magic inherent in working the earth. Even early on in the novel, before Beauty's family's troubles begin, she finds solace from her daily chores in the garden. It is her space, and her ability to grow things is her special gift. Gardens abound in this book. There is a magnificent garden at Rose Cottage, and the Beast has a dying rose garden which Beauty brings back to life. Beauty's association with gardens is what marks her as a bringer of life; just as she revives the roses, she will also bring back to life the Beast's human qualities, his capacity for kindness, generosity, and love.

The novel is in part about finding home.

In the opening of the book, the city in which Beauty's family lives is exotic: there is magic and pet dragons. However, the grand house in which they live is not really a home.

Although the family members love one another, they live busy and separate lives for the most part. Beauty is plagued by nightmares; the only place she feels comfortable is in the garden. Thus, when the family fortune is lost, and they have only Rose Cottage as a refuge, they find themselves with the opportunity to make a real home.

Beauty adapts the easiest, because of her affinity with gardens. However, her sisters Jeweltongue and Lionheart also find they have domestic gifts, and the three sisters work to make a comfortable home. There is a hint of magic about Rose Cottage, because it had been the home of a greenwitch.

Beauty's ability to coax the dormant roses into blooming suggests to the townspeople that Beauty may herself have some magic talent.

The Beast's palace is in stark contrast to homely Rose Cottage. Beauty finds it as much grander than their city house as the city house was grander than Rose Cottage.

The house is a maze of passages, reminding Beauty of a nightmare. Even the air is different: in some rooms, the air seems thicker, as though it resists the intrusion of outsiders. There are no other people present: as in the original tale, invisible servants do Beauty's bidding. The palace somewhat resembles a mausoleum, and there is a subtle sense of menace within it. The emphasis on decay is heightened when Beauty discovers the Beast's garden. Despite (or perhaps because of) being enclosed in a glass house, the Beast's garden is dying. This is the real reason Beauty is brought to the Beast's palace; the Beast was intrigued by her father's description of her love of roses and her ability to make things grow. As he tells Beauty, the glass house is the heart of the estate, and it is dying. Literally, there is no food for the Beast's roses; they

are starving to death, as the Beast is slowly starving for want of love and nurturance. Beauty's "magic," her patience and care, offer the Beast and his roses their only hope.

The only spot in the Beast's palace that suggests there is hope is his tower room, where he takes Beauty to show her the stars. The room is decorated with beautiful paintings by the Beast. These show Beauty that despite his horrifying appearance, he is a human being with the soul of an artist.

The Beast who produced these paintings can be redeemed. Eventually, just as she breaks invisible barriers to find food for the roses and coaxes them back to life, Beauty is able to break the spell holding the Beast in thrall. As a final test, Beauty is given a choice between grandeur and simplicity, between palace and home. She chooses well; fittingly, the glass house is transported to Rose Cottage, where Beauty and her Beast will live out their days tending roses and painting. This is indeed a novel about coming home.

The time and place of this story are deliberately vague, as they are in all fairy tales.

Jeweltongue's salons and the society of the community around Rose Cottage are vaguely Georgian. There are echoes of Regency extravagance in Beauty's mother's life and death, the latter the result of a reckless wager lost over a dangerous horse jump.

However, details such as pet dragons and sphinxes, greenwitches, and Beauty's magical salamander serve as reminders that this is a fantasy world. The story belongs outside time and place, for it is one that resonates through time.

Social Sensitivity

"Beauty and the Beast" is a type of animal-bridegroom story, with its roots in the myth of Cupid and Psyche. In that tale, there is a definite criticism of female curiosity, as Psyche is punished for disobeying her husband's stricture not to look at him.

In Madame le Prince de Beaumont's version, the story seems to teach young girls that the most intimidating of men might really be princes in disguise. In a culture in which arranged marriages were common, this was likely a reassuring message. Thus different versions of the story address different cultural concerns. McKinley has maintained de Beaumont's concept of inner beauty, but she has made her Beauty a more active figure. Hence, Rose Daughter teaches not only that appearances should not be trusted, but that one is responsible for one's destiny. Beauty does not wait around; she sets events in motion with her tending of the Beast's garden.

Rose Daughter also teaches that kindness never is wasted. Time and again, Beauty is helped by those she has helped in the past.

The loving family of sisters also reinforces the importance of giving. McKinley explodes the sibling rivalry theme of many fairy tales by refusing to put the sisters in competition with one another. Finally, Beauty's treatment of plants and animals shows that there is no hierarchy of worthiness. The rescuing of the roses is as important as (maybe even necessary for) the rescuing of the Beast.

Fairy tales seem by their nature to be divorced from the "real" world, but because they offer some distance from what we call reality, they often prove to be excellent vantage points from which to look at our concerns. The relationship between Beauty and the Beast might serve to explore contemporary attitudes about love. One dominant model for relationships has been that of the self-sacrificing woman who redeems a sinful man. Another has been that of the woman learning to adapt to her man's needs. McKinley rejects both of these.

Beauty is not particularly self-sacrificing, and if she has to change to see the Beast more clearly, then the Beast has to change to find his human heart. The relationship model here is one of mutual helpfulness.

Love grows from friendship, and is based on genuine values, not on superficial ones.

Literary Qualities

The dominant image in this novel is that of the rose. Roses have a wealth of associations. Affiliated in mythology with Aphrodite, the goddess of love, the rose in Christian symbolism is emblematic of the Virgin Mary, called the Mystical Rose. Medieval legend has it that roses first grew from the prayers of a maiden falsely accused and burned at the stake. Thus, her affinity with roses marks Beauty as a pure and good woman. Roses are more broadly associated with love, with different colors having different connotations. An old woman tells Beauty that roses stand for "the love that makes you and keeps you whole, love that gets you through the worst that life'll give you and that pours out of you when you're given the best instead." This is the kind of love Beauty finds with the Beast. The Greenwitch used to sell rose wreaths from Rose Cottage as charms. Since people have begun to lose the love needed to grow roses, roses have become more scarce and more precious.

The rose is also symbolic of the Beast.

Like the Beast, the rose is contradictory: it is attractive, yet it also has thorns. Readers learn that the roses at Rose Cottage have become thorny from sorrow, much as the Beast has become gruff from loneliness. If the Beast illustrates the prickly aspect of roses, Beauty represents their loveliness.

Together, the two form a whole, as suggested by the allusion to the folk song "Barbara Allen." When the family moves from the city, Beauty sings the last lines: "And from her heart grew a red, red rose, and from his heart a briar...." The lovers are parted in life, but come together after death as plants. When Jeweltongue suggests this is a sad song, Beauty replies that she does not "understand about plants." Beauty knows that plants live and feel tenderness.

As the briar and the rose are intertwined, so become Beauty and the Beast.

The garden presents another allusion, to Eden. The Beast's exile, amid his dying garden, is a reminder of the Fall of Adam, another man who wanted to know too much.

Beauty's ability to revive the garden and to revive the Beast after he is apparently dead, suggests that she is a redeemer of sorts.

Their return to Rose Cottage is a kind of return to paradise. Beauty chooses a "little goodness among the people we know," rather than wealth, power, and awe. There is perhaps an echo of another gardening metaphor, from Voltaire's Candide: "il faut cultiver notre jardin" [we must cultivate our garden]. Beauty and her Beast will build what goodness they can in their own corner of the universe.

McKinley makes effective use of foreshadowing, as well as of symbols and allusions. Beauty's nightmare looks forward to her meeting the Beast. This sense of being haunted by a brooding presence provides tension in the story, creating an almost Gothic

atmosphere, especially once Beauty is in the Beast's palace. Of course, Beauty discovers that the being that awaits her at the end of the corridor is Beast, not a monster. Tension is maintained, however, with the curse: "Three in a bower/ And a rose in flower/ Until that hour/ Stand wall and tower." This seems to suggest that the arrival of the sisters at Rose Cottage presages some terrible destruction. There is destruction of a sort when Beauty breaks the enchantment, but it is a reversal of her nightmare. Instead of being alone, she and the Beast together run through corridors to find the light. The menace is but an illusion, as Beauty finds when she stands up to it.

Some reviewers have found the pace of the novel slow in places, suggesting that there is too much descriptive prose. However, the descriptive passages create necessary atmosphere, and the style suits the book's dominant themes. Gardening is a hobby that teaches patience, so any text built on a central metaphor of gardening will also be slow moving. Like the climbing roses, the text flows in curves and tangles, rather than in clean lines. The process of reading this novel is akin to that of tending a garden. One must pay tender attention to the details to appreciate the full texture of the novel. The novel effectively grows on readers, just as the Beast grows on Beauty.

As Charles de Lint notes, this story is "as close as one can get to sharing a piece of the treasure that lies deep in an author's heart."

There is also a real mystery that keeps the reader's attention. There are three different versions of the Beast's enchantment, and of the curse: Mrs. Words-Without-End's, the ironically named Jack Trueword's, and the Greenwitch's. The reader must sift through the evidence to understand what really happened and what it means. This element provides a good opportunity to explore issues of storytelling and point of view. Jack's version of the story is malicious: how does his motivation affect the interpretation of the story? McKinley presents the first two stories closely together, leaving Beauty and the reader to resolve the contradictions before the meeting with the Greenwitch and the denouement. On some level, then, this is a detective story.

"Beauty and the Beast" is a well-known story, so most readers will bring some pre conceptions to their reading of this novel.

That is another pleasure of this text, as McKinley plays with the form of the classic tale, teasing readers and reversing their expectations. A major difference between other versions of the tale and this one is that McKinley does not transform the Beast physically. She has commented that she always found the transformation of the Beast the most unrealistic element of the story. In Beauty she did transform the Beast, but she made sure that he at least showed some signs of aging from the length of his enchantment. Her solution in Rose Daughter, to leave the Beast as he is, is much more satisfying. If appearances are not important, then why should he have to become a handsome young prince to be a fit partner for Beauty? Some literal-minded readers may think that there are too many physiological reasons why Beauty cannot marry a Beast, but if one really wants to be literal, then one has to acknowledge that, short of major plastic surgery, extensive physical transformation is not possible. At the end, the Beast worries that Beauty might prefer a handsomer husband, but Beauty points to his special

gifts as a Beast and says that she loves him as he is. If he were to change, he would no longer be her Beast. There is also the possibility that the Beast's connection to the natural world is part of what makes him appealing. Beauty may plait his hair out of his face, but there will always be something a little wild about him.

Themes and Characters

Beauty and the Beast embody the dominant themes of this story: true beauty is found more in kindness and generosity of spirit than in appearance; appearances can be deceiving; love is less an explosion than a patient discovery of another person.

Beauty is at first overshadowed by her sisters: Jeweltongue is brilliant and witty; Lionheart is brave and outgoing. However, these traits inherited from their mother are mixed blessings. Readers can see between the lines that the girls' mother was a restless and unhappy woman. Jeweltongue has her cleverness, but she uses it to hurt people.

Lionheart has her mother's bravery, but she uses and destroys animals, just as her mother killed a young colt with her dangerous bet.

Beauty is quiet, yet she rescues Lionheart's victims and soothes those cut by Jeweltongue's sharpness. She seems to have nothing of her mother in her, yet she later learns from the Greenwitch that her mother had inherited an affinity for magic, and this, perhaps, is what Beauty has of her mother. Yet Beauty pursues none of the trappings or power associated with magic. Her "magic" is explained as easily as that of the children in The Secret Garden: she is gentle and patient, and she gives rather than taking. Nature does the rest of the work. We are told that Beauty is attractive, but her actions and her heart ultimately claim the most attention.

As the Greenwitch tells her, she has the Beast's heart, and the animals and other living things respond to her, because of what she is. To underscore this emphasis on inner beauty, both Jeweltongue and Lionheart become more attractive as they become kinder and more caring individuals.

The Beast is generally understood to illustrate the cliche that you cannot judge a book by its cover. In the beginning, he is hideous and frightening, so much so that Beauty can only bear to look at him because of the gift of the salamander (appropriately, all of those whom Beauty has helped or been kind to share some knowledge with her or give her things to help her make the transition to Rose Cottage—goodness has its rewards). The salamander offers Beauty "a small serenity"; when Beauty first meets the Beast, this serenity allows her to look at him. He is terrible not because he is a Beast, but because he embodies frightening contradictions: he should not exist, but he does.

The salamander's gift allows Beauty not only to look at the Beast, but to pity him, and from pity come to trust him. One of the reasons Beauty fears the Beast is the similarity of his palace to the place in her nightmares. After her mother dies, Beauty has a recurring nightmare that she is lost in a dark corridor, at the end of which waits a some sort of beast. However, when finally telling the Beast of her dream, she distinguishes between a beast and a monster. She still fears the monster, but not the Beast.

Ever so gradually, as Beauty sees the Beast's paintings, his love of the stars, and his loneliness, she stops seeing him as something unnatural. By the end of the novel, she cannot remember exactly when she learned to see him with eyes of love. This Beast does not transform into a handsome prince, as he is lovable as he is.

This tale is a reversal of the usual fairytale formula in which a young woman waits to be appreciated for her true worth. Beauty is the rescuer, and the Beast waits to be understood and rescued. In the original tale, the Beast's enchantment is punishment for his lack of charity; in Beauty, McKinley did not address this issue. However, in Rose Daughter, the Beast is guilty only of seeking out more knowledge than he ought; his initial transformation was effected by the Guardians of that knowledge. The enchantment resulted from the Beast protecting himself from a jealous sorcerer. In addition, the Beast does not tempt travelers with roses; it is the Greenwitch who does this, hoping to help the man who had once been her friend. The Beast's isolation is killing him, and he can do nothing about it.

Beauty is the only one who can save the Beast. When the last rose petal falls, and all seems lost, she is able to find her way to rescue the Beast because she had nurtured cuttings from his rose before she had even met him. This commitment to life is her strength. This moment also underscores the connection between the Beast, the roses, regeneration, and the themes of generosity and relationship. Beauty has the gift of making connections with other people because she is generous. Her patience with growing things extends to her relationships with others. These are the things the Beast has cut out of his life. He thinks at first only to take from Beauty, but the inner man betrays the Beast. Beauty teaches the Beast how to give. At cost to himself, he lets her go back to her family; paradoxically, this sacrifice is his salvation, for in talking to her sisters about the Beast, Beauty realizes she loves him.

Beauty does have some help in her reclamation of the Beast. The Greenwitch acts like the fairy godmother who softens the bad fairy's curse: she keeps some open spaces in the Beast's "dungeon," enough to ensure that he cannot close himself off entirely to life. There are important limits to the Greenwitch's power, though: as she tells Beauty, she can create situations for possibilities, but she cannot manipulate people. She appears to be a benevolent guardian: it is she who is able to comfort the child Beauty after nightmares, and who provides Rose Cottage as a refuge. Yet the Greenwitch is also a foil for Beauty. The Greenwitch too is a "giver," but the man she loves, the sorcerer Strix, is handsome on the outside, but beastly within. Instead of being able to give Strix something of real value, the Greenwitch can give him only a simulacrum, a woman made of roses, animated by the Greenwitch's heart. Strix destroys the simulacrum in a rage upon finding he has been tricked. Comparing the Greenwitch and Strix with Beauty and the Beast shows that self-sacrifice and generosity are not at all the same thing. This is a significant message, because it ensures that readers do not see Beauty as an example of selfless femininity.

The Greenwitch is involved in Beauty's life from the beginning. When the people of Longchance talk about the Greenwitch's adopted daughter, a girl who was "not quite right," who ran away and made a good marriage in the city, the reader will recognize

Beauty's mother. It is possible that she is a descendent of Strix; certainly her restless hungering is akin to his desire for more knowledge, more power. But Beauty's mother has more in common with the simulacrum. Both exude the scent of roses, and both are essentially hollow.

Beauty's mother is not so dramatic a figure as the wicked queens and stepmothers of other fairy tales, but she is a type of the selfish or unloving mother. Fortunately for Beauty, the Greenwitch ensures that Beauty has one loving memory of her mother.

The rest of Beauty's family are more fully realized as characters than they are in most versions of the story. There is another crucial difference as well: there are no jealous or spiteful sisters here. McKinley has noted in an interview with John Morgan that she wanted to show that Beauty is not coerced in her choices. Beauty's father transgresses when he takes the rose, but because the Greenwitch meant for someone to take it, his "theft" is less serious. It is Beauty's choice to honor the agreement with the Beast; she does not "pay" for her father's "crime." Her sisters do not sacrifice Beauty to their needs, either; they only want Beauty to be happy. In the end they welcome the Beast because Beauty loves him. The sisters also illustrate the theme of not judging by appearance. Both have faults in the beginning, and they seem suitably matched with the shallow Duke of Dauntless and the Baron of Grandiloquence. Yet Lionheart and Jeweltongue have more in them. Lionheart learns that bravery does not entail being hard, and Jeweltongue learns that wit need not hurt. Both contribute their special skills to supporting the family, and both find love in unexpected places, Jeweltongue with a baker, and Lionheart with the second son of the local gentry.

Finally, as is often the case in McKinley's fiction, there is a special place for animals, and we learn much about characters by their interactions with animals. Lionheart and Aubrey Trueword are brought together by their love of and skill with horses. The Beast's isolation is lightened by the presence of Four-paws the cat, a reminder of the Beast's humanity. A Beast with a pet cat is not such a fearsome creature. Beauty also has close relations with animals. She uses her pet dog Tea-cosy as a reminder that sometimes one can see better with other senses than sight. As well, the unicorns allow Beauty to visit them and to gather manure to feed the Beast's starving roses. In the end, the menacing figures that threaten as Beauty breaks the enchantment are found to be only simple, innocent animals and insects. The use of animal figures also underscores the need to look beneath appearances, as well as reminding readers that kindness is always rewarded.

Topics for Discussion

1. Think about the rose as a symbol. How many meanings are tied to roses in this novel?

2. If you know older versions of this story, what is the impact of seeing details changed in this version?

3. Why does Beauty have her nightmare?

Is it a warning? What does it mean that the Greenwitch comforts her as a child?

4. What is the role of Jeweltongue and Lionheart in the novel? Are they foils for Beauty? Why do we see their love stories as well?

5. Is Beauty's father to blame for sending her to the Beast? Why does he take the rose? Is Beauty herself at fault? Or is there a greater destiny at work?

6. Why did the Beast isolate himself after being punished by the Guardians? Is he partially responsible for his own "enchantment"?

7. What has kept the Beast's humanity alive? Is it his own doing?

8. Is the curse really a curse? Why might it not be a curse?

9. How does the story of Strix, the Greenwitch, and the Beast affect how we see the Beast?

10. Why is Beauty's mother so unhappy?

Why must she die in the beginning of the story?

11. Why does Beauty decide that she and the Beast will live in Longchance, and that the Beast must not change? Why does McKinley give Beauty all the power of the choice?

12. How does McKinley make use of the idea of magic? Why did she set this story in a world in which magic exists?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Research different symbolic meanings attached to the rose. How do these apply to McKinley's use of the rose?

2. Read Madame le Prince de Beaumont's version of the story, then compare it to McKinley's (or compare Rose Daughter to McKinley's earlier version,Beauty).

3. How do roses grow? Why would a study of rose gardening teach something about this novel?

4. Compare McKinley's novel to the Disney film Beauty and the Beast. Which themes do they have in common? Are there significant differences?

5. Research the idea of the animal-bridegroom. What do the stories about this figure have in common? Where do these stories come from?

6. Find a copy of the words to "Barbara Allen." How does this ballad relate to themes in Rose Daughter?

7. People in the book talk about folk tales.

What is a folk tale? Why are folk tales important in this novel?

For Further Reference

Adams, Laura. Review of Rose Daughter.

Horn Book 73.4 (1997): 574-75. Mixed review of Rose Daughter, mostly positive, about character development and plotting.

De Lint, Charles. Review of Rose Daughter.

Fantasy and Science Fiction 94.4 (1998): 36-7. Positive review that compares Rose Daughter and Beauty. Also discusses how the book came to be written.

"McKinley, (Jennifer Carolyn) Robin." In Something about the Author, vol. 89. Detroit: Gale, 1997. One of the more up-to-date biographies available.

McKinley, Robin. "Newbery Medal Acceptance." Horn Book 61.4 (1985): 395-405.

Good discussion of McKinley's interest in creating strong female heroines.

Sanders, Lynn Moss. "'Girls Who Do Things': The Protagonists of Robin McKinley's Fantasy Fiction." ALAN Review 24.1 (1996): 38-42. A good discussion of traits shared by McKinley's heroines.

Related Titles/Adaptations

Readers who have not read McKinley's Beauty may want to see how she changed her approach to the story over the two decades between the books. Rose Daughter is a more mature work. Another sophisticated version of the "Beauty and the Beast" story is Sheri Tepper's Beauty.

McKinley continues to revise fairy tales with her newest novel, Spindle's End, which tackles the story of "Sleeping Beauty." There are a number of excellent novels based on fairy tales. Patricia McKillip's Winter Rose retells the story of "Tarn Lin." Readers who enjoyed McKinley's lush descriptions of gardens will enjoy the atmosphere created in this story of Rois Melior, a girl who loves the woods and who fights to save the man she loves from his fairy captor. Neil Gaiman's Stardust is not based on a particular fairy tale, but it is nonetheless a lovely fairy tale finding love in unexpected places. Some of the best revisionist fairy tales are found in short fiction. See, for instance, Don't Bet on the Prince, edited by Jack Zipes, or the Snow White and Blood Red series edited by Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow (the latter are probably suited to a more mature audience).

Although it is not an adaptation of Rose Daughter, the Disney film Beauty and the Beast should be mentioned, as it is probably the most popular version of the story current in our culture. McKinley herself is not particularly fond of the Disney version, and as with other Disney fairy tales, this one somewhat oversimplifies the themes. Nonetheless, there are interesting comparisons to be made between the two.

Related Web Sites

Joseph, Michael. "In Search of Cupid and Psyche: Myth and Legend in Children's Literature." http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/spedal/mjoseph/chapter6.html. A website set up to support a university course on versions of "Beauty and the Beast." Chapter 6 is on Rose Daughter. Some useful links are included.

"Robin McKinley's Official Home Page."

http://www.sff.net/people/robin-mckinley/. An excellent site with good links. Of particular interest are McKinley's essay "The Story Behind Rose Daughter" and the interview by John Morgan, in which McKinley discusses further the writing of the novel.

Sullivan, Damien R. "Official Robin McKinley Home Page." http://ofb.net/~damien/mckinley/. Despite the title, McKinley is not affiliated with this site. The archives have some interesting discussions of McKinley's work by fans.

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