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“Some Things Grew No Less With Time:”

Tracing ATU 510B from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of English

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in English

by

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May 2017

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ABSTRACT

“Some Things Grew No Less With Time:”

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This thesis provides a comparative analysis of seven different variants of the fairy tale commonly known as “Donkeyskin,” classified in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther folktale motif index as ATU 510B. By comparing so many different iterations of one fairy tale, it is easier to recognize the inherent attitudes concerning women and their place in society contained in this tale.

Additionally, reading multiple variants from different centuries lends a perspective on the way that these attitudes changed over the centuries. Each of the thirteenth century texts considered end with their heroines trapped in loveless marriages, much like the seventeenth-century fairy tale, “Donkeyskin,” their direct literary descendant. The nineteenth century texts then present death or marriage as the alternatives for women, while the twentieth century brings the first instance of a heroine choosing for herself. This comparison allows the reader to learn not only what was considered a “happy ending” at the time, but also to gain a better understanding of the means by which a woman could gain agency.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The field of fairy tale studies began to gain recognition as an area of serious academic discourse in 1976 with the publication of Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*. Bettelheim's work started a trend that continues today of mainly approaching fairy tales from a psychoanalytic critical perspective. Since then, scholars such as Jack Zipes, Maria Tatar, and Marina Warner have continued striving to have fairy tale studies recognized as a genuine academic field. Their attempts have been complicated by the frequent association of fairy tales with children's literature and Disney adaptations. However, this field shares far stronger ties with comparative literature and folklore than with children's literature. Unfortunately, as fairy tale studies is still seen as a somewhat indulgent field of study, most academic writing on the subject has been in the same vein: either a defense of the fairy tale as an important genre, or psychoanalytic readings of individual tales. Although a great deal of time has been devoted to examinations of tale types by folklorists including Carl Lindahl, Linda Degh, and Leonard Roberts, rarely are tale types studied across time and cultures by scholars in the field of fairy tale studies. Additionally, the fields of folklore and fairy tale studies rarely overlap. Folklorists often work with oral variants of a tale, while those who work in fairy tale studies compare literary renditions of the tales, which leads to a lack of cooperative research between these fields of study. While the rise of such academic imprints as the Wayne State University Fairy Tale Studies series have improved publishing opportunities for fairy tale scholars, there is still a great amount of work to be done in the analysis of individual tales and their significance.

This project is intended to fill the gap in fairy tale criticism by providing a detailed analysis of a fairy tale¹ in each of its literary forms, from a thirteenth-century medieval romance to a twentieth-century fantasy novel. The project focuses on ATU 510B, the darker sub-type of “Cinderella” known as “Donkeyskin” or “All Fur” and its evolution from thirteenth-century romances to the contemporary retelling *Deerskin*. ATU 510B is the story of a young woman who, following the death of her mother, is forced to flee her home in disguise to escape an incestuous marriage with her father. The endings of this tale vary; some conclude with the death of the heroine, others end with her marriage. However, until the twentieth century, each variant of this tale features strong patriarchal overtones in its ending. This common thread of marriage or death unites the variations of this story across seven centuries, revealing a dark side to the psyche of each culture where it was collected. Such a comprehensive reading is more beneficial than a study of only one variant of the tale, because each version of the story encapsulates a period of time and explores the cultural perspective on women at that time. This allows the reader to learn not only what was considered a “happy ending” at the time, but also to gain a better understanding of the cultural views of the effects of trauma on women, and the means by which a woman could gain agency.

In addition to this introduction and a conclusion, the project includes three chapters, each of which explores texts from a certain period in comparison to ATU 510B. Each of the chapters takes its title from one of the texts discussed within that chapter, and the titles are meant to serve as a highlight to the transitions between each time period discussed. The second chapter’s title is taken from *Yde et Olive*, when King Florent states his intention to marry his daughter. The third chapter’s title is drawn from Mary Shelley’s *Mathilda*, from the moment when Mathilda

¹ These stories are referred to by folklorists as *märchen* or wonder tales. The term “fairy tale” is widely accepted by experts in the field of fairy tale studies, such as Jack Zipes and Marina Warner, and has been used here to avoid confusion.

recognizes the lust in her father's eyes. The fourth chapter's title is taken from *Deerskin*, when Princess Lissar confronts her father and condemns his incestuous desire. In this way, the titles echo the content of the chapters: in the first, the daughters mainly remain silent in the face of their fate; in the second, the daughter realizes what is happening, but still feels that she cannot act against her fate; in the final chapter, the daughter finds the strength to speak openly against her father and to expose the way that he has harmed her.

The second chapter deconstructs Charles Perrault's "Donkeyskin" (the oldest true ATU 510B fairy tale) into three major motifs: the threat of incest, flight from the father, and disguise. These motifs are then identified in the medieval analogues *La Manekine*, *Yde et Olive*, and *Guillaume de Palerne*. By examining these early literary antecedents, "Donkeyskin" can be recognized as a composite work, made up of elements gleaned from multiple earlier texts. While the animal disguise motif featured in "Donkeyskin" may be found in texts as old as *The Odyssey* (Homer book XIV, lines 446-56), scholars have made little headway in connecting it to medieval texts that may have influenced Perrault. Previously, "Donkeyskin" has been thought to be influenced by texts including *The Life of Saint Dymphna* and *La Manekine*, but there has not been a complete study of the motifs that make up "Donkeyskin" in order to find their predecessors.

The third chapter focuses on Mary Shelley's nineteenth-century novella *Mathilda*, analyzing the text as a variation on "All Fur." When the misogynistic plot of the Grimms' fairy tale is used as a framework for reading Shelley's first-person novella, it reveals the contrast between the idyllic, patriarchal stories told by nineteenth-century men and the deeply traumatized, dystopian versions of the same stories told by women. To this end, Mary Shelley's *Mathilda* can be read as a much darker variation of "All Fur," one in which the heroine—like the

princess in the fairy tale—creates a new identity for herself through disguise, but this young woman ultimately finds herself trapped in that identity. Scarred by mental illness, Mathilda adopts masculine agency in order to escape the patriarchal system, then finds herself caught in the hybrid identity she has created. In *Mathilda*, a stronger focus is placed on the effects of abandonment and incestuous lust on the heroine, with the result being a complex portrayal of mental illness. Mental illness is frequently used as a plot device in Gothic novels, with specific disorders assigned by sex—hysteria being a “female disorder” and paranoia being a “male disorder”—a system which is upended by Mathilda. Unlike the other heroines of ATU 510B, the gender-bending disguise she adopts is less physical than mental. However, despite *Mathilda* being a more realistic, feminist portrayal of the effects of patriarchy, the heroine faces inevitable death as the result of her refusal to marry or to confine herself to prescribed societal standards.

The fourth chapter is a reading of Robin McKinley’s *Deerskin*, a twentieth-century retelling of “Donkeyskin,” set in a feudal fantasy world. The chapter considers the changes made to the nature of this tale by adapting it as a novel, particularly the greater role of the heroine’s parents, who essentially function as embodiments of the patriarchy and the feminine ideal. In a sort of return to the medieval romance roots of ATU 510B, the novel begins by telling the love story of Princess Lissar’s parents, similar to the way *Yde et Olive* is part of a cycle of medieval romances that begins not with Yde’s story, but with that of her parents. This adaptation also reintroduces the violence that was omitted from each variant since *Apollonius of Tyre*: in *Deerskin*, Lissar is raped by her father. While this may seem like violence for its own sake, McKinley’s text provides a compassionate portrayal of the psychological trauma the princess endures as a result of her father’s abuse. However, this text does not function like a more violent version of *Mathilda*, leaving the princess doomed to misery. Instead, the story offers, again, a

happy ending, similar to that of the original tale. However, the ending of *Deerskin* is not a marriage for the sake of patriarchal norms. Rather, for the first time, the happy ending is wholly dependent on the heroine's decision, giving her something no other ATU 510B heroine has ever had: a choice.

The evolution of ATU 510B's ending from the obligatory marriage of the heroine to the spouse who discovers her hidden identity to her consensual marriage to the man she loves reveals seven centuries of thought about the place of women in society. The object of this project is to advance the field of fairy tale studies, while also providing also providing valuable insights into the importance of the progression of ATU 510B from the medieval era to today.

CHAPTER 2

“I WILL HAVE HER FOR THE LOVE OF HER MOTHER.”

MEDIEVAL ANALOGUES OF ATU 510B

“Once upon a time there lived a king who was the most powerful ruler on earth.”

Charles Perrault, “Donkeyskin”

The thirteenth century was filled with fantastical stories of kings and queens, which were known in France as *romans*. While such stories were present in other countries, the genre flourished particularly in France. These medieval stories were influenced by oral folktales, and later contributed to the creation of literary fairy tales, such as those penned by Charles Perrault in the seventeenth century. While there has been a great deal of scholarship regarding the medieval stories of daughters fleeing the threat of incest in disguise, such as Elizabeth Archibald’s *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, these stories are rarely looked at in comparison to Perrault’s “Donkeyskin,” the fairy tale that is their clear literary descendant.

As a subtype of “Cinderella,”² the fairy tale “Donkeyskin” is usually overshadowed by its more presentable variant. “Donkeyskin” is often hidden away, much like its heroine, kept out of all but scholarly editions of fairy tales. But in the seventeenth century, Charles Perrault took special delight in telling this tale (Warner 321), and his literary edition of the story is where the majority of research starts. “Donkeyskin” begins with a king and queen who have no heir except a daughter. When the queen discovers she is dying, she requires her husband to swear that he will never marry again unless his next wife is as beautiful as she had been. Unfortunately, this promise has horrific consequences when the king recognizes his daughter’s resemblance to her dead mother. When her father determines to marry her, the princess turns to her fairy godmother for help. Her godmother advises her to demand an impossible dowry: three dresses, one the

² In the Aarne-Thompson-Uther folktale motif index, “Cinderella” is ATU 510A; “Donkeyskin” is ATU 510B.

colors of the four seasons, one as shining as the moon, and one as brilliant as the sun. When the king produces the dowry, the princess demands the hide of his prized donkey that defecates gold. When even this is given to her, she dons the donkey skin as a disguise and escapes. Eventually, she is caught wearing one of her beautiful dresses by the prince of the nation to which she has fled and he makes her his bride (Perrault 214-28). While the fairy tale is the most common iteration of the story, the roots of this tale can be traced back five centuries earlier than Perrault. This chapter contends that—when reduced to its major motifs—“Donkeyskin” can be clearly seen as a composite of various medieval texts.

Although Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson classified the ATU 510B tale type as “The Dress of Gold, Silver, and of the Stars” (Johnson-Olin), Hans Uther correctly revised the name of the type to “Peau d’Asne” or “Donkeyskin” (295). The revision of the type name is important to note because it shifts the focus away from the most “Cinderella”-like aspect of the story (the three balls where the heroine wears three beautiful dresses) and points directly to the most unique, non-“Cinderella” motif in this story: the disguise. However, focusing on one motif in this fairy tale is far too reductive, as “Donkeyskin” can be broken down into three essential motifs that make up the complete version of the text: the threat of incest, flight from the father, and disguise (particularly disguise in animal skins). Each of these motifs can be found in medieval texts, though rarely are all of them found together,³ which implies that “Donkeyskin” itself is likely a synthesis of the various elements found in narratives such as *La Manekine*, *Yde et Olive*, and *Guillaume de Palerne*.

La Manekine, the oldest of the texts discussed here, was composed by Philippe de Remi Beaumanoir in the second quarter of the thirteenth century (Sargent-Bauer 86). Philippe’s text

³ While many medieval heroines disguise themselves to flee incest, none of them wear an animal skin for disguise. Juliana Dresvina has suggested that Saint Dymphna, who fled her father disguised as a *jongleur*, likely wore a costume complete with ass’s ears, but the connection is tenuous (93).

was also translated into German around 1240, an edition that was heavily edited by the translator, Rudolph von Ems (86, 89). This hints at the possibility that Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm may have had access to *La Manekine* as inspiration for their fairy tale “The Maiden Without Hands,” but Sargent-Bauer contends that “Philippe’s works were not widely distributed, then or subsequently” (88). While *Yde et Olive* is found in fourteenth-century French manuscripts, according to Barbara Brewka the *romans* was “probably composed in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, perhaps toward the earlier part of that period” (127). Unlike Philippe, who places his own name at the beginning of his manuscript, the composer of *Yde et Olive* is unknown. Brewka also names only one other edition of the text besides the medieval manuscripts and her own annotated version: a German translation published in 1888 by Max Schweingel (127-28). The final text, *Guillaume de Palerne*, also written in the thirteenth century, was the work of another anonymous poet (Sconduto 2). In addition to the original manuscript, Leslie Sconduto names several other editions of *Guillaume*, including “four editions of a Middle French reworking by Pierre Durand [that] were published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (2). The fact that *Guillaume* was going through new editions at this time is of particular interest, as that places the text in the same period as Perrault’s works. In addition, Sconduto mentions the existence of English prose editions of the story dating back to the sixteenth century and three Middle English verse adaptations, making *Guillaume* the most popular and widely distributed of the source texts for “Donkeyskin.” The idea of Perrault borrowing elements of medieval texts builds on Alicia Montoya’s explanation of the medieval roots of fairy tales: “during the first decade of fairy tale production, the 1690s, fully half of the fairy tales published drew on folkloric motifs that ultimately went back to medieval tales” (116).

The threat of incest motif is likely the most productive starting point for studying the origins of “Donkeyskin,” because it can be found in the majority of ATU 510B analogues. In her book *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, Elizabeth Archibald states that “Medieval incest stories are so numerous that it is impossible even to mention them all, let alone discuss them all in detail” (2). Unfortunately, Archibald offers no explanation for the proliferation of the incest motif. But these early stories, including *Apollonius of Tyre*, the *Life of Saint Dymphna*, and the two variants discussed here, *La Manekine* and *Yde et Olive*, clearly lay the foundations for “Donkeyskin,” the earliest of the ATU 510B fairy tales.⁴

One of the oldest medieval analogues to “Donkeyskin,” *La Manekine* concerns a father’s desire to marry his daughter, although the text goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the king is not wholly to blame for his actions. The king and queen of this variant are happy together for ten years, but their union has resulted only in the birth of a daughter, the princess Joie (Joy) (Philippe lines 63-8).⁵ When death comes for the queen, she begs that her husband promise he will not marry again, except upon one condition:

“Bien vous otroi: se vous avoir
Poés femme de mon sanlant,
Qu’a li vous alés assanlant;
Et des autres bien vous gardés
Se vous mon couvenant gardés”

⁴ Marina Warner identifies Giambattista Basile’s “L’Orsa,” (“The She Bear”) as the earliest ATU 510B fairy tale (320). However, the story features a heroine with a magical disguise that transforms her into a bear. This shape-shifting disguise sets Basile’s princess apart from the others, who undergo less radical physical transformations.

⁵ Throughout this chapter, I refer to Barbara Sargent-Bauer’s face-to-face translation of *La Manekine*. All translations from the French are hers.

[“I concede this to you: / if you can have a wife who resembles me, / that you form a union with her, / and that you keep away from the others / if you are to keep your promise to me.”] (ll. 138-44)

With the queen’s stipulation about her husband’s remarriage, this text makes its first attempt to relieve the king of any guilt—a decision that is echoed in “Donkeyskin.” In fact, Perrault’s story explicitly condemns the queen for her supposed conniving, stating: “Confidence in her own qualities convinced the queen that the promise, cunningly extracted, was as good as an oath to never marry” (Perrault 215).⁶ But *La Manekine* grants another motivation to the queen. She did not extract this oath merely to please her own vanity; she wishes also to secure her own lineage, for the king must additionally swear that Joie will succeed him on the throne if he does not remarry and produce a male heir. This element was effaced in Perrault’s fairy tale, which presents the reader with an arrogant queen who is merely seeking to keep her husband in her power, even after her death.

But in Philippe’s story, the king’s counselors will not hear of Joie succeeding her father as queen and whisper amongst themselves: “Et nonporquant en briquetoise / Ert li roialmes de Hongrie / Se feme l’avoit en baille” [“Nevertheless the kingdom of Hungary / Will be in peril / If a woman had it in her power”] (ll. 212-14).⁷ Clearly, the counselors do not approve of the queen’s power play and will not accept Joie as the royal heir. Therefore, they plead with the king to marry again, but he holds firm to his promise (ll. 221-36). So a yearlong quest is undertaken to the four corners of the earth in search of the queen’s equal, but the messengers return hopeless.

⁶ All references are from Maria Tatar’s translation of Perrault in *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*.

⁷ This was in keeping with Salic law (instituted by the Salian Franks and kept also in Germany), which allowed women to inherit any material possessions, with the exclusion of Frankish land (Drew 44-5). This meant that women were permitted to inherit family property, but not land that belonged to the kingdom. Therefore, a woman could not be the heir to the throne. While Philippe’s story takes place in Hungary, it is likely he would have referred to familiar laws of France.

One of the barons, despairing at the king's lack of a son, happens to cast his eye on the princess Joie and realizes her strong resemblance to her mother. For the first time, Joie has been perceived as a sexual being, the object of the male gaze. The baron, fearing that their kingdom will come to ruin under the rule of a queen, thinks nothing of proposing Joie as the only possible bride for her father. Arguing that there is no other woman as beautiful as the dead queen, this baron manages to persuade the entire court and all of the clergy to support his arguments (ll. 300-40). The king at first hesitates, but when his eye is drawn to Joie, he no longer wants to resist the match, especially with the blessing and even encouragement of all of the clergy and nobility (ll. 431-52). This stands in sharp contrast to "Donkeyskin," where the king's mourning is done quickly and, "After a few months the king wanted to go ahead and choose a new wife. But that was not an easy matter. He had to keep his promise . . . [but] only his own daughter was more beautiful" (Perrault 215). There is a significant difference between the roles of each king. In *La Manekine*, the king mourns for at least a year, for that is how long the counselors search for his new bride, and he does not look to his daughter until he is told that there is no other choice. It is initially his dead wife and his wicked counselors who are to blame for Princess Joie's fate.

Perrault changes this completely with his condemnation of the dead queen and by presenting the king's own lust as the reason for the marriage. "Donkeyskin" states that, "Only [the king's] daughter was more beautiful, and she even possessed some qualities that his dead wife had lacked. The king himself noticed this and, burning with a desire that drove him mad, he took it into his head that she should marry him" (Perrault 215-16). While this may be rightfully compared with the king's musings in *La Manekine*, the two are fundamentally different.

Philippe's king ponders,

"Pour fol me puis tenir

Quant a çou ne doi avenir
Que mes fols cuers aime et covoite
.
.
.
.
“Je sai bien que cele est ma fille
Dont li pensers si fort m’escille.
En cel pensé, qui n’est pas gens,
M’ont mis mi baron et mes gens;
Si m’ont en tel folie empaint
Dont li miens cuers souspire et plaint.
Et pour quoi en souspire gié?”

[“I may well think myself a fool / Since I am not to gain / What my foolish heart loves and desires / / I well know that this girl is my daughter, / The thought of whom torments me so. / In this way of thinking, which is not noble, / I have been put by my barons and my people; / They have pushed me into such a folly, / For which my heart sighs and laments. / And why do I sigh about it?”] (Philippe II. 433-47)

Perrault’s king lusts after his daughter and manages to find a “philosopher” who agrees that the king should be permitted to marry his daughter (216), but Philippe’s text presents the king as a poor man caught in a trap set by his dead queen, his counselors, and his own heart. This king reluctantly admits that he loves his daughter in a way “which is not noble,” but as he has the encouragement of all of his trusted advisors and the clergy, he decides to give in to his base desire (Philippe II. 444-54, 520-42). This is the fundamental difference between the two kings: while Perrault makes a slight excuse for the king on account of his “desire which drove him

mad” (215), Philippe sets up his king as a truly tragic figure who could almost rival Oedipus, whose actions are never fully his own.

In contrast, *Yde et Olive* takes several steps to ensure the king receives all of the blame for his horrific actions.⁸ This text begins with several stanzas concerning the heroine’s parents. The reader is presented with the beautiful romance of King Florent and Queen Clarisse, who “A grant deduit ont lor vie gardee” [“have conducted their lives well”] (*Yde* line 6276). And because of their wise and good conduct, the kingdom is happy. But the joy does not last. “Li rois Florent engroissa s’espousee” (“King Florent has made his wife big with child”), the text reads (l. 6277), and their happiness is ended. Queen Clarisse fears her pregnancy will claim her life, and often prays that Saint Mary will spare her, but in the end, “Qu’ele en morut, ce fu griés destinee” [“She dies, as was destined”] (l. 6290). But a child is born of their great love: a daughter, the Princess Yde.⁹ Still, the birth of his daughter cannot console the king. Florent is so caught up in mourning his beloved wife that his chief counselor, Sorbarres, pleads with him to stop, asking, “bons rois, pour la vertu nommee, / Vous volés vous ocire par criée?” (“Good king, in the name of virtue, / Do you want to kill yourself crying?” (ll. 6316-17) The king’s grief is nearly equaled by that of his people, who mourn Clarisse mightily. This immediately creates contrasts with *La Manekine* and “Donkeyskin.” Whereas both Philippe and Perrault write of a king whose wife dies when his daughter, the princess, is nearly of marriageable age, *Yde et Olive*’s king is left widowed upon the birth of his daughter. There is also no promise made to Queen Clarisse concerning Florent’s remarriage, which means that his failure to remarry is only on account of his great grief at losing Clarisse. This also means that everything that transpires as a result is solely the fault of the king.

⁸ The text used here is Barbara Anne Brewka’s edition of *Yde et Olive*. All translations from the French were completed by Dr. Ana Grinberg.

⁹ The princess is alternatively called Ydain in the text, for the sake of rhyme.

For seven years, King Florent is disconsolate, “et nuit et jour pour sa femme souspire” [“and night and day, for his wife, he sighs”] (*Yde* l. 6352). But Princess Yde is growing up into a beautiful, accomplished young woman, “ele aprent tant, bien sot son sautier lire / Et en rommans et en latin escrire. / / A xiiij ans fu si bele meschine” [“who learns so much that well she can read her Psalter / And in French and Latin writes / / By fourteen, she was such a beautiful girl”] (ll. 6355-58). Unfortunately, it is her beauty that will prove Yde’s undoing. Her father, who has mourned his beloved Clarisse for the fourteen years since his daughter’s birth, has turned away all of Yde’s suitors, insisting that “ains l’avera pour lui a compaignie” [“he will have her to keep him company”] (*Yde* l. 6365), which seems an innocent decision. The court thinks nothing of this announcement, until the king tells them that he will marry again. This scene takes place before the entire court, all of whom sexualize Yde when she enters and is subjected for the first time to the male gaze.

The news that the king is to remarry makes the kingdom joyous at first, but the rejoicing turns to horror when the king proclaims,

Maint haut homme ont ma fille demandee;

Jou ne sai homme u mix fust mariee:

Dedens .j. mois l’averai espouzee;

Jou le prendrai pour l’amour de sa mere.

[“Many men of rank have requested my daughter / I don’t know of a better man to marry her / Within a month, she will marry me / I will have her for the love of her mother.”]

(*Yde* ll. 6395-98)

The king’s announcement throws his court into chaos, because no one had suspected the king’s plan. Whereas Philippe’s king had to be persuaded to consider replacing his dead wife with his

daughter, King Florent shocks his entire court by announcing his mad intentions. Afterward, he also faces the admonishment of his chief counselor, Sorbarres, who demands to know,

“Qu’est ce que tu dis, leres?

Doit dont ta fille estre a toi mariée?

A ceste loi que Dix nous a donnee,

Dedens infer sera t’ame dampnee”

[“What is this that you say, scoundrel? / That your daughter has to be married to you? /

According to the law that God has given us, / Your soul will be damned in hell.”] (*Yde* ll.

6399-402)

This, too, sharply contrasts with the situation in *La Manekine*. King Florent’s closest friends and advisors turn on him following his crazed announcement, again emphasizing the king’s own blame in the matter. “Donkeyskin,” surprisingly, contains no mention of how the court responds to their king’s desire to marry his daughter. Therefore, *Yde et Olive* is the text in which the king is most strongly condemned and is solely to blame for his incestuous desires.

The next element of “Donkeyskin” found in medieval narratives is the flight from the father motif. This begins with the princess’s reaction to her father’s desire. In “Donkeyskin,” the reader is told that “the young princess, saddened by this kind of love, grieved and wept day and night. With a heart aching from a thousand sorrows, the princess went to find her godmother” (Perrault 216). The story then begins to feature Perrault’s embellishments, as the fairy godmother devises a plan to help the princess escape (217-18). While Elizabeth Archibald identifies this trope as “the Flight from the Incestuous Father” (149), incest is not always the motivating factor for the flight, as in *Guillaume de Palerne*, a story that includes both the flight from the father and

the disguise motifs, but lacks incest. The texts that are integral to this discussion of the flight from the father are *La Manekine*, *Yde et Olive*, and *Guillaume de Palerne*.

In *La Manekine*, Princess Joie is resourceful enough to send a young nobleman to spy on her father and his counselors for her. When the young man reports to her that the unspeakable wedding is being planned, Joie reacts more strongly than Perrault's princess (Philippe I. 654-55).

The text states,

Quant ele [l]'ot, en tel offroi

Est, qu'ele ne set qu'ele face.

En petit d'eure fu sa faice

Des larmes de ses iex couverte.

Or est ele seüre et certe:

Se ele ne troeve occoison,

Petit li vourra sa raison

[“When she hears this, she is in / Such terror that she does not know what to do. / In no time, her face / Was covered with tears. / Now she is sure and certain of this: / If she does not find a way out, / Her reasoning will be worth little to her.”] (l. 656-661)

The next step of Joie's story is different from the other iterations discussed here, but is itself a common motif in medieval texts. The princess chooses to mutilate herself in order to escape her father—a theme that is connected to other ATU 510B analogues. As Nancy Black explains, “although Philippe's heroine is named Joy, not Constance, the tale follows the pattern of the secularized stories written a century or so later in England by Trevet, Gower, and Chaucer, who name their heroine either Constance or its variant Custance” (38).¹⁰ Black also contends that *La Manekine* is the earliest example of the “Accused Queen” motif that would lead to the Constance

¹⁰ This story is partially retold in Geoffrey Chaucer's “The Man of Law's Tale,” which omits the incest motif.

cycle of tales. More importantly, this story serves as one of the predecessors to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairy tale "The Maiden Without Hands," in which the incest motif is curiously suppressed (Grimm 109-113). Marina Warner suggests that "the Grimms erased the motive of the father's unlawful love from their source, because they simply could not bear it; they were too squeamish for the motive, though not the mutilation itself" (348). However, this assumption is contradicted by the Grimms' inclusion of "Allerleirauh" ("All Fur"), a clear ATU 510B tale, complete with the incest motif.¹¹ Therefore, the Grimms' reason for purging the mention of incest from "The Maiden Without Hands" remains a mystery.

Princess Joie's flight in *La Manekine* is unique, as the princess does not undertake the journey of her own volition. After she has mutilated herself so that her father may not carry out his wish to marry her, the princess is locked away, awaiting execution. Her father has declared that she must be burned alive. But the king's seneschal and the jailer take pity on Joie and set her adrift in a boat without mast, oars, or rudder, entrusting her to the hands of God. They create an effigy to be burned in her stead (Philippe II. 879-1068).¹² It may be argued that Joie's being sent away by those who pity her parallels the way in which Perrault's heroine is helped by her fairy godmother, but the agency of the two women is very different in each story. Joie has the presence of mind and strength of will to remove her own hand in order to prevent marrying her father. When that fails, she is left without recourse. Peau d'Ane, as the princess is called in "Donkeyskin," must instead rely on her godmother's suggestions in order to avoid marrying her father, but when the time comes to leave, she goes alone, with no rudderless boat to carry her to wherever God wills.

¹¹ See Chapter Three for an analysis of "All Fur."

¹² Effigies were frequently burned in place of accused heretics, especially at the height of the Spanish Inquisition during the late medieval period and early modernity.

The idea of the princess being helped by the kindness of others is effaced in *Yde et Olive*, as the heroine must make the decision and the preparations to leave on her own. Unlike Joie, Princess Yde does not have the luxury of learning her father's plan from someone else. Instead, her father tells her of his intentions before the entire court. Calling her before him, King Florent tells Yde,

“Ma bele fille

. . . .

Puis que perdi vo mere, ne fui lies,

Mais par voc ors iere resleeciés:

Mix ressablés vostre mere au vis fier

Que riens qui fust onques desous le ciel;

Pour son samblant ai jou voc ors plus cier,

Si vous prendrai a per et a moullier.”

[“My dear daughter / . . . / After I lost your mother, I never remarried / But in your body, I found joy again / Well you resemble your mother . . . / For her face I love more your body / I will have you as father and as wife.”] (*Yde* ll. 6526-33)

Upon hearing this, Yde does something quite different from the heroines thus far: she rebukes her father, in the sight of his entire court. The text states, “Cele l’entent, si embroncha son cief. / ‘Peres,’ fait elle, ‘as tu le sens cangiét? / Plus chou ne dites, car trop est grans peciés!’” [“This she hears and covers her face. / ‘Father,’ says she, ‘have you lost your senses? / Say nothing else, because these are grievous sins’”] (*Yde* l. 6534-6536). Thus, Yde is the first of these heroines to be given a voice to confront her father, and she is unafraid to state her opposition to the king’s

wishes, accusing him of having “lost [his] senses” before all of his nobles, just as he has made her a public spectacle by announcing his intention to marry her before the whole court.

Upon returning to her chambers, Yde, like Peau d’Ane and Joie, gives vent to her emotions, as the text expresses,

La fille au roi est forment esmarie;

Toute nuit pleure, si s’apelle caitive:

“Que devenirai? Pour coi fui ainc nasquie?

Se li miens peres a o moi compaignie,

L’ame de moi en iert pour voir traïe.

Jou m’en fuirai, chi n’arresterai mie”

[“The daughter of the king is sorely dismayed; / Cries all night, she calls herself a doomed captive: / ‘What will happen? Why was I born? / If my father has my company,¹³ my soul will be betrayed. / I will flee, they will not constrain me.”] (*Yde* ll. 6547-552)

With these few lines, Yde shows herself to have the same power of will that gave Joie the strength to mutilate herself in order to escape her father. However, Yde’s plan proves to be more successful, as she chooses, like Peau d’Ane, to immediately flee from her father. But there is no fairy godmother or kind seneschal to advise or aid Princess Yde. Her character can be seen clearly in her statement, “I will flee, they will not constrain me.” Although she fears resistance, she is determined to escape in spite of the consequences she may face.

Having made her decision, Yde awaits the ideal moment to disappear, which comes on the very day set for her wedding to her father. The king has sent his intended bride to bathe in preparation for the wedding ceremony, but while Yde is bathing, her father’s old friend, Desiier de Pavie, arrives in the city. With the court distracted by receiving the king’s friend, Yde

¹³ This term implies sexual intercourse.

disguises herself and escapes to the woods, even taking her father's prized warhorse with her, echoing Peau d'Ane's act of carrying away the skin of her father's prized donkey. Though she must make each of her decisions unassisted, Yde proves resourceful enough to flee all alone from the grasp of her father. This sets her apart from the other heroines discussed thus far, as she manages to make her escape without the intervention of others. Although Joie manages to subvert her father's wish to marry her, she patiently waits the execution she seems to believe she deserves. Without the seneschal and the jailer's assistance, she would not have lived. Likewise, Peau d'Ane is wholly dependent on the guidance of her fairy godmother, who counsels her on how best to stall the wedding, how to disguise herself, and when to flee.

Guillaume de Palerne is somewhat of an oddity in the midst of these texts, as Princess Melior faces no threat of incest from her father. Instead, she chooses to flee from the marriage her father has arranged for her. She has been pledged to the ruler of Greece, but she is very much in love with her father's retainer, Guillaume. In spite of Guillaume's respected status in the court, he is a foundling, and thus is not a fit husband for the princess (lines 2620-684). This is also one of the only medieval texts in which the princess takes a companion when she flees, the other being *The Life of Saint Dymphna*, in which her confessor, Gereburnus, accompanies her (Warner 335-36). Upon hearing of the arranged marriage, Melior "is very displeased / By what her father has done to her" (*Guillaume* ll. 2681-82). Her grief partially springs from the knowledge that the man she loves is unaware of her affections and she is now promised to another. She feels that she must speak to Guillaume at last and tell him that she loves him (ll. 2792-800). But once Melior and Guillaume have acknowledged their love for each other, they must face the reality of Melior's unwelcome betrothal. This prompts Melior's decision to escape, and she tells Guillaume they must plan "How we might get out of the realm / Without being seen, / Found or

captured or detained” (*Guillaume* ll. 2966-968). While Melior otherwise melodramatically laments her fate, as when she spends thirty lines bemoaning her fear that Guillaume will not love her (ll. 2770-800), she does not weep like Joie, Peau d’Ane, or Yde over her betrothal. Melior does determine immediately that “she will have no one other than her beloved” (2686), showing a similar determination to that of the other princesses when they decide to make their escape. She and Guillaume puzzle over how to escape undetected, but cannot come upon a solution until they summon Melior’s best friend, Alixandrine, who devises a disguise that will allow them to escape (2991-3023).

Disguise is the principal motif in “Donkeyskin”—the element that gives both the tale and the tale type their names. It is also the primary connection between “Donkeyskin,” *La Manekine*, *Yde et Olive*, and *Guillaume de Palerne*. In each of these stories, disguise can take three possible forms: mutilation, clothing, or animal skins. “Donkeyskin” obviously depicts the third type. When Peau d’Ane approaches her fairy godmother and begs for help, her godmother devises a plan: she will ask for a dowry of three dresses so elaborate that they will be nearly impossible for the king to provide. When the dresses arrive in succession, the princess despairs, but her godmother requires that she demand a greater boon: the skin of the prized donkey that provides her father’s wealth. When even that is given to the princess, her godmother orders her to don the skin and escape. Thus, the princess assumes the persona of Peau d’Ane (Donkeyskin), suggested by the filthy hide she bears on her back (Perrault 216-18). Donning the skin of the donkey is a multifaceted act of defacement for the princess. As Warner points out, “in this early fairy tale, [Perrault] marks the daughter with the father’s sin: the sign of the donkey conveys his lust. She becomes a beast, after her father has behaved like one” (325). Peau d’Ane has taken the symbol of her father’s lust upon her and has also blurred the lines between human and animal, becoming

a hybrid outcast who belongs to neither world. She additionally faces a severe social degradation, which leaves her begging for work on the streets, but also brings her to the place where her disguise will eventually be discarded, as she becomes the bride of a prince (Perrault 218-19).

The princess Joie chooses the first form of “disguise,” which does not in fact conceal her, but instead disfigures her in such a way that she is untouchable by her father. Finding herself alone in the kitchen, Joie notices a large cooking knife that is used to butcher swans. She then thinks of a way to escape her father forever:

En sa main le prent la meschine,

Et pense que ele colpera

Son puing, et caoir la laira

En l’iawe

[“The young girl takes it in her hand, / And thinks that she will cut off / Her fist and will let it fall / Into the water.”] (Philippe ll. 688-91)

At first she fears that her father will condemn her to death because he will realize she has dismembered herself in order to escape their wedding. But she hears her father’s people coming to escort her to him and

Or voit bien n’i plus caloigne.

Son puing senestre tant aloigne

Q’ele le met seur la fenestre;

Le coutel tint en sa main destre.

Onques mais feme ce ne fist:

Car le coutel bien amont mist,

S’en fiert si son senestre puing

Qu'ele l'a fait voler bien loing

En la riviere la aval.

De la grant dolor et du mal

Quë ele senti s'est pasmee.

[“Now she sees that there can be no more indecision. / She stretches out her left fist /
Until she puts it on the window-sill; / She held the knife in her right hand. / Never did a
woman do this: / For she raised the knife very high, / And struck her left fist so hard /
That she made it fly far / Down into the river. / Because of the pain and the injury / That
she felt, she fainted.”] (Philippe II. 721-731)

In this brutal scene, the princess goes so far as to amputate the hand on which her father might place a wedding ring, thus ensuring that she will be unfit for marriage, but also condemning herself to death for her defiance. This concept of self-mutilation occurs in many saints' lives, in which maidens frequently mutilate themselves to preserve their virginity.¹⁴ But in spite of this suggestion at hagiography, Joie is not intended to be a saint, but an accused queen.

When she is called before her father to hear his plans for their wedding, Joie patiently waits for the opportunity to speak, then reveals,

“Mais roïne ne doi pas estre,

Car je n'ai point de main senestre,

Et roi ne doit pas penre fame

Qui n'ait tous ses members, par m'ame!”

[“But I may not be a queen, / For I do not have a left hand, / And a king may not take a
wife / Who does not have all her members, upon my soul!”] (Philippe II. 793-97)

¹⁴ Joie also faces the risk of martyrdom, because she is condemned to be burned alive after making herself an unfit bride for her father. This would have placed her among the ranks of other virgin martyrs, including Saint Dymphna, who was murdered by her father for refusing to become his wife (Warner 337).

With this mutilation, Joie has fundamentally altered her identity. She is now considered unfit for marriage, due to the lack of her hand, which means she is doomed to a life of singleness unbefitting a royal heir. And, as Black argues, “this act so disfigures her that she no longer resembles her mother” (38). Princess Joie, the predecessor to many “accused queens,” goes much further than simply donning a disguise, altering her body itself in order to escape the threat of incest. In this way, “Her body becomes the text upon which the tyranny of the father’s violence is written” (Black 40). And, like *Peau d’Ane*, Joie’s disfigurement becomes her identity, as she is referred to as “Manekine,” due to the loss of her hand, until her true identity can be revealed at last (Philippe I. 1340). An interpolation of the narrator states that “Ele nommer ne se voloit / Pour çou que li cuers li doloit / De la vilenie son pere” [“She did not wish to speak her name / Because her heart ached / At the baseness of her father”] (l. 1343-345). This surprisingly places all of the blame for Joie’s suffering upon her father, just as *Yde et Olive* portrays King Florent as the cause of his daughter’s woes. This is a surprisingly feminist concept in these particular texts, one which sharply contrasts with the condemnation of the queen and the explanatory madness of the king interpolated by Perrault.

Yde et Olive introduces the idea of clothing as disguise for the princess. Rather than donning a demeaning animal skin or choosing self-mutilation, Yde escapes the threat of incest by becoming a man—first by means of clothing and finally by a miraculous physical transformation in which her sex is changed. As Sylvia Huot expresses,

Yde’s position as a woman is rendered impossible through her father’s transgressive desire. But while she is forced to alter her identity radically, she does so . . . through a carefully controlled change of performance, replacing her all-too-successful staging of courtly femininity with one of chivalric masculinity (181-82).

While she is thus able to avert unwelcome sexual advances, Yde additionally manages to elevate her social status, rather than relegating herself to a lower class like the other princesses. This also means that she faces less suffering than the other young women from the outset of her flight.

While Yde briefly worries about starvation, much in the same way that Peau d'Ane is forced to beg for food and shelter (Perrault 218), they arrive at vastly different destinations. Peau d'Ane becomes a scullery maid, where she is widely regarded as a "grubby little fright, uglier and dirtier than the most filthy scullion" (Perrault 222), but Yde arrives in Rome and becomes a soldier, quickly distinguishing herself as one of the best men in the emperor's ranks. Rather than becoming a social outcast, Yde gains autonomy as a benefit of her disguise.

While *La Manekine* and *Yde et Olive* feature clothing and mutilation as disguise, *Guillaume de Palerne* is the earliest medieval text to feature a protagonist who dons animal skins to escape a king, in the same way Peau d'Ane does. Guillaume and Melior are placed in an unusual situation by their disguises. When they determine to escape, the lovers rely on the guidance of Alixandrine, who takes on the role of Peau d'Ane's fairy godmother by suggesting the disguises. Alixandrine tells Guillaume and Melior to hide themselves in a pair of white bearskins she has seen in the palace kitchen. She sews them into the skins, so that they can pass for actual bears, dangerous predators best left alone. As Alixandrine completes her work, she tells her friends that she has deliberately left one of their hands free so that they can feed themselves (*Guillaume* ll. 3011-024, 3323-326). This hand slips in and out of the bearskin, serving as a symbol of the lovers' humanity as they travel on all fours in the guise of beasts. The exposed hand echoes Joie's loss of her hand, the constant reminder of "the baseness of her father" (Philippe I. 1345), the reason for her flight.

The hand also connects to the way that Peau d’Ane is discovered in Perrault’s tale. The prince finds a ring baked into the cake he requested from Peau d’Ane and knows it must belong to her. Because he has accidentally seen her without her hideous disguise, the prince wants to marry Peau d’Ane. So he vows to marry no one but the maiden who can wear the ring. This sets off a Cinderella-like search, in which some women mutilate their fingers in hopes of marrying the prince. But, as with Cinderella’s shoe, the ring fits only its rightful owner and Peau d’Ane’s marriage is secured by means of her hand.¹⁵ In contrast to Perrault’s princess, however, Guillaume and Melior mainly play the part of animals, going on all fours and hiding in the woods, rather than using their disguises as a way to remain unrecognized in the company of others. However, they also become unnatural hybrids like Peau d’Ane, because the text says that

At night they walk upright

And when they see that it is day,

Then they go on all fours like bears.

But know one thing to be true:

They are much more ugly to see

When they are walking upright on two feet

Than when they get down on all fours (*Guillaume* ll. 3384-390)

The idea that they are “more ugly to see / When they are walking upright on two feet” stems from the unnaturalness of their concealment. Bears may occasionally go on two legs, but it is rare to see them doing so for long periods of time. That is a particularly human behavior. To do so while concealed in a bearskin emphasizes the human beneath the animal pelt—an uncanny

¹⁵ This theme of the exposed hand takes on additional significance in Grimms’ “All Fur,” in which the king slips his ring onto the heroine’s finger at one of the balls. Allerleirauh is discovered because, in her haste, she did not completely blacken her hand with soot and the king recognizes his ring on her finger.

occurrence that should not exist in nature, much like Peau d'Ane's appearance as a hideous creature of whom it is said "only wolves are uglier than she is" (Perrault 222).

The elements found in *La Manekine*, *Yde et Olive*, and *Guillaume de Palerne* can be clearly recognized as the foundations of the later ATU 510B fairy tales, including Perrault's "Donkeyskin." Each of these stories offers at least one of the three primary motifs found in Perrault's fairy tale: threat of father-daughter incest, flight from the father, and animal disguise. By examining these early stories, it becomes clear that "Donkeyskin" is a composite of various elements of these texts, along with original content by Perrault, including the animal that provides Peau d'Ane's disguise. Having assumed their varying disguises, each princess discovers she has gained far more agency than she enjoyed in her father's court. While she may be scoffed at and mocked like Peau d'Ane, each woman is able to earn her keep and even to catch the eye of an eligible spouse. In the end, it is only when the disguise is set aside that each woman resumes her prescribed role as either a dutiful wife, or—as in the case of Yde—a husband. This demonstrates that while each of these princesses initially defies authority and asserts her own will, she must ultimately come under the rule of a man or become a man herself.

CHAPTER 3

“[HE FIXED] HIS EYES ON ME

WITH AN EXPRESSION THAT CONVULSED MY VERY FRAME:”

ATU 510B IN THE ROMANTIC ERA

*“Once upon a time there was a king whose wife had golden hair
and was so beautiful that her equal could not be found anywhere on earth.”*

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, “All Fur”

The nineteenth century brought Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s seminal collection of fairy tales, which included a German variation of ATU 510B. “Allerleirauh” (translated as “All Fur” by Jack Zipes) removes the fantastical trappings of Charles Perrault’s tale, including the enchanted donkey, the fairy godmother, and the magical trunk. In their place is a stripped-down narrative in which a young woman is forced to rely on her own cleverness to escape an unthinkable relationship with her father. And in place of the Cinderella-like revelation of the princess in “Donkeyskin,” Allerleirauh’s disguise is torn away without her consent, raising questions about her willingness to resume her royal identity.

Only a few years after Grimms’ fairy tales were originally published, another story that has clear roots in ATU 510B was written (though it was not published until over a century later). Mary Shelley’s *Mathilda*, while not clearly linked to ATU 510B by Shelley herself, functions as another iteration of this tale.¹⁶ While numerous scholars have argued that Mary Shelley’s *Mathilda* is a work in which a young woman invents a traumatic history for herself in order to transcend the oppressive patriarchal system in which she lives (Miller 299, Edelman-Young 34), such a reading makes no account for the tragic events which the heroine cannot control,

¹⁶ While it is impossible to prove a connection between Mary Shelley and any version of ATU 510B, it is possible that she may have come across a version while researching father-daughter incest for Percy Bysshe Shelley’s play, *The Cenci*, which Mary was initially intended to write.

including her father's suicide and her own death from exposure to the elements. If Mathilda is to be seen as a powerful (and incredibly deceitful) woman who constructs a false narrative of her life in order to shape her own identity, there is no real justification for the heroine's death. In actuality, *Mathilda* is not a tragic drama, penned by its own starring actress. Rather, the novel is a failed fairy tale in which a mentally ill heroine finds herself caught between patriarchal expectations and her own desire for autonomy.

The collection of fairy tales created by the Brothers Grimm serves as a powerful tool for studying nineteenth century culture. As Jack Zipes states, "the Grimms imbued the tales with a heavy dose of Christian morality, the protestant work ethic, and patriarchalism" ("Once," xxxv). The careful revision and selection of stories in the Grimms' collection insured that the tales reflected "proper" nineteenth century values. Zipes traces the Grimms' moralistic revisions of several common tales, the most notable being "Aschenputtel" ("Cinderella"), which manifested in three major European tales: Giambattista Basile's "The Cat Cinderella" in Italy, Charles Perrault's "Cinderella" in France, and the Grimms' "Aschenputtel" in Germany. Zipes notes that Zezolla in "The Cat Cinderella," the oldest of the tales, is a far more active heroine than the later incarnations: she murders her stepmother, then has to make her way out of poverty by outwitting her stepmother's replacement and marrying a prince. Perrault went on to soften Cinderella's personality by emphasizing her meekness and modesty. The Brothers Grimm feminized her even further, making her a symbol of passivity and piety (*Brothers Grimm* 194-96). This trend in one story reveals the way that many of the stories were reshaped as a means of teaching the bourgeoisie about proper behaviors and gender roles, particularly when it came to female passivity. Zipes discusses the use of fairy tales in the education system, noting that the "specific canon of tales, continually reproduced and used for the last two centuries, emphasizes male

adventure and power and female domesticity and passivity” (*Brothers Grimm* 189). With this in mind, fairy tales emerge as useful tools for understanding the treatment of patriarchal values in the nineteenth century, providing a stronger framework for understanding the ambiguities of some texts, which is certainly the case with Shelley’s *Mathilda*. In *Mathilda*, the heroine alternates between a type of thinking typically attributed to Gothic heroines and the sort of thinking associated more closely with Gothic males, in much the same way that the heroine of “All Fur” shifts her identity with her beastly disguise.

In this instance, “All Fur,” the fairy tale that will provide the framework for analysis in this chapter, is one that is rarely published in anything other than scholarly collections, for the same reason that Shelley’s text was suppressed for over a century (Shelley 1339): both stories deal with a father’s incestuous desire for his daughter.¹⁷ “All Fur” provides a valuable comparison to *Mathilda*, because the initial plot of the stories is almost identical. In the fairy tale, a princess leaves her life behind after her father determines to marry her. She escapes with the dowry she requested—three beautiful dresses and a cloak of a thousand furs—and disguises herself with the fur cloak. Taken for a strange creature of the woods, something between human and animal, male and female, the princess is captured by hunters and taken to another palace. Relying on her wits alone, Allerleirauh reclaims her royal identity and reaches the capstone achievement for a fairy tale princess (as well as a nineteenth-century woman): she marries a wealthy man—in this case, a king (Grimm 239-42).

¹⁷ While Shelley’s text was kept out of print by her father, William Godwin, there were other nineteenth-century texts that contained themes of father-daughter incest, including Percy Bysshe Shelley’s own play, *The Cenci* (published 1819) and Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “Morella” (published 1850), which itself shares many characteristics with ATU 510B.

Mathilda begins, not with a royal family, but with the story of the title character's parents.¹⁸ They, like a couple in a fairy tale, were very happy. Both possessed brilliant minds and kindly natures. Having loved one another since childhood, they were married by the age of twenty, and they seemed destined only for future joy. But even at this point in the text, their relationship seems unnatural. Mathilda explains, "He [her father] felt as if by his union with her [her mother] he had received a new and better soul" (Shelley 1341-42). However, as Mathilda recounts, disaster occurred fifteen months later, when her mother died in childbirth (1342). The death of her mother is also the initial crisis in *Allerleirauh's* story, for upon her deathbed, the queen demands that her husband swear he will marry no one less beautiful than she (Grimm 239). This places the initial blame for the events to come upon the queen's selfish hope to keep her husband from remarrying.

Mathilda, instead, is abandoned by her father upon the death of her mother and left in the care of a neglectful aunt (Shelley 1343). At this point in her life, Mathilda becomes "adjusted to solitude," but is painfully starved for affection (1343). Her only comfort in this isolation is to daydream about her father, a figure she believes is obliged by nature of their relation to love her. She writes, "My favorite vision was that when I grew up I would leave my aunt . . . and disguised like a boy I would seek my father through the world," but she "never found courage to depart" (1344-1345).¹⁹ Even in her teenage years, Mathilda dreams of creating an identity that will give her the agency to do as she wishes; in this case, to dress as a boy in order to find the only person she has left to love her. Unfortunately, even so early in her life, Mathilda has adopted an unhealthy view of love.

¹⁸ This portion of Shelley's text has more in common with *Yde et Olive* than with any later fairy tales.

¹⁹ Yet another way in which *Mathilda* parallels *Yde et Olive*.

Allerleirauh experiences no such fantasies, as her father is present with her. She is not as isolated as Mathilda. However, the princess seems to be kept at a distance from her father, as he does not notice her growing resemblance to her mother, until “one day, when she [is] grown up” (Grimm 239). Allerleirauh also seems to feel no danger in her father’s house, so it seems safe to assume that she is reasonably happy during her childhood, very much unlike Mathilda, who has no one to love her and finds all of her hopes on reestablishing ties with her long-lost father.

Daydreaming becomes unnecessary for Mathilda when she receives a letter from her father on her sixteenth birthday. Having reached the end of her years of solitude, Mathilda joyously welcomes her father (Shelley 1345-46). It seems that her life has changed for the better, as her father celebrates their meeting and welcomes her as “my Mathilda, my consolation, and my hope” (1346). It seems that even with this first meeting, Mathilda’s father shares her hope that they may find solace in each other. Upon the death of her aunt, Mathilda and her father leave Scotland and go to London. She is taken out of the environment where she “had become a complete mountaineer,” and is thrust into the cultured, calculating atmosphere of the city (1345-47). At first, she barely notices the change, because her father fills all of her time with pleasant diversions, but soon after their move to London, Mathilda feels the effects of the society into which she has been led. In the city, Mathilda begins to understand that she is no longer an isolated “mountaineer,” who can delight in whatever amusements she wishes; instead, she must take her place as the object of the male gaze.

Her first observation about society in London concerns the behavior of a man. She writes, “Among our most assiduous visitors was a young man of rank . . . After we had spent a few weeks in London his attentions towards me became marked and his visits more frequent” (Shelley 1347). Although she has only just re-entered society, Mathilda has already garnered the

attention of a suitor and has been set on the course toward marriage, the only proper destiny for a young woman at the time. But Mathilda states that she was “too much taken up in [her] own occupations and feelings to attend much to this” (1347). But upon reflection, Mathilda recalls something more significant about her suitor’s visits, stating, “I now remember that my father was restless and uneasy whenever this person visited us, and when we talked together watched us with the greatest apparent anxiety” (1347).²⁰ This event recalls the next step of *Allerleirauh*’s story: “Now the king had a daughter who was just as beautiful as her dead mother . . . When she was grown up, the king looked at her one day and realized that her features were exactly the same as those of his dead wife” (Grimm 239). Mathilda writes that her suitor’s visits “suddenly ceased altogether, but from that moment I must date the change of my father” (Shelley 1348). Mathilda does not yet guess at the danger she faces; she merely appreciates the ongoing attentions of her father, whose identifying gaze provides her with the recognition that she mistakes for love.

From this point on, Mathilda’s happiness begins to crumble. She describes this transformation, lamenting, “There were no degrees which could break my fall from happiness to misery . . . he, my beloved father, shunned me, and either treated me with harshness or a more heart-breaking coldness” (Shelley 1348). For Mathilda, sensitive as she is, it is almost too much to bear that she has been shut out by the only person who cares for her, and without explanation. Soon after, however, she receives a hint as to what is happening, and begins to learn that her father’s gaze of recognition, the subordinating male gaze, is not the only look she must endure in this patriarchal society. There is also the sexualizing male gaze, which paints women as sexual objects to be obtained. While out with a group of people, Mathilda says, “I chanced to cast my

²⁰ This also echoes the behavior of King Florent, who will hear of no suitor for Yde but himself.

eyes on my father and met his: for the first time the expression of those beloved eyes displeased me, and I saw with affright that his whole frame shook with some concealed emotion” (1348). Her father’s look is no longer one that defines her correctly. Something has changed about the way he sees her, and both of them are afraid of it: Mathilda is “displeased” by her father’s gaze, and her father is left “[shaking] with some concealed emotion.” For two months, Mathilda endures her father’s alternating anger and neglect, until he decides to return to his Yorkshire estate, where he lived with her mother (1349).

The change of location also marks a difference in Mathilda’s mental state. Due to her despair at her father’s neglect, Mathilda becomes a hysteric. She plays a role around her father, hoping to regain the relationship they have lost. “Changing mood rapidly, overtly expressing her moods, and constantly seeking attention” are behavioral patterns attributed to the hysteric by Nakagawa (44), all of which are applicable to Mathilda, who experiences the loss of her father’s attention as a near loss of her own identity.

Eventually, frustrated and heartbroken by her father’s emotional turmoil, Mathilda begins desperately trying to understand its cause. She explains,

The solution that seemed to me the most probable was that during his residence in London he had fallen in love with some unworthy person . . . and that he had now visited this house that by reviving the memory of my mother whom he so passionately adored he might weaken the present impression. (Shelley 1351)

Unfortunately, Mathilda’s hope that her father will look to her mother’s memory in order to forget another woman is tragically misguided, as it is her mother’s memory that makes Mathilda herself desirable, just as it is *Allerleirauh*’s resemblance to the dead queen that awakens her father’s desire for her. Thus mistaken, Mathilda writes, “I said to myself, let him receive

sympathy and these struggles will cease . . . Half I accomplished; I gained his secret and we were both lost forever” (1351).

In a violently emotional scene, Mathilda finally confronts her father about his rejection of her, begging him to divulge his secret, that he may finally enjoy peace. At first, he resists her, saying, “You are indeed presumptuous, Mathilda, presumptuous and very rash . . . Do not again speak to me in this strain, but wait in submissive patience” (Shelley 1352). Just as *Allerleirauh* does not fear anything from her father’s promise to his dying queen, Mathilda believes that her father has only formed an attachment to some unlikely woman of London—an attachment which may or may not pass. It is her deep-seated fear of losing the only person who loves her that prompts Mathilda’s hysterical behavior; she confesses, “I hardly knew what feelings resistlessly impelled me” (1352), but she continues to press for an answer.

The result is the mostly highly disputed scene of the novel and the one that most closely parallels the initial tragedy of “*All Fur.*” Seeing Mathilda as nothing more than a consummate actress, Katherine Miller urges a reading that “acknowledge[s] Mathilda’s complicity in her father’s revelation,” noting that “she repeatedly goads her father into speech” (298). This is the case, but Miller has overlooked the influence of patriarchy and neglect, which have deeply wounded Mathilda’s psyche. Mathilda is not, as Miller suggests, cruelly manipulating her father for her benefit—she is trying to preserve her sanity and the only loving relationship she has ever known.

Finally unable to contain herself any longer, Mathilda expresses the only conclusion his behavior has offered her: “I know it—I see it—you hate me!” (Shelley 1353). Miller argues that by “asking specifically whether her father loves her, Mathilda establishes a situation where her father’s response to her queries must acknowledge his love for her” (298). However, her father

does not fall into the trap which Miller claims Mathilda has set. Instead, he replies, “Yes, yes, I hate you! You are my bane, my poison, my disgust!” (Shelley 1353). But Mathilda does not react negatively to her father’s statement of hatred, because—in contrast to Miller’s assumptions—she has accomplished what she set out to do by causing him to acknowledge their relationship. Hatred is acceptable to Mathilda, because it reaffirms her submissive stance, and it allows her to resume the identity bestowed by the gaze of her father.

But the encounter does not end with Mathilda’s victory, for her father has not finished speaking. She says, “then his manner changed, and [he fixed] his eyes on me with an expression that convulsed my very frame” (Shelley 1353). This is a return of the sexualizing male gaze that Mathilda’s father turned on her before, and it proves terrifying to her. Like *Allerleirauh*’s father, who “realized that [his daughter’s] features were exactly the same as those of his dead wife . . . [and] fell passionately in love with her” (Grimm 239), Mathilda’s father finally expresses his unspeakable secret: “You are my light, my only one, my life. –My daughter, I love you!” (Shelley 1353). Again, there are numerous scholarly interpretations of this statement. Miller argues that Mathilda’s father “merely answered her questions,” and expressed “filial love,” while Mathilda’s staged, violent reaction creates the implication of incest (289). In an even more explicit condemnation of Mathilda’s behavior, Diana Pérez Edelman-Young claims that “the manipulation of her father’s response suggests that Mathilda truly desires to face and experience the [incestuous] love her father expresses” (56). However, both of these readings fall short. Mathilda’s father’s response does not read like an expression of mere filial love, as men do not frequently refer to their daughters as “my light, my only one,” and Mathilda hardly seems pleased with his revelation. She writes,

It was despair I felt . . . after the first moments of speechless agony I felt her fangs on my heart: I tore my hair; I raved aloud; at one moment in pity for his sufferings I would have clasped my father in my arms; and then starting back in horror I spurned him with my foot. (Shelley 1353)

This is certainly not the reaction of a woman who is pleased with what she has heard, nor is it the contrived performance that Miller claims to see. Mathilda's response shows only the violent histrionics of a hysteric caught in the grip of horror. The "despair" that Mathilda feels is the rending of the masochistic relationship that has thus far sustained her. It is the death of the identity bestowed by her father's gaze.

From this scene forward, *Mathilda* begins to diverge from the fairy tale of "All Fur" in ways which methodically destroy the chance for a happy ending. Following his confession of love, Mathilda's father claims that "the worst is past . . . we are to find flowers, and verdure and delight," echoing the deranged wish of Allerleirauh's father to marry his daughter (Shelley 1353, Grimm 239). But Mathilda's father immediately collapses, overwrought, believing that he will be able to die happily, now that Mathilda knows his secret (Shelley 1353). It seems that his resolve is far weaker than that of the king in "All Fur," who only delays his marriage to his daughter because she herself intervenes. Allerleirauh, who is all alone in her efforts to escape her father, herself devises the plan to demand an impossible dowry. So she makes her father promise to provide her with three dresses that resemble the sun, moon, and stars, and a fur cloak made from the pelts of every animal in the kingdom. She thinks to herself, "by demanding this, I shall divert my father from his evil intentions" (Grimm 239). But her father is not to be dissuaded, and produces all that she has asked, leaving her again in the position of Mathilda, as the object of her father's desire, though she is also his intended bride.

At hearing her father's confession, Mathilda is emotionally overwrought, but she is quick to act. While her father lies insensible in the garden, she runs to the house, informs the servants of his condition, and locks herself in her room (1353). Thus sheltered, Mathilda seems surprised at her own reactions: "I did not wring my hands, or tear my hair, or utter wild exclamations, but . . . [sat] silently letting fall a perpetual stream from my eyes" (1354).²¹ But once she has recovered from her initial shock, Mathilda begins again to think of disguising herself, as a means of escape, while hoping that her father will take himself away to India again. Either way, she knows, "he or I must depart" (1354). Her heart is broken, because she feels that she is losing herself as well as her father. Even so, she mentally pleads with her father, "Let the liquid luster of thine eyes be quenched; and then return to me . . . thy child, who may then be clasped in thy loved arms, while thy heart beats with sinless emotion" (1354).²² In the midst of this horrible situation, Mathilda's masochism remains, displayed in her hope that she and her father may be together again once his lust passes. Her hope is still bound to the male gaze.

The next day, after a night haunted by dreams which prove prophetic, Mathilda finds her father gone. In his stead, she finds a letter, which discloses some disturbing information about his feelings towards her. The language throughout portrays her as the object of his gaze, first the subjugating gaze of the patriarch, then the sexualizing gaze of the lover. He tells her that he has imagined her for years, saying, "If I saw a lovely woman, I thought, does my Mathilda resemble her?" (Shelley 1356). Of their meeting, he writes, "At length I saw you. You appeared as the deity of a lovely region . . . to which of all human kind you admitted only me" (1356). Despite the undeniable sexual tenor of his words, he insists that his love for her was "sinless" until after he dismissed her suitor in London (1356). He says, "When I saw you become the object of

²¹ Much in the same way that the previous ATU 510B heroines shelter themselves and weep all night.

²² It seems here that she is wishing for the reunion that Perrault wrote for Peau d'Ane and her father.

another's love; when I imagined that you might be loved otherwise than as a[n] . . . image of loveliness and excellence; or that you might love another with a more ardent affection . . . then the fiend awoke within me" (1356).²³ Again, his emphasis is on Mathilda as an image, and it is clear that he fears an end to their masochistic relationship. But it is also clear from the increasingly lascivious language that he uses (eventually culminating in "she ought to be as [her mother] to me") that, despite the claims of Miller and Edelman-Young, Mathilda's father has harbored lust for his own daughter (Shelley 1356-57). So, with the lines of his letter, he leaves her with a new identity: "I . . . have set the seal of distrust and agony on the heart and brow of my own child" (1355). So Mathilda, like Allerleirauh, Peau d'Ane, Joie, and Yde before her, is re-formed as the child of incest and shame.

Upon finishing the letter, Mathilda pursues her father to the coast, fearing that—as in her dream—he has gone to end his life. But Mathilda arrives only to look upon her father's corpse (Shelley 1359). Miller reads this as Mathilda's ultimate triumph, suggesting that "she successfully kills off her unnamed father's authority and establishes a new life with the potential for female freedom from patriarchal control" (300). But Mathilda does not seem victorious; rather, she descends into misery. It is her father's suicide that initially sets Mathilda apart from Allerleirauh, an event that will reshape her identity again, and will ultimately lead to her tragic death.

Mathilda laments her father's loss, dwelling on the absence of his gaze: "is it not enough that I shall never more meet the eyes of my beloved father; never more hear his voice; no caress; no look?" (1359). Without her father's recognition, Mathilda is lost. Once again taken to London after his death, Mathilda finds society unbearable. She fears the sexualizing male gaze now more

²³ This is oddly reminiscent of the way that Perrault claimed that the king was suffering from madness. St. Dymphna's father, also, was partially exonerated on account of his supposed demonic possession.

than ever, having been the object of her father's lust; and she has gained a newfound dread of the subordinating male gaze, fearing it will recognize her internalized guilt over the death of her father. She writes, "I must shrink before the eye of man lest he should read my father's guilt in my glazed eyes" (Shelley 1360). This is the first sign of the next stage of her mental illness. Burdened with a secret she cannot tell, she retreats into paranoia, leaving her hysterical tendencies behind.

Paranoid personality disorder is marked by an individual's "sense of being mistreated, of being the victim of someone else's malicious plots . . . [and taking] others' remarks and behaviors not as they are or as they are intended to be, but in twisted ways" (Nakagawa 27). This echoes Mathilda's conviction that everyone around her can read the story of her father's incestuous love in her eyes. She dreads the company of people in London, seeing social events as "the tortures that were prepared for me when I should mix in society" (Shelley 1360). She describes her time in the city in much the same way a convict would describe their imprisonment: "I was led to London, and had to endure cold looks, cold words and colder consolations: . . . they tried to bind me with fetters that they thought silken, yet which weighed on me like iron" (1361). Mathilda is experiencing paranoia, believing that her remaining friends and relatives are all conspiring against her, that they know of her part in her father's death and blame his actions on her, that she is branded with guilt.

Unwilling to endure the task of constantly lying to preserve her reputation, Mathilda fakes her own death in order to escape (Shelley 1360-61). Again, her story parallels that of *Allerleirauh*, although with some crucial differences. The fairy tale princess takes her dowry of beautiful dresses with her and makes an escape, disguised in her fur cloak (Grimm 239). While Mathilda chooses a very different disguise, it is interesting to note the language she uses to

describe her deception: “I who had before clothed myself in the bright garb of sincerity must now borrow one of diverse colours” (Shelley 1361), which echoes the way in which the brightly-dressed princess disguises herself in the multi-hued cloak of a thousand furs. Mathilda writes regretfully of her deceptions, saying she “felt the only the degradation of falsehood,” though she is happy to escape (1361). Melina Moore suggests that Mathilda is using her narrator’s voice to posture for her readers here, claiming that “despite her attempts to perform guilt and sadness for the reader, Mathilda cannot seem to hide the pleasure she feels in forging a new life and identity for herself” (212). However, this is just the effect of escaping her paranoid delusions. She imagines that all of London guesses her father’s lust and its part in his suicide, so she feels a brief respite from that dread when she escapes to the country.

For her disguise, Mathilda chooses a “fanciful nun-like dress” (Shelley 1362). As Edelman-Young states, this is a way that Mathilda “strips herself of female sexuality,” effectively placing herself outside of the influence of the sexualizing male gaze (57). Similarly, Margaret Yocom argues that *Allerleirauh* uses her fur cloak “to unsex herself” (107), an act which proves effective when she is discovered in the woods and the hunters cannot tell if she is human or animal (Grimm 240). Mathilda likewise becomes a sort of hybrid, caught between feminine submission and masculine agency. She has become afraid of the world and her own powerlessness within it, thus imagining herself as a persecuted heroine who must outwit those who would condemn her for the “crime” of being loved by her father. Her patriarchal conditioning will not allow her to see that the condemnation she perceives is only illusory, that her father’s lust was not her fault. In order to escape her “persecutors,” Mathilda, like a paranoid Gothic male, has constructed an identity. She has seemingly triumphed over the patriarchy by identifying herself.

She imagines herself at first as “an altered creature. Not the wild, raving and most miserable Mathilda but a youthful Hermitess dedicated to seclusion” (Shelley 1362). And in the beginning of her makeshift cloistering, she takes pure joy in nature, just as she did before her father came. Moore sees this as a sign that Mathilda delights in having effectively murdered her father so that she might liberate herself from society (212). However, Mathilda’s enjoyment of her solitude seems only transitory, as she writes also, “my eyes were seldom raised and often filled with tears . . . I was gathered up into myself—a selfish solitary creature ever pondering on my regrets and faded hopes” (1362-63). Mathilda is not a master of deception, who has forced everyone out of her life so that she might live as she pleases. She is instead a traumatized young woman who has obeyed the will of the patriarchy and has only suffered as a result, finally escaping only through the construction of her hybrid identity as a non-sexual woman who thinks like a paranoid man.

But even in her solitude, Mathilda is not safe from the male gaze. She is befriended by a young poet named Woodville, who is grieving the death of his fiancée, and their mutual sorrow forms a bond between him and Mathilda (1368). But Woodville’s presence triggers a return of Mathilda’s masochism and hysteria. Mathilda’s behavior towards Woodville reveals her struggle within her hybrid identity and also serves as another parallel to “All Fur.” Just as Allerleirauh sometimes puts off her constructed identity—the cloak of furs and the name Allerleirauh—to resume her feminine identity by wearing the beautiful dresses she carried from her father’s house, so Mathilda’s psyche fluctuates between her masculine paranoia and her feminine hysteria and masochism. While in Woodville’s presence, she exhibits a more subdued form of her former hysteria, weeping silently without reason, never smiling, and avoiding his gaze. She writes of their relationship, “I am . . . a character that he comes to see act: now and then he gives

me my cue” (1369). Even she recognizes the symptoms of her hysteria. But alone, she resumes paranoia, contemplating both her supposed “guilt” in connection to her father’s abuse and the likelihood of her hiding place being discovered (1368). She becomes ever more controlling of Woodville, hoping to draw him into another masochistic relationship like the one she experienced with her father.

What Mathilda cannot understand is that Woodville has no desire to control her. His gaze is neither that of subjugation, nor of sexualization; he wishes only to be kind to her. Woodville tells her, “When I look upon you, the tears you shed . . . add to my interest for you . . . If pity, and admiration, and gentle affection can wean you from despair let me attempt the task” (Shelley 1368). He offers her friendship and, it seems, love. But due to the trauma of her father’s desire, Mathilda can no longer recognize healthy love, instead placing her hope in death. She finds herself caught between the autonomous identity she has created for herself, outside of the strict, patriarchal gender roles she has left behind, and the possible identity Woodville seems to offer, as a respectable wife and mother (1370). As a hybrid, she is fitted for neither world, so she decides to die. But she cannot bear to die alone, so she begs Woodville to enter a suicide pact with her that they might die together. Woodville refuses to humor her, so their relationship is ended. Like the young king who eventually marries Allerleirauh, Woodville requires Mathilda to surrender her hybrid identity in order to take a place by his side.

Whereas Allerleirauh shows her true identity to her future bridegroom by attending three separate balls, clothed in the magnificent dresses she took away with her from her father’s house, Mathilda does not risk such exposure. She will allow no hint of her former identity to escape, except the tears she weeps in Woodville’s company. While this prevents her from the wedding that concludes the fairy tale, it also prevents the literal exposure Allerleirauh suffers at the hands

of her groom. On the night of the third ball, the king slips a ring on the mysterious woman's finger, so that he may find her—a task which proves difficult, as she is hiding in the kitchen, wrapped in rough furs and with dirt and soot covering her face (Grimm 240). But the king suspects Allerleirauh's secret, and summons her to speak with him. His actions then become somewhat more troubling: "he seized her hand and held it tight, and when she tried to free herself and run away, the cloak opened a bit, and the dress of bright stars was unveiled. The king grabbed the cloak and tore it off her" (Grimm 242). This is not a gentle unveiling. Notice the words used to describe the king's actions: "he *seized* her hand," "*grabbed* the cloak," and "*tore* it off her." The princess "tried to free herself and run away," but the king will not let her go. She is caught like a wild beast in a trap she cannot escape. Allerleirauh's struggle to escape her suitor raises troubling questions about whether she was in fact willing to be caught by him. And despite the fact that the text asserts that the couple married soon after and "lived happily together until their death" (Grimm 242), the revelation of Allerleirauh reads eerily like an episode of sexual violence.

Perhaps Mathilda is in fact shielding herself from being captured by Woodville, but either way, she is completely alone when he leaves her. Wandering the landscape near her home, she dreams again of a reunion with her father, whom she imagines is waiting in heaven, purged of all but "innocent love" (1373). Caught up in her own musings, Mathilda loses the way back to her cottage and spends the night on the cold ground. This mistake leads eventually to her death, as she is stricken with fever. The fever leads to a sort of chronic weakness that saps her life away for several months, during which Mathilda writes the story of her life, hoping that Woodville will read it (1372-76). The manuscript, then, is her final hysterical utterance. Miller is correct in seeing Mathilda's narrative as an instance of the heroine's "playacting," but she misunderstands

the cause of that performance (303). Mathilda is, like any true hysteric, desperately trying to reach out to someone who will accept her.

Mathilda, traumatized and guilt-ridden from the abuse of her father, takes it upon herself to escape the possibility of sexual desire and removes herself both from her physical place in society (as an inhabitant of London) and her symbolic place in society (as a woman). Thus removed, she finds herself trapped in the hybrid identity she has constructed. As Nakagawa asserts, “The Gothic heroine oscillates between the paranoiac fears of gaze and the hysteric desperation for gaze because, although most gazes are dangerous, she cannot live without a gaze of recognition” (10). Mathilda, unable to choose between an unhealthy relationship within the confines of patriarchy and preservation of her paranoid autonomy, finally rejects the happy ending of *Allerleirauh*’s story. She cannot bring herself to put off the fur cloak of hybridity, take up the three beautiful dresses of patriarchal femininity, and marry the king. Or perhaps she merely refuses to risk having her autonomy torn away like *Allerleirauh*. Thus, she, as a nineteenth century woman who has rejected her rightful place in society, meets the only fate left to her: death. By subverting the proper fairy tale narrative of love and marriage, Mathilda is unable to find her happiness in life, and finally accepts the empty solace of death as her only recourse.

CHAPTER 4

“I RETURN TO YOU NOW ALL THAT YOU DID GIVE ME:”

ATU 510B RETOLD

“Many years later she remembered how her parents had looked to her when she was a small child: her father as tall as a tree, and merry and bright and golden, with her beautiful, black-haired mother at his side.”

Robin McKinley, Deerskin

The twentieth century brought with it the emergence of a new literary genre: the fairy tale retelling. As opposed to the numerous iterations of fairy tales in operas, plays, and edited collections, retellings sought to completely rework their source material. Sometimes this would involve changing the setting of the tale, such as in Eudora Welty’s *The Robber Bridegroom*, in which the action is moved from Germany to the United States, or the characters might be given new and original histories, as in Angela Carter’s wildly successful short story collection, *The Bloody Chamber*. Retellings gained additional popularity near the end of the twentieth century, having undergone a period as the subject of high literature, including novels like Margaret Atwood’s *The Robber Bride* and poetry like Anne Sexton’s *Transformations*, finally becoming a staple of the fantasy genre. But in spite of the popularity of retellings, certain darker novelizations have not been welcomed with enthusiasm.

Such has been the case with Robin McKinley’s *Deerskin*. Although McKinley has enjoyed a fairly successful career as a fantasy novelist, complete with winning a Newbery Medal and Newbery Honor, *Deerskin* is a text that is usually glossed over or relegated to the shadows. This is mainly due to the fact that it is a fantasy retelling of Charles Perrault’s “Donkeyskin,” one which is unafraid to depict the dark themes of its source material. Throughout McKinley’s text

are echoes of each variation of ATU 510B, whether intentional or not, which tie the novel back to its earliest roots, making it one of the most complex variants of the story. In *Deerskin*, McKinley provides a full novelization of Perrault's fairy tale, but also preserves the fantastic, fairy tale-like atmosphere of the story. This metaphor-laden text reforms the story of ATU 510B as the tale of a young woman who ultimately learns that she possesses the greatest power a woman can hold: the power to choose for herself.

McKinley's novel begins with the romance of the princess's parents. All of the characters are nameless in this section, highlighting the similarities to Charles Perrault's "Donkeyskin." Amelia Rutledge is right in claiming that "McKinley's depiction of Lissar's parents appears one-dimensional to the point of demonization" (173), but Tamara Paxton Copley observes that the beginning "[shows] that although fairy tale kings and queens, heroes and heroines, look beautiful and seem radiant, they provide no warmth and can be neither helpful parents nor good human beings" (28). From the outset, the king, the queen, and the princess are depicted as "flat" characters, because their significance is more metaphorical than literal. As the novel unfolds, it becomes clear that the king is the metaphorical embodiment of the patriarchy itself; the queen stands for the feminine ideal created by the patriarchy; and Princess Lissla Lissar herself is a symbol of all women, caught in the grasp of the king and queen who seek to claim her, body and soul.

Princess Lissar hears her parents' story recited constantly by her nurse and the tale becomes her only source of connection to her parents. The text explains, "[The story] was the nursemaid's favorite, and became the little girl's, the long story containing many stories, of her parents' courtship and marriage" (McKinley 3-4).²⁴ Relegated to her nursery by the king and queen, who are too caught up in their love for each other to notice their daughter, Lissar's

²⁴ This relationship is reminiscent of medieval renditions of this tale, particularly *Yde et Olive*.

parents are “only a little more real to her than the characters in the storybooks” (4). She is told again and again about the way her father was able to win her mother, the most beautiful woman in seven kingdoms, with a leaf from the tree of joy and an apple from the tree of sorrow, which grew at opposite ends of the earth. Cut off from contact with others, Lissar is held captive, subjected to endless recitations of fairy tales that teach her the only things that matter are beauty and a good marriage. In this way, Lissar becomes a representation of every girl. And thus overwhelmed by the shadow of her parents, Lissar spends over a decade hidden from the sight of nearly everyone, with nothing to think of except the ideals she is being taught, effectively brainwashed by tales of perfect men and women.

Immediately, McKinley’s text has begun to hint at the dark secrets to come by telling the story of Lissar’s parents. The princess’s nursemaid tells her,

“such a joy was the daily presence of your lovely mother that her father was not eager to part with her. And so he looked to drive her suitors away, or to lose them . . . But who could blame him? For she is the most beautiful woman in seven kingdoms, and he died of a broken heart eight months after she married your father.” (McKinley 4)

With this narration, the reader begins to see the type of education Lissar is receiving. She is being taught that it is of utmost importance to be a desirable woman. Additionally, she is told that her grandfather “died of a broken heart” after her parents’ wedding, hinting at an unnatural relationship between her grandfather and her mother. With this story, her nursemaid is not only passively condoning the hint of incest, but also establishing the pattern of patriarchy: that the daughter is the property of her father. Lastly, beauty is the source of power in the king and queen’s story. There is little evidence of love between them; the king draws the strength to complete his terrible task of journeying to the ends of the earth from the contemplation of the

queen's beauty. And for the queen, agency is only gained by manipulating men with her face and form. Through the filter of her nursemaid's ramblings, Lissar is taught that her mother is only valued for her beauty and Lissar, in turn, is neglected because she is too young to be considered a beautiful woman.

Everything is changed for the ignored princess when she is fourteen years old and her mother becomes ill. The queen's illness is a mystery; the text states only that "the queen might not die, except that her illness . . . had robbed her of the tiniest fraction of her beauty" (McKinley 10). For Lissar's mother, beauty is power, and "when she guessed she might no longer be the most beautiful woman in seven kingdoms she lost her will to live" (10). The queen has no identity except as the paragon of beauty who is adored and even worshiped by everyone around her. And so, because of her fear of this complete loss—or at least radical alteration—of her identity, the queen's illness turns deadly. But she will not so easily concede her power. The queen requires her frantic husband to commission a painting that will depict her in all of her previous glory. Painters are called from all the corners of the kingdom and even from outside of the kingdom to depict the queen. After a lengthy process of selecting a painter and waiting for the portrait to be completed, the final work is unveiled. The painting, much like the queen herself, has a curiously unsettling effect on those who look at it. The text states, "They cried out as they looked at it, and fell to their knees What none dared say aloud was: she, this splendid, immortal woman on the canvas, is more beautiful than the queen ever was" (17). In this way, the queen has not only preserved her place as the most beautiful woman anyone around her has ever seen; she has also ensured that no woman, particularly not her own daughter, will ever surpass the "splendid, immortal woman on the canvas," reinforcing the queen's place as the embodiment of the idealized feminine.

And yet the queen's efforts are not over. When she realizes she is dying, she exacts the fatal promise from her husband presaged by *La Manekine*, Perrault's "Donkeyskin," and the Grimms' "All Fur": that he must not choose a second wife unless she is as beautiful as the queen was.²⁵ The queen explains that she is requiring this promise "so that you [the king] will not always be comparing the poor girl to me in your memory, and be cruel to her for it" (McKinley 20). This half-hearted pretense of kindness comes across as even more malicious than the behavior of Perrault's queen who believes that "the promise, cunningly extracted, was as good as an oath to never marry" (215). And McKinley's condemnation of the queen is also more emphatic: "There was a strange tone in the queen's voice . . . it might have been . . . triumph" (20). The queen knows that, with the portrait, she has given her husband an impossible ideal to match. No human woman, not even the queen herself, could be as beautiful as the woman painted on the canvas, so no one will take the queen's place by her husband's side.

In the midst of the country mourning the queen, Lissar remains forgotten by everyone but her nursemaid. The king and queen absorbed the attention of all of their subjects and since "they forgot their child themselves," it seems natural for the rest of the country to do so as well, and to believe that "the princess had no place and no purpose" (McKinley 23). Lissar is a completely passive observer for all of these events, and likely would have remained invisible to her father's court, had not someone outside of the kingdom thought of her after her mother's death. Ossin, the prince of a neighboring kingdom, has sent Lissar a fleethound²⁶ puppy named Ash, hoping that the gift will bring her some comfort in her grief. While Lissar is delighted with the gift, she is required to appear before the court to receive Ash, which also brings the princess to the

²⁵ For an analysis of these narratives, see previous chapters.

²⁶ An archaic name for a Scottish Deerhound. McKinley's choice of breed is metaphorically significant, as Lissar later adopts the persona of Deerskin. As a Deerhound, Ash has been bred to hunt deer. Those who are to remain with Lissar must be capable of catching her.

attention of her father for the first time in years. She meets his eyes and “she did not know what she saw, but it made her cold all over, suddenly, so cold that the sweat of terror broke out on her body” (28).²⁷ Lissar is too young and too afraid to recognize what she sees in her father’s eyes, but she understands somehow that it is dangerous. In the brief moments she remains in his presence, she does not look at her father again. But her father is not the only one who has noticed Lissar, as the court begins to murmur, “She’s a pretty little thing . . . She might even grow up to be a beauty; don’t forget who her mother was” (29). Lissar has begun to hold some interest for the courtiers, because she is beginning to be beautiful, and they have hope that perhaps she will become like her mother. These are the only choices Lissar is given by those around her: to become like her mother, or to be isolated forever.

Even this early in the text, *Deerskin* hints at the darkest possibilities of fairy tales, with both of the heroine’s parents aligned against her. This represents the reality of twentieth (and even twenty-first) century femininity, in which young women must combat the predatory beauty of the feminine ideal and the incestuous lust of the patriarchy. Lissar’s mother, now immortalized in an inhumanly beautiful portrait, represents the impossible beauty standards to which young women are meant to aspire. Her father, on the other hand, represents the twisted patriarchal system, which would trap every woman in marriage with the metaphorical replica of her father.²⁸

Yet with the arrival of Ash, Lissar begins to recognize her isolation and in turn makes a determination: “*I will not be nothing*” (McKinley 36, emphasis original). In spite of everyone’s attempts to sequester and belittle her, the princess has determined that she will make something of herself. Unfortunately, this decision on her part comes at nearly the same time that others

²⁷ The wording here is reminiscent of Mathilda’s first experience of her father’s lustful gaze.

²⁸ This is not to imply that all marriages fit this description; rather, marriages that are made as a result of patriarchal norms are typically marriages in which a woman has no choice but to marry a man who is very much like her father.

begin to strategize on how best they might use her for their own machinations. Sadly, though, Lissar's refusal to play politics backfires shortly after her seventeenth birthday. The court hosts an enormous ball, meant to introduce the princess to eligible suitors, but the party does not go as planned. To Lissar's horror, and the chagrin of visiting emissaries, her father will allow her no partner but himself. This is only the beginning of what Lissar has feared for the two years since her father first looked at her.

The party is at the crux of the fear that Lissar cannot bring herself to name. This is the nightmare she has refused to acknowledge; the same fear that has kept her from looking her father in the eyes for two years, that has kept her "[waking] from nightmares, seeing his eyes bent on her again" (McKinley 41). It is the same fear that causes her to panic at being told she resembles her mother. She has been trapped by her father, at the mercy of male sexual desire. And in a powerful scene that harkens back to *La Manekine*, the earliest iteration of this story, the text says, "She found herself trembling, and her father's hand weighed on her more and more till she thought she would go mad, and there before all the people staring at her, try to gnaw her hand off at the wrist, like an animal in a trap" (54).²⁹ Again, the princess's hand is emphasized as the means of escaping from her father. In this case, she does not intend to consciously sever her hand in order to escape, but rather fears that the wild impulse to escape will drive her mad and she will gnaw off her hand like an animal. This shifts the idea of the daughter's fears from a conscious knowledge of the threat of incest to an unconscious dread that manifests in unchecked physical and psychological reactions. Lissar does not employ logic, because her situation is beyond rational understanding. She cannot comprehend the horror of the threat she faces, so she reacts by impulse.

²⁹ Like Princess Joie, Lissar's response to the threat of incest is connected to mutilation. For more on the motif of the Handless Maiden, see Chapter Two.

But Lissar remains trapped at her birthday ball until, at one o'clock in the morning, she pleads with her father to let her go. She escapes to the shelter of sleep, but wakes with the knowledge, "Last night, the ball, had been a beginning, not an ending" (McKinley 62). When her own plans for the next day are interrupted by a summons from her father, Lissar dresses herself in a way that betrays her fear of her father's lust:

She did not look like a princess. Her hair was pulled severely away from her face; she fastened the shirt closed up to her throat, and the sleeves came down nearly over her hands. The heavy skirt gave no hint to the curve of hip and leg beneath it, and the boots hid her ankles. (65)

Lissar, like the fairy tale heroines before her, has thus sought to unsex herself, to use clothing to shield her body from the lustful gaze of her father. As Susan Bordo explains, "Conscious intention . . . is not a requisite for females to be seen as responsible for the bodily responses of men Frequently . . . [women's] bodies are seen as 'speaking' a language of provocation" (6). Lissar worries that any hint of femininity in her clothing and hairstyle will be misinterpreted as seductive, but, as with many women before her, Lissar's efforts are too late.

The princess is led before her father's entire court, where the king begins to make an announcement. McKinley here displays expert narrative skill, as the king's speech is interwoven with the confusion of his court, who have begun to suspect that something terribly wrong is about to take place. And unsurprisingly, the courtiers take pity on their half-mad, still-grieving king, believing that he is naturally over-fond of his daughter, as a doting father would be. But as the king continues to speak, they begin to blame the princess for her father's decision not to remarry: "That is probably the girl's doing. Every girl wants her father to herself She probably has a hundred little petting, luring ways with him when they're alone together. And he,

poor man, thinks the sun rises and sets in her. Just look at the way he looks at her” (69). The tension continues until the revelation at the heart of every iteration of ATU 510B: “In three days’ time, we shall celebrate the wedding of our beautiful, beloved princess, Lissla Lissar—but it is not only your princess’s wedding you will celebrate, but your king’s as well—for I shall be her bridegroom!” (70)

Following her father’s announcement, Lissar faints immediately. She wakes sprawled on the floor, with her loyal dog, Ash, standing over her. When her father insists that they will wed, she falteringly speaks out against him: “*No*. F-father, you cannot mean to do this. You cannot mean to m-marry me” (73).³⁰ Her stuttered words reveal the strength it takes to speak out against the highest authority in her life, but also betray her fear. She has spoken out against the patriarchy itself. And by so doing, she has brought consequences upon herself that she fears may break her. Those consequences are almost immediately manifested by the court’s instinctual turn against her: “What has she done to him, this witch-daughter, that he should desire to devastate his country and his people this way?” (73). The courtiers’ impulse to blame Lissar for her father’s mad decision echoes what Judith Herman and Lisa Hirshman refer to as “the male fantasy of the Seductive Daughter,” a common excuse for father-daughter incest (42). The people, so attached to their mad king, cannot see that he is beyond help, and turn their blame toward the princess as a likely scapegoat. Lissar is reaping the results of attempting to subvert the male will.

After her father sends her away, Lissar grieves for her lost innocence. McKinley writes, “It was the worst, utterly the worst of all nightmares; the nightmare that had lived with her, hiding in the shadows, since that day . . . [she] met her father’s eyes. She had feared him since then, without naming her fear; and last night . . . the nightmare had begun to take shape” (75).

³⁰ Lissar is the first heroine since Yde to speak out against her father’s decree.

This is the nightmare that haunts many women within the framework of patriarchy: that they are powerless to resist the will of their father. Clarissa Pinkola Estes suggests that this type of response may be a woman's reaction to the internalization of the male gaze, embodied by the "captor, the dark man who inhabits all women's psyches, the innate predator" (40). Lissar is not only facing an unspeakable marriage, but also the reality of her own helplessness in the face of unwelcomed male desire. This highlights the worst of Lissar's plight: she feels that there is nothing to be done to avert her fate. Her mind collapses under the horror of her father's announcement, and she is rendered too weak to resist, partially because she has been taught all her life that she can do nothing of her own volition.

The dread of what is about to happen to her also brings about another terrible reaction: "Lissar began to weep then," the text says, "the stunned, uncomprehending tears of hopelessness: of a truth too appalling to be contained in reality, that the body one inhabits is about to be used in a way that one would rather die than undergo" (76). This is the advent of a terrible change in Lissar's consciousness, in which she begins to see her body and spirit as separate. Bordo explains that this type of mindset is common among abused and self-abusive women, who view their bodies as "alien," as "confinement and limitation," and as "the enemy" (145). Lissar is beginning to blame her body for the abuse it is about to endure, but recognizes that her spirit will endure that abuse as well, due to its habitation within her traitorous body.

While awaiting her wedding day, Lissar is abandoned completely, left alone with Ash, away from all human contact. She hears no word of whether or not the wedding preparations are continuing, or if she is really her father's intended bride. She lies on her bed, half conscious, with her dog by her side. Two days pass, during which she is too traumatized to comprehend anything more complex than eating, bathing, and sleeping. Each night, the door to her chamber is tried by

forceful hands that nearly shatter the door in the frame. Lissar has barred the door to her bedroom to keep out anyone who would enter. But there is another door, a small garden gate. When Lissar attempts to lock it, her key will not fit. “It does not matter,” she thinks. “The other garden door . . . has a hundred years of ivy growing over it. The key to it must no longer exist” (McKinley 77). This gate is symbolic of the incest taboo, which is present in all cultures and may be considered sealed by nature, just as the gate is grown over with vines, and there is no longer a key that will fit. The taboo itself should be lock enough against violation, just as Lissar believes that the tiny gate is lost among the vines, sealed tight.

But on the third night, it is this gate which is “ravished open,” a choice of language that foreshadows the unspeakable events about to take place (McKinley 81). Paralyzed by panic, Lissar cannot move from her bed, though Ash makes a valiant attempt to defend her mistress by attacking the intruder. But the king has come prepared to face such an onslaught, and flings Ash aside with gauntleted hands, breaking her body against the window frame. When Lissar begins to scream, her father beats her bloody, then rapes her when her voice gives out.³¹ The text states, “And then he left her, naked, on her bloody bed, the body of her dog at the foot of the broken window; and he left the chamber door open, and the garden gate as well” (83). The king leaves the doors open behind him; he has no shame regarding the act he has committed, nor does he show any reluctance to leave his daughter naked and bleeding, nearly dead, in his wake. His behavior implies that he sees such a violation as his right, both as Lissar’s father, and as the king. He is completely without remorse. As the symbolic embodiment of the patriarchy itself, the king believes he has only exercised his right to do as he pleases with his daughter.

Afterward, barely alive, Lissar knows she cannot remain in her father’s court, so she and Ash set out to go as far away from the king’s house as possible. In spite of her many wounds and

³¹ Rape by the father also occurs in the early medieval text *Apollonius of Tyre*.

the pain they cause, Lissar manages to limp away from her abuser's home. Travelling for an unspecified amount of time, she and Ash arrive at an abandoned cabin that becomes their home for the next few months. In this liminal space, Lissar learns not only how to survive on her own, but also the extent of the damage that has been done to her. Some of her memories are now beyond her recall, and she can barely stand to touch her own body, as she feels it is an enemy, without being able to remember why. The pain culminates when she miscarries her father's child and experiences a horrifying vision of her parents. She sees her father as a "man-dragon," and her mother as a monstrous woman made of fire, who reaches out with gigantic arms to claim her in death (117). The relationship between the dragon and the woman further confirms Lissar's parents' significance as representations of the patriarchy and the feminine ideal. Tradition dictates that dragons breathe fire, and the image of Lissar's mother is a woman made of flame, implying that the patriarchy has breathed out this monstrous female. But this hallucination is driven back by another vision, of a woman, who is "both black and white, shadowed and unshadowed, a blackness with a light upon it and a whiteness shining from the dark" (117). Only later does Lissar learn that this vision whom she calls "the lady" is actually the Moonwoman, a legendary goddess-like figure revered by the people of the land she has entered.

While *Peau d'Ane*, the princess in Perrault's "Donkeyskin," receives her disguise through the counsel of her fairy godmother, Lissar is magically gifted with a disguise by the Moonwoman. The replacement of the fairy godmother with a mystical, goddess-like figure signals a connection between Lissar and the sacred feminine. Estes refers to this archetypal figure as Wild Woman, and elaborates, "She is both friend and mother to all those who have lost their way, all those who need a learning, all those who have a riddle to solve, all those who are out in the forest or the desert wandering and searching" (7). Moonwoman is a literary descendant

of virgin moon goddesses like Artemis, a huntress who serves as a patroness to hurting women. As a rape victim herself, “she watches out for young creatures, particularly those who are alone, who are hurt or betrayed, or who wish to make a choice for themselves instead of for those around them” (McKinley 212-13). By choosing an ageless woman who looks near to Lissar’s own age, McKinley provides a foil for Lissar’s mother, in place of the grandmotherly figure of the fairy godmother. This sets up a strong contrast between the sacred feminine and the patriarchal feminine, with one reaching out to destroy Lissar and the other welcoming and nurturing her.

Lissar’s actual disguise is far more complicated than that of Peau d’Ane. For five years, she and Ash sleep on the side of a mountain, until they have faded from the memory of those who might suspect their identities. When Lissar wakes, she is given the appearance of Moonwoman, her dark hair and amber eyes replaced with white hair and black eyes. Lissar, unlike most of the ATU 510B heroines, is revered because of her disguise, as she is frequently mistaken for the Moonwoman herself. While the princess in “Donkeyskin” darkens her face and hands with ashes and dons the pelt of her father’s prized donkey, Lissar is physically transformed, but is also granted a magical piece of clothing.³² Unlike the donkey skin that makes Peau d’Ane a social outcast, Lissar is given a magical white deerskin dress that is resistant to stain or wear.³³ It is this dress that causes her to choose the name Deerskin in place of the name she has forgotten. While Peau d’Ane gains temporary agency that must be put off with her disguise and her assumed identity, Lissar faces a different situation. Deerskin is not an identity,

³² This resembles the physical transformation of the princess in Giambattista Basile’s “L’Orsa” (“The She-Bear”). However, Lissar is also given magical clothing, like the princesses in all true ATU 510B variants.

³³ The specific choice of a deerskin disguise harkens back to *The Odyssey*, in which Athena gives Odysseus a deerskin cloak as part of his disguise (Homer book XIV, lines 446-56). Guillaume and Melior also briefly disguise themselves in deerskins in *Guillaume de Palerne*.

but a negation of identity. Just as Moonwoman embodies feminine potential and possibilities, Deerskin is given the freedom to explore those possibilities by taking on the appearance of Moonwoman. In this way, Lissar is set apart from the other ATU 510B heroines, because she does not surrender her agency when she casts aside the persona of Deerskin. Instead, the anti-identity of Deerskin serves as a liminal space for Lissar, a threshold between the abused princess she was before and the woman she will become.

Having accepted her disguise from the Moonwoman, Lissar undergoes a similar social degradation to that of Peau d'Ane. She, like Perrault's princess, is assigned a menial task caring for animals. The difference is that Lissar truly enjoys the work she is given in the kennels, caring for a litter of puppies everyone else has given up on. Lissar sees these puppies as an extension of herself, as she too has come back from the edge of death, and she fights to keep them alive. Through the entire process, she is aided by Prince Ossin, who also loves dogs, and particularly wants to save this valuable litter. In this way, the prince and princess are drawn together more tightly than would have been possible otherwise. But this leads to what is presented as a dilemma: they fall in love.

Lissar still cannot see herself as whole, so she cannot accept the possibility of love. She is afraid of Ossin's offer of marriage, because she still blames herself and her own body for her father's violation. She believes that "even now the memory of that act of violence would shatter her; she could not contain the memory even as her body had not been able to contain the results of its betrayal" (222). So she runs away again and hides in the Moonwoman's cabin. Still, Lissar is not making decisions for herself. She has allowed the shame of her rape to dictate her decision to run away from love and the possibility of an adult, physical relationship within the context of

marriage. And when she returns to the Moonwoman's cabin, she does not leave until she feels irresistibly drawn back to the yellow city, where Ossin's father rules as king.

When she returns to the yellow city, Lissar does not know why she has been called back, but the extra sense Moonwoman has given her draws her to the palace. On the way, she hears that there is a wedding about to take place. At first, she believes she has been drawn there to observe Ossin's wedding and to recognize that she can go on without him. But she soon learns that Ossin is not the one getting married. His younger sister, Princess Camilla, who has just passed her seventeenth birthday (the age at which Lissar was raped), is to be married to a foreign king, whose wife died many years earlier and whose daughter is said to have been killed five years before. Lissar hears the story and, with horror, realizes that Camilla is about to be married to Lissar's rapist father. Recognizing the urgency of her errand, Lissar races to the palace and interrupts the wedding ceremony. And so it is, for the first time in five years, Lissar confronts her father, with the words "You shall not marry this woman, nor any woman, in memory of what you did to me, your own daughter" (McKinley 295). Lissar feels as though the words are torn from her, without her own volition, and so they are. She cannot help but speak them; they are her unconscious will finally asserting itself to avenge her battered psyche.

The scene then becomes the most fantasy-like section of the novel, for perhaps it is only in fantasy that an abused daughter may confront her father so vindictively. Lissar, haloed by white light, begins to bleed from her palms, much like she did the night she was raped by her father. She then draws her bloodied hands through her white hair and the color spreads, restoring her hair to its original color, her mother's shade of "mahogany-black" (McKinley 297). She stands and accuses her father, before everyone gathered for the wedding:

“I carried your child—my own father’s child—five months for that night’s work; and I almost died again when that poor dead thing was born of me . . . I often thought that I would choose to die rather than remembering what drove me to madness, for I believed the shame was mine. For you were king, and your will was law.” (298)

Here Lissar boldly stands and recites what she was taught in her father’s kingdom: the shame was hers. She had brought her suffering upon herself by daring to oppose the king, whose “will was law.” She recites the lies of the patriarchy in the face of her own ultimate patriarchal authority, even as she condemns him for violating her.

Lissar then proclaims, “But I return to you now all that you did give me: all the rage and the terror, the pain and the hatred that should have been love . . . I will bear them not one whit of my time on this earth more” (McKinley 298). With these words, Lissar is brought to her knees, as dark, thick blood flows from between her legs, from the source of her deepest wound. This blood flow symbolizes Lissar’s own rebirth. She is essentially birthing herself—her independent, adult self, who recognizes her own power. Lissar is no longer the trembling princess who cowered before her father, nor is she Deerskin, the traumatized young woman who could no longer remember her own name and history. She stands on her own as Lissla Lissar, a woman who has endured years of suffering to be able to choose her own fate.

Lissar undergoes another transformation as the people watch, and “she was again the blazing figure she had been . . . but she was . . . no longer white but red and golden . . . But for some of those watching the woman made of flame was two women, and they were identical, except they were inimical” (McKinley 299). During this second transformation, Lissar begins as a white figure, a color that Estes describes as “a promise that there is nourishment enough for things to begin anew, that the emptiness or the void would be filled” (99). This filling takes place

when Deerskin resumes the physical appearance of Lissar in a metaphysical rebirth. But Lissar must also exorcize her mother's ghost—the specter of patriarchal femininity—in order to be free. The people fear the red flame woman, as well they should, for she is the embodiment of the eroticized feminine, the murderous beauty, the ghost of Lissar's mother. And so, in this ultimate psychological battle, Lissar banishes the red woman from herself. The red figure, symbolic “of sacrifice, of rage, of murder, of being tormented and killed” (Estes 99), is vanquished, and Lissar stands alone.

With a strength beyond herself, Lissar seizes her father and he recognizes her for the first time. Then, “a look of horror . . . ran fingers like claws over his face, and left a broken old man where a proud king had once stood” (McKinley 301). This echoes the story of Lissar's grandfather, who aged inexplicably when his daughter married and left him. More significantly, though, it is the metaphorical revelation of the truth behind the patriarchy: that what seems to be an immovable power is in fact “a broken old man” that draws strength only from those weak enough to believe its lies. Lissar has shaken free of the ideological bonds that would hold her and robbed the patriarchy of its own strength.

In the last pages of the novel, Lissar again runs from Prince Ossin. This time, however, he runs after her. Unlike the prince in “Donkeyskin,” Ossin did not go spying at keyholes to discover Lissar's identity; rather, he waited for her to reveal herself. And so she did, but this fairy tale is not as simple as the one told by Perrault. For the princess bears wounds that refuse to heal, and the revelation of her identity must necessarily include a revelation of those wounds. For Ossin to love Deerskin, he must love Lissar, the broken princess. And for him to love Princess Lissar, he must love the wild Deerskin. Estes explains, “To love a woman, the mate must also love her untamed nature. If she takes a mate who cannot or will not love this other side, she will

surely . . . be left to limp around unrepaired” (125). This is what is lacking from Perrault’s fairy tale: the prince does not love the princess as Peau d’Ane, while she is free to act as she wills. Only when she puts off both her disguise and her independence can she become his bride. But Ossin, the hunter-prince, loves both sides of Lissar, both the wild huntress and the wounded princess. And so he goes after her, which leads to the revelation of the novel’s greatest change to the tale.

When Ossin finds Lissar, he refuses to catch her physically, instead hoping she will make the decision to stop running.³⁴ When she does, he pleads with her to trust him and to become his bride. She reminds him of her scars, and he acknowledges them, but he hopes that Lissar will move beyond the remembrance of her past and allow herself a future. As she steps into Ossin’s arms, Lissar knows that “she would stay there—for now. And she promised herself and Ossin . . . that she would try to stay there, for as long as the length of their lives; that she would put her strength now and hereafter toward staying and not fleeing. But I do not know how strong I am, she said. I cannot promise” (McKinley 308). This is the heart of the changed fairy tale. In the end, the heroine still has the freedom to stay or to go. She is not held fast by the prince, as in the Grimms’ variant, nor is she swept into a wedding ceremony attended by her predatory father, as in Perrault’s story. Even at the point where a “happily ever after” should be guaranteed, it is still Lissar’s choice alone. And, because of the wounds she bears, there can be no promise. So this is the pledge that Ossin accepts: that his wife will try to remain at his side, as long as she can bear it. For this tale, it is enough.

As the heroine of the final iteration of ATU 510B, Lissar must come through the darkest trials faced by women: the lust of the incestuous, patriarchal father; the internalized influence of the feminine ideal; and the revelation of her own place in the midst of these things. Only after

³⁴ This contrasts significantly with the violent revelation of Allerleirauh’s identity in the Grimms’ fairy tale.

she has confronted both of her ideological parents can she recognize her own right to choose her destiny. For that is what matters in this last variant of the fairy tale. Not the finality of the happy ending, but the heroine's ability to choose (or not) that ending for herself.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“She took me to the king’s grave; there we spread the donkey skin, cracked and frayed. I didn’t need it any longer; let it keep him warm.”

Emma Donoghue, “The Tale of the Skin”

In her book *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes discusses the idea of the “scapecoat” (386). As a psychologist who deals with traumatized women, Estes explains that she often finds it beneficial to have her patients fashion a full-length coat to fit themselves, decorated with representations of all the insults that have been hurled at them. She then explains, “They never want to destroy their scapecoats once they have made them. They want to keep them forever, the nastier and the gorier, the better. Sometimes we call them battlecoats, for they are proof of the endurance, the failures, and the victories of individual women and their kinswomen” (386). This is reminiscent of the animal skin disguise in “Donkeyskin.” The skin itself is a means of degradation, a reminder of the lust that causes the princess to hide her own body in shame. But the skin is also her means of freedom, a way to escape the lustful gaze, and a symbol of all of her suffering. When the prince takes away the donkey skin, he is also denying his bride’s past and part of her identity. He has stolen her scapecoat so that he might have his lovely queen.

While ATU 510B may be an ancient tale, it maintains relevance, even in the twenty-first century. In a time when women are still shamed for speaking out about being raped and are still blamed for being abused, this tale echoes across centuries to speak to us. While there may be little hope for the early princesses except an empty happy ending, with contemporary retellings, we begin to see the heroine of this tale blossom and grow. This change lends hope to those who

watch in horror as old videos of the now-President of the United States are played, and Donald Trump jokes, “If Ivanka weren’t my daughter, perhaps, I would be dating her” (Lavender). In a society where incest is still considered by some a matter to be joked about, there is a need for this tale. Many times, stories have foreshadowed change in society. We can hope for the storytellers’ revisions of ATU 510B to presage changes in the twenty-first century.

This acknowledgement of the continuing significance of ATU 510B’s themes is also reflected by the title of this thesis, “Some Things Grew No Less With Time,” which is taken from Robin McKinley’s *Deerskin*. In the context of the novel, the quote refers to the continuing psychological trauma Princess Lissar is experiencing as a result of having been raped by her father. As the title of this manuscript, it is a reminder of the cultural impact of incest and misogyny. Fairy tales were originally collected because they were considered repositories of the ideas and troubles of a nation’s people. To find so many stories concerned with the threat of father-daughter incest scattered across centuries reveals the horrible truth that this subject has haunted us for far too long. The impact of incest has grown no less with time. But just as ATU 510B has begun to offer hope for its heroine after centuries of retelling, let us hope that one day this fairy tale will only be a reminder of traumatic events that used to take place, once upon a time.

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