Robin McKinley

Pegasus (Pegasus, 1)

United Kingdom (2010)

TAGS: Pegasus

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General information	
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Author of the Entry	Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

Creators

**Robin McKinley , b. 1952
(Author)**

Robin McKinley is an award-winning and prolific American author who currently resides n the UK. She won the Newbery Medal for *The Hero and the Crown*, a Newbery Honour for *The Blue Sword* and the Mythopoeic Award for Adult Literature for *Sunshine* (from the book).

Robin McKinley has written numerous books as well as contributed to other books and collections. Many of her novels are fantasy with a focus on a strong female character. Her series of novels are *Pegasus* and *Damar*.

Source:

Profile at fantasticfiction.com (accessed: August 20, 2020).

Bio prepared by Ayelet Peer, Bar-Ilan University, ayelet.peer@gmail.com

Additional information

Summary

The story is set in a fantasy land called Balsinland. In this land, humans and Pegasi share a unique 1000-year-old alliance. The Pegasi in this book share a civilized society, with artisans and other artists; they have produce paper and fabrics. When Princess Sylviianel, King Corone IV's fourth child and only daughter becomes 12 years old, she receives a Pegasus named Ebon. She is ceremonially bound to him, as is the ancient custom in her kingdom. All members of the royal family are bound to their Pegasi during a ceremony which includes magical words. From that moment on the human and Pegasus are bound to each other. It is a special honour and privilege to be tied to a Pegasus, yet it is often a merely ceremonial bonding. Only the King and his bonded Pegasus King, Lrrianay, actually exchange ideas in a particular sign language. It means that a certain Pegasus will escort the royal (or other dignitary bound to it) in the palace and will attend to him/her without further communication. However, Sylvi and her black Pegasus, Ebon, share a unique bond, unlike the others. They can talk to each other via a kind of telepathy. This ability makes Sylvi get closer to Ebon, he even allows her to fly on his back, and the story follows their friendship for four years, until Sylvi's sixteens birthday. Before her birthday, Sylvi is invited to visit the Pegasi land, Rhiandomeer; she is the first human to receive this invitation. She is also invited to visit the scary and mysterious Pegasi Caves, the walls of which are covered by unique carvings made by Pegasi sculptors over thousands of years.

While her parents are supportive of her special bond with Ebon, Sylvi's unique ability causes alarm in the royal court, especially amongst the magicians. The chief magician, Fthoom, is vehemently opposed to any such union. The magicians traditionally control all communication between humans and Pegasi, and some of them are used as translators. However, they have their secret agenda (not fully revealed in the book), and they wish to maintain their monopoly on being the bridge between the races.

Sylvi soon discovers she is much attracted to the Pegasi world and she realizes that the human magic does not bond the races but keeps them apart. The Pegasi become weaker due to it, and therefore the dependency on the human magician for any communication grows. She finds out in the Pegasi Caves that, by using the magicians, the humans may have been deceiving the Pegasi from the beginning.

Unfortunately, the book ends on a cliff-hanger, when Fthoom manipulates the historical records to denounce any unique bondage between humans and Pegasi, much to Sylvi's and her father's dismay and anger. Fthoom does it during a turbulent time when the kingdom is under attack by ferocious bird-like creatures named Rocs. After the magician's harangue, while Sylvi and the court are in disarray, both Lrrianay and Ebon disappear. There is currently no sequel.

Analysis

The book offers a rich fictional world of power struggle, royalty and magic. There are many terms and names, relating to the human kingdom as well as the Pegasi society, and it can take several readings to understand all the terms fully. The story does not rely on any Greek mythological reference, except for the Pegasi. Nevertheless, the Pegasi form the heart of the book and are its primary focus, especially their relations with humans.

The story is a growing-up tale. It focuses more on Sylvi's growth and her inner struggles and conflicts than on any external plot. Sylvi is a strong heroine who s not afraid of voicing her opinions against those with power. Through her friendship with Ebon, Sylvi develops from being a happy twelve-year-old princess to a mature young adult, who can evaluate the intricate political difficulties of her society and the Pegasi's. She finds herself being more drawn to the world of the Pegasi, and even afraid of losing her humanity if she would succumb too much to their world.

The Pegasi warmly welcome Sylvi; they see her as a valuable ambassador, who can connect with them openly and truthfully, without any external assistance and thus relate their wishes to the King and the court. They wish to form a stronger alliance with the humans, but they are impeded by the magicians.

Only when Sylvi understands Ebon and his background better, can she truly appreciate and learn about her origin and history. Confiding to Ebon and caring for him is an essential stage in her maturation.

The Pegasi are described as sublime beings; everything the humans are not. They are not motivated by greed or ambition and are thankful for the alliance, which allows them to remain peacefully within their borders. Yet while the Pegasi king asks Sylvi to convey his message of peace and unison, Fthoom declares from his falsified records that the

alliance is rotten from its core: "The truth is that your selves, your spirits, your beings, are absolutely opposed to each other: to draw you closer together is to press the sword point to your own hearts.'" (p. 397). These words are meant to draw the races apart instead of bringing them together and reveal the magician's plan to abolish any understanding between the races that might jeopardize the magicians' monopoly.

To conclude, the mythological Pegasus was associated with the gods (for example, running errands for Zeus). He temporarily agrees to take Bellerophon on his back, yet when Bellerophon's hubris overtook him, Pegasus threw him off his back. Hence Pegasus is understood as a mysterious and unique being. The author took the image of the flying horse further and provided it with new mythology and society. It is not just one Pegasus but an entire civilization of Pegasi, creatures symbolizing what is pure, natural and right in the world. They seek peace and tranquillity, but humans, like Bellerophon, are motivated by ambitions and haughtiness.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Pegasus

Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Conflict Family Good vs evil Journeys

Addenda	The review refers to the Kindle edition.