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A Tale of Two Nations' Histories

The Application of Literary Fairy Tales as a Firsthand Account of History

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By

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Introduction

Fairy tales are often thought to be solely for children as a means of education and entertainment. This has not always been the case as literary fairy tales have been utilized as political instruments by authors and intended for a highly educated audience. Using fairy tales as a facade provided protection for authors, as outright criticisms against those in power usually resulted in dire consequences such as imprisonment or even death for the objector. The literary fairy tale provided a medium that allowed authors to express their opinions under the guise of a story. Understanding this allows one to interact with firsthand accounts of society and history.

Analyzing Giambattista Basile's and Charles Perrault's variants of the tale commonly known as "Sleeping Beauty" give insight into the sociohistorical atmosphere of Italy and France during the seventeenth century. These two variants of "Sleeping Beauty" were chosen as they were written for similar audiences, but different key details paint drastically different pictures which can be applied to Italy and France during that time. The intended audiences for both were aristocrats in the respective countries of the authors. The authors have diametrically opposed motives for writing the tales: where Basile ridicules the Neapolitan court, on the other hand Perrault aggrandizes the French court of Versailles. To understand the hidden meanings within the tales, it is crucial to understand the sociopolitical environments in which the tales were written along with the life experiences of the authors.

Understanding the Baroque Period

Both authors write at the rise of the Baroque style in Italy and France. Italy is the origin of the Baroque style which started at the beginning of the seventeenth century, bringing Renaissance techniques to new heights. Just as the Renaissance took many decades to spread throughout Europe, the Baroque started to rise in France in the 1660s with the rise of King Louis

XIV, “It was during this period that painters, architects, stage designers, composers and singers came to Paris from Bologna, Modena, Venice, Florence or Rome” (De la Gorce). Louis XIV attempted to usher in the remaking of France by using the new lavish artistic style from Italy.

The entire point of Baroque works, including literature, were to create a piece that was so ostentatiously beautiful, one could not help but take notice. The concept of Baroque is to persuade and move one by overwhelming the senses with complex artistic beauty (Moser). The best way to understand the concept of Baroque is the music from the period. Baroque music is characterized by its heavily ornamented polyphony, meaning various complex melodies were played at once to create a grand harmonic sound. Some commonly known works are Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* and Handel’s *Water Music*. The Baroque style flourished most in Italy, France, and Spain.

The Life of Giambattista Basile

Giambattista Basile led the life of a courtier, soldier, poet, academic, and administrator. Basile was born in the Neapolitan area in the village of Posillipo around 1575 to a middle-class family and became an eloquent writer. Basile sought patronage in one of the various Neapolitan estates but failed to do so.

Basile left his homeland in his mid-twenties and lived in Venice for a while. During Basile’s time in Venice, he met Andrea Cornaro, a nobleman, who invited him to join his *Accademia degli Stravaganti*. This was a significant moment in Basile’s life as this was where he officially entered established literary circles of the times (Canepa, 39-41). After spending some time in Venice, Basile decided to return to Naples.

Upon returning to Naples, Basile was able to partake in Neapolitan literary circles with the help of his semi-famous sister, Adriana Basile, who was a singer and composer. Adriana was

invited by the Gonzagas of Mantua to join their court and she ensured Giambattista was invited as well. There he orchestrated courtly entertainment but would soon return to Naples once again. Finally settling in Naples, Giambattista served as a court administrator doing various tasks to support the daily operations for whichever nobleman he served under, giving him a stable career. During this time, he also worked on various literary pieces, including his masterpiece *Il Pentamerone*, where the tale “Sun, Moon, and Talia” can be found. Basile’s life as a wandering poet and administrator from court to court gave him great insight into the overarching court culture of Italy, allowing him to compare it to his native Naples.

The environment of Italy that Giambattista experienced was one of political turbulence, extravagance, and moral depravity. The situation of the Italian states during the seventeenth century gives a better understanding to his disenchantment with and critique of the various states within Italy, especially Naples.

The Italian States During Basile’s Time

The Kingdom of Naples during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was governed by Spanish viceroyalty. Naples had become a land where anything could be bought for the right price and the hierarchy that had been in place for centuries became extremely corrupt, “It is therefore not surprising that in Naples, as in Rome, patrons, audiences and playwrights preferred conventional comedy and, at most, conventional social satire, to a more profound analysis of the human condition” (Koenigsberger). The condition of Naples became satirical even among its own nobility.

The Venice that Basile experienced and the atmosphere of the northern Italian states was much different than that of Naples. The Republic of Venice was arguably the wealthiest and most powerful trading power in Europe throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

While the economic decline that affected Italy during the seventeenth century also affected Venice, it remained both culturally and economically significant throughout Europe. The Venetian schools were held in high regard throughout Italy and this is what led Basile to be desirable as, “Mantua, Ferrara, Urbino and, even more, Rome itself, lived on the artistic potential of the great cities, above all of Florence and Venice” (Koenigsberger).

Summary of Basile’s “*Sole, Luna, e Talia*” (Sun, Moon, and Talia)

Basile’s tale “Sun, Moon, and Talia” starts with a preface about how those who are wicked often dig their own grave and those who are innocent will be protected in the end.

The tale itself starts with a great lord who had a daughter named Talia. The lord demanded all the soothsayers in the land to come and predict Talia’s future. The fortune tellers said she would be greatly harmed by flax. Therefore, the lord banished flax and hemp from his residence. However, one day Talia saw an old lady on the street spinning thread and was curious to find out what she was doing. So, Talia invited the old lady into the palace to come and show her how to spin thread with a spindle. When Talia tried it for herself, she got a splinter of flax under her fingernail, causing her to fall into a deep sleep.

Her father was struck by immense grief and decided to place her in a remote palace in hopes to forget his misfortune. She was placed in a room and put on a velvet settee with luxurious brocade overhanging it.

Then one day a king was passing by the palace and his falcon flew into one of the palace’s windows. The bird did not return when summoned. The king tried knocking on the doors but to no avail. He then climbed inside the palace using a ladder and found Talia laying there asleep. He tried his best to wake her but could not. So, before leaving, he took advantage of her as she slept. He left for home and had forgotten what transpired for a while. In the meantime,

she bore twins from the encounter, one named Sun and the other Moon. Fairies placed the twins on her bosoms to nurse. Not finding the breast, they accidentally sucked Talia's finger instead. Their sucking pulled the flax from her finger and she awoke. She was surprised to see two children by her side and no one else.

After some time, the king remembered Talia and went back to see her again. He saw she had awoken and had two children, and he was shocked. The king introduced himself to Talia and stayed with her for a few days. On his departure, he promised to return to get her.

On the king's return to his own kingdom, he could only think of Sun, Moon, and Talia, so much that it was all that came out of his mouth. Now, the king's wife had grown suspicious and ordered the king's secretary to tell her the truth. She threatened him by saying that he was "between Scylla and Charybdis" and his fate was laid before him, depending if he told the truth or not (Basile, 365). He told her the whole truth. Knowing this, the queen sent the secretary to tell Talia that the king wished to see the children. Gladly, Talia complied.

The queen devised a plan to have the king eat his own children, acting with "the heart of a Medea" (Basile, 366). She ordered the cook to kill the children, cook them various ways, and serve them to the king. The cook pitied the children and tricked the queen. He took the kids to his wife and cooked two young goats instead. The meal was served to the king and he liked it very much. The queen kept reminding him that he was eating what was his. The queen did indeed believe the king ate the children and wanted to dispose of Talia next. The queen devised a similar plan and sent the secretary back to get Talia. When the queen met Talia, she demeaned her "with the face of a Nero" (Basile, 367). The queen had a fire lit to cook Talia. She ordered Talia to undress (the queen wanted her bejeweled dress) and be taken to the spit.

Amid the queen's scheme to kill Talia, the king arrived. He learned that the queen had killed Sun and Moon because the king had betrayed her and she wanted to avenge his adultery. The king was consumed with guilt and rage at the death of his children. He soon turned his rage to the queen. He wanted her to pay for her crimes, along with the secretary and the cook. The queen and secretary were thrown into the hot coals. When the king was about to punish the cook, he fell to his knees. He told the king that he had saved the children and they had not been killed. The king could not believe it, but if it were true, he was to reward the cook greatly. The cook's wife brought out the children and the cook became the king's chamberlain. After, the king married Talia and the family lived long lives.

The tale ends with the verse:

"He who has luck may go to bed,
And bliss will rain upon his head" (Basile).

Analysis of "Sun, Moon, and Talia"

The overarching themes in Basile's "Sun, Moon, and Talia" are that of rape, infidelity, and tyranny. Since Basile was a courtier, he expressed the hypocrisy and immorality of the courtly society by perceptively penning entertainment they would read.

He writes in the Baroque style using double entendres and metaphors as a way to satirize the hypocrisy of society, especially the nobility. Basile's *Il Pentamerone* was a mockery of the established Boccaccian novella-style of writing based on *Il Decameron*.

The theme of predator and prey is prevalent through the entire tale. Basile chooses to have Talia born to a lord who has a kingdom, and it is a king who trespasses on the lord's countryside palace where Talia is. The king trespassed because his falcon flew in one of the palace's windows. The falcon is a predatory bird and led the king to his prey. The falcon

symbolizes authority, power, and wealth (Wilcox, et al). These are principal characteristics of Spain at the beginning of the seventeenth century as Spanish exploration of the Americas in the sixteenth century made it extremely wealthy and powerful, but that soon changed (Canepa, 38). The fiscal crisis Spain faced throughout the costly Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and its depleting resources coming from the Americas resulted in immense financial pressure levied on the Kingdom of Naples (Canepa, 38). Much of the wealth Spain acquired during the seventeenth century was appropriated from Naples to support its war efforts. Naples had no choice but to comply. The innocent being taken advantage of is also shown through Talia being violated.

The theme of rape is an extremely important element as it is what starts everything. The king takes advantage of Talia while she is asleep, unconscious, and unable to defend herself. He cannot resist his depraved instincts. Basile uses Baroque euphemisms to “justify” such a repulsive act knowing his audience will be disgusted and revolted by the king’s immoral actions. Basile does this to give the sense of the depravity of aristocratic behavior during his time. Something so horrendous and against any social decency was ordinary. The regularity of blatantly inappropriate behavior of the aristocracy was leaving a mark on society, thus leading to its deterioration. Usually, noble purity (at least maintaining the appearance of purity) was paramount in Europe, and Basile wanted to express how it was completely tarnished in Naples.

Just as Talia could not regain her virginity, the Neapolitan nobility could not regain its integrity. Ordinarily, noble titles were extremely hard to attain, but not in Naples where anyone could be one with the proper amount of coin. The number of landed nobles increased in Naples, but the amount of territory each controlled dwindled along with the contents of their coffers, causing a domino effect of more noble fiefdoms to be auctioned to the highest bidder (Canepa, 36-38).

The king had taken away from Talia one of the most important things for young unmarried women, her virginity. During this time, “Women were widely viewed as emblems of Catholic morality ... the protection of a woman’s chastity was vitally important, especially for younger women” (Rosenthal, et al). This knowledge was implicit for Basile’s audience. Within the context of the story, if the king had not violated her, she would not have had the children who removed the flax, awakening Talia. In a perverse way, the king *awakens* Talia, thus he “saves” her by violating her.

Talia’s sleep also represents the lack of power young women had. She was at the mercy of the king just as women of the time were at the mercy of the males in their family, “... men exclusively dictated the societal expectations of women” (Rosenthal, et al). Women’s power and rights were nonexistent, and they were expected to acquiesce to the desires of the patriarchy without opposition. To resist would mean going against expectations, which was for women to be compliant.

Talia was victimized by the king and did exactly what she was supposed to do, which was nothing. She even had two children out of wedlock for something she had no control over. Once she awoke, it was up to her to take care of them by herself. Basile is emphasizing the tyrannical nature with which men in power acted and how women were pawns who could be discarded at their whim.

Not only does her “dormancy” refer to women, but for Basile it symbolized the situation Naples found itself in. The economic stagnation and decline of the Italian Peninsula after the Renaissance affected all the Italian states, and particularly the Kingdom of Naples. Not only did it economically stagnate, but also structurally as southern Italy experienced re-feudalization and Italian goods lost demand in Europe as their French, English, and Dutch equivalents became

more available and affordable (Canepa, 36). The power and wealth of Spain was waning as well, causing Spain to put financial pressure on Naples. Having no other choice, Naples had to continue to pay high taxes to Spain. Naples politically, socially, and economically contracted which compounded its marginalization from the rest of Europe, hence becoming dormant.

The queen represents many things such as jealousy, wrath, and revenge. In her own right she also represents tyranny. It should be noted that within the story she is depicted as malicious and vindictive, but it is the king who acted with infidelity and broke his vows towards his wife. She does act with villainous tendencies, but she too is a victim to the king's wrongdoings.

After the queen found out the truth about the adultery, she is described as having "the heart of a Medea." Making references to classical literature was quite common during the Baroque period. Basile's educated audience would have understood the classical references as it was a part of the typical education for those who were privileged to receive one. Basile is referencing Euripides' tragedy *Medea*, from Greek literature. In the tragedy, Jason who is married to Medea and has two children with her, leaves Medea to marry the princess of Corinth. In her rage, Medea devises a plan to exact her revenge by killing Jason, the princess of Corinth, and all of Jason's children, even Medea's own children (Knox).

Here, Basile makes a direct analogy to better understand the complicated feelings of the queen in Basile's tale. In both Euripides and Basile's tale, the spark that lit the flame of rage in the women was that of their husband falling in love with another woman. Medea addressing the audience in her soliloquy, "It is the thoughts of men that are deceitful, their pledges that are loose" (Knox). It is interesting that both villains were wives that were betrayed by their husbands, yet the men took no responsibility, nor is punished or condemned, for their actions.

A woman was supposed to idolize her husband and be obedient, so is it surprising that the queen or Medea lashed out in rage after betrayal? No! If their husband was supposed to be the whole point of their existence, they had nothing left to lose and rage replaced any love they had for their spouse. The queen may have been justified in her rage, but not in the actions that followed it.

The queen represents tyranny, and this is best set by her reference to Scylla and Charybdis. Here, Basile makes another connection to Greek mythology. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the sorceress Circe is the one who tells Odysseus how to traverse the treacherous waters between the vengeful monster Scylla and the whirlpool Charybdis. If Odysseus did not do exactly what Circe said, Odysseus and his crew would be killed by the monsters, similar to how the king's secretary could only save his life by telling the queen the entire truth. In Greek mythology, Circe represents the powerful jealous woman. She poisoned Scylla and turned her from a nymph into a hideous six-headed monster because Circe was jealous of her. It is no coincidence Basile chose to make two references to classical literature. Basile successfully built up the queen as a fearsome character who abused their power and status to seek revenge, something a tyrant would do.

The Life of Charles Perrault

Charles Perrault was born to a middle-class family in Paris, France in 1628. He attended prestigious schools and became a lawyer by trade. Known as a great writer early on, he landed himself a position as secretary of the *Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* under none other than Jean-Baptiste Colbert, King Louis XIV's chief minister. The main goal of the *Académie* was to adorn and elevate the image of the monarchy using symbolism from antiquity ("Membres").

Perrault was an ardent supporter of Louis XIV and his ideology. Later in life he was elected as an official member of the *Académie Française*. A very important position, “The main function of the Academy is to work with all possible care and diligence to give certain rules to our [the French] language and to make it pure, eloquent and capable of dealing with the arts and sciences,” and was established by Cardinal Richelieu and institutionalized by King Louis XIII (“L’Histoire”). After a forced retirement, Perrault decided to devote his life to writing, which is where he wrote *Histoires ou Contes du Temps passé*, published in 1697, and where his “Sleeping Beauty” variant can be found (“Charles Perrault”).

Versailles during Perrault’s Time

To understand the French court at Versailles when Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty” was written, it is important to understand the life of King Louis XIV, commonly referred to as the “Sun King.” Louis essentially implemented the shift from French feudalism to French absolutism. Perrault wrote his tale to support this shifting paradigm in France.

Upon the death of King Louis XIII in 1643, Louis XIV was only four years old and not of a suitable age to rule, making his Spanish mother Queen Anne of Austria his regent alongside her chief minister, the Italian-born Cardinal Mazarin.

The Queen Mother and cardinal essentially co-ruled the kingdom of France for just under two decades. This precarious situation, along with unfavorable policies implemented by the two, left many nobles resentful and led some nobles to form a rebellion against the Crown. This rebellion culminated the year Louis XIV was legally recognized to be of ruling age in 1651, later known as *La Fronde* (Goubert, 119-120). When Louis XIV took the reins as sole ruler of France in 1661, the state was in turmoil.

Not soon after taking the reins of power away from the Queen Mother and Cardinal Mazarin, Louis XIV decided to move the royal court from the Louvre in Paris to the *Château de Versailles*, which was one of Louis XIII's hunting lodges. Elaborate plans were made to build around the chateau and create a palace that would house thousands of nobles. Major construction of the palace took place in four parts with the last major one ending in 1710. The building of Versailles not only symbolized the remaking of France, but also of French noble identity and the subjugation of the nobles to the Crown (Chae).

Everything was symbolic of the king's power and of courtly etiquette. One of Louis' strategy in subduing the nobility was to give them an identity to be proud of. Music was a way to materialize the aspects of the monarch and nobility, "The aestheticization of power and the musical envoicing of court ideologies were thus critical components of both sovereign authority and noble identity" (Chae). This relates to all forms of *divertissement* (court entertainment), including literary fairy tales. Once, nobles were quasi-princes of their own lands with their own mini courts but were now forced to bend to the kings every whim. Etiquette was crucial and necessary in order to ensure court life was structured, proper, and symbolized France how Louis wanted it to be seen.

Summary of Perrault's "*La Belle au Bois Dormant*" (Sleeping Beauty)

There was a king and queen who had hoped to have a child for many years. The two did various charitable works hoping to appease God. Then, the day finally came where the queen fell pregnant and thus gave birth to a girl. A grand baptismal ceremony and feast was held where all the fairies in the land were invited as honored guests. The king and queen invited seven fairies to the celebrations. However, an elder fairy was forgotten and did not receive an invitation for no one had seen her in fifty years. She attended the ceremony anyway to demonstrate her power.

The elder fairy felt insulted at both not receiving an invitation and not being able to dine on the bejeweled golden plates that were set out for the other fairies.

When the time came for the fairies to give their blessings, the princess was given the gifts of immense beauty, angelic wit, endless grace, dancing, singing, and that she would play music well. The elder fairy's "gift" was that the princess would die by touching the spindle of a spinning wheel. Luckily, a good-hearted young fairy intentionally went after the elder fairy and her blessing was to only have the princess fall asleep for one hundred years upon touching the spindle. Upon awakening, a prince will be at her side.

The princess in her mid-teens was not being supervised within the palace and found an old lady spinning thread with a spindle. The old lady did not know of the banning of spindles within the palace and the princess was curious about the spindle so tried it herself. She pricked her finger and collapsed into a deep sleep. Everyone tried to wake her up, but the king recalled the fairies' blessings and that the princess falling into a deep sleep was fated. After some consideration, she was laid to rest in a beautiful room adorned with finery. When the young fairy who saved her before arrived, she protected the princess by encircling the palace with thorny brush and:

"She touched with her wand everybody (except the king and queen) -- governesses, maids of honor, ladies-in-waiting, gentlemen, officers, stewards, cooks, undercooks, scullions, guards, with their beefeaters, pages, footmen... Immediately upon her touching them they all fell asleep, that they might not awake before their mistress and that they might be ready to wait upon her when she wanted them" (Lang, 51-52).

One hundred years later, a prince arrived at the palace. He heard various legends about the abandoned palace, but someone told a tale of a princess that would awake when the prince

she would marry made his way up to her chambers. He decided to try and get into the palace. The thick bramble only made way for the prince and blocked everyone else from entering. He saw servants and courtiers in a deep sleep and a palace that had been dormant for a century. The prince found the princess' chambers. He saw a beautiful princess in a grand chamber surrounded by servants. The princess awoke when the prince came to her bedside. The two were overwhelmed with love and emotions. The two discussed things for hours. After confessing their love, they were wedded that evening. A grand feast was held along with other festivities in the palace. Everything had happened just as the good fairy foretold.

The princess stayed in her palace while the prince returned home. For two years the prince and princess met in secret. The prince always had an excuse for his absence from home, but his mother, who was an ogress, did not believe him. She believed he had taken on a wife. Meeting in secret for two years, the couple had two children together, a girl named Morning and a boy named Day. Upon his father's death, the prince became king and announced his marriage to the princess as she joined him in his palace as queen. The queen mother, the ogress, was rumored to like eating children. She was not fond of the new queen or her children from the onset.

The prince went off to war and selected the queen mother as regent during his absence. Then, the queen mother wanted to dine on Morning and ordered the chef to kill and cook her. The chef was a kind man and could not follow through with killing the child. So, he killed a lamb and served it to the queen mother instead with a delicious sauce. The chef hid Morning with his wife. The trick worked and she thought that she ate Morning as the dish was so delicious. A few days later the queen mother wanted to eat Day. The chef used the same ruse and it worked. Soon after, the young queen was the next on the menu. The chef did intend to kill her

in order to save his life. However, he could still not follow through with the act. The young queen was ready to die so she could be reunited with her children she thought killed. The chef told her that her children were still alive and safe with his wife. The chef cooked a deer in her stead and dressed it with the same delicious sauce. The queen mother was extremely satisfied.

One day the queen mother was sniffing for raw meat to eat when she heard Morning, Day, and their mother talking. When the queen mother discovered she had been tricked, she ordered everyone involved in the plot, along with the queen and her children, to be thrown into a large vat of deadly snakes. In the midst of the execution, the king returned to the palace and in the heat of the moment, the ogress threw herself in the tub instead. The king, princess, and the children no longer had to live with the treachery of the ogress (Lang).

Analysis of “Sleeping Beauty”

Perrault writes his tale in the French Baroque style which is characterized by overaccentuating details and colorful descriptions. Unlike Basile’s harsh opinion of the Neapolitan court, Perrault was an avid supporter of Louis XIV and the change he was trying to implement. Perrault’s tale is a perfect example of how the arts were employed to socialize the French nobility during Louis’ reign (Rabinovitch). Perrault’s viewpoints borderline obsession, but this is how he was able to attain such high regard for his works, because Louis approved of them. Without Louis’ approval, it is unknown how well-known his tales would have been, if at all. This is best shown by Perrault’s work *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand (The Century of Louis the Great)* which he wrote decades before Louis’ reign ended.

Life at Versailles was synonymous to a large, orchestrated dance. The day-to-day lives of the nobles in residence were planned and structured, even down to who could enjoy the *privilege* of watching the king eat. Everything was a theatrical performance in the court. Louis sought to

deify himself and made this very clear as opera-ballets were composed where Louis played central roles like Greek gods and nobles would have to dance around him (Samama and Clements). Perrault played his part in the “dance” of Versailles as his tale is filled with etiquette and propriety.

The tale starts out with a king and queen who are extremely wishful to have a child, which having an heir to the throne is one of the most important duties of a king and queen. While having a male born to the king and queen was preferential, it was especially important in France. Different from the other monarchies in Europe, a woman could not assume the position of sovereign in France. This is known as Salic law and has its roots from the time of the Frankish Empire.

The king and queen being childless for a while may have been a reference to Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, Louis XIV’s parents. The couple were notorious for being married for decades without bearing any children, but Louis XIV and Philippe I d’Orléans were eventually born. Perrault may have been referencing what was seen as the miraculous birth of Louis XIV.

There were seven fairies that were invited to the princess’ christening. The number seven is extremely important in Christianity as, “The number seven symbolizes the unity of the four corners of the Earth with the Holy Trinity” (Winch). Perrault is saying that the princess will achieve all of the heavenly gifts proper for a woman. Here, there is already a hint at the socialization of women and the etiquette they should abide by. Perfection is the set ideal for women, and the princess attained that.

The elder fairy who was forgotten is very symbolic of the nobility who clung to the “old ways.” These were the nobles from long established families that held lots of power during feudal France. The greatest threat throughout Louis XIV’s reign was not any foreign power, but

the nobles from his own kingdom. Perrault states that the elder fairy had not been seen for fifty years. Perrault wrote his tale in 1697, and fifty years before then would have been right around when the *Fronde* would have occurred. The *Fronde* was a noble uprising resulting from the Crown trying to centralize power that started in 1648 and ended in 1653; this is what left a lasting impression on Louis XIV in how he saw the French nobility (Goubert, 119-120). Both the elder fairy and nobles holding on to the feudalistic ways were provoked into acting out of spite. However, both were respected and feared. To make the nobles wholly submit, Louis would humiliate and ridicule them in front of the other high-ranking nobles, making an example of them. The elder fairy cursed the princess to show she should not be forgotten or disrespected, even if she has not been seen for a while.

The blessings given to the princess were the ideals impressed on young noble women and the etiquette that dictated their lives. Beauty, wit, grace, dancing, singing, and playing music were all traits that the perfect lady should possess. The imposition of the ideal woman was integral to reshaping the French nobility, “Good manners were increasingly becoming the concern of an aristocratic class that felt obliged to define itself in terms other than those of the warrior ideal of feudalism” (Bouffard). This meant the education, actions, forms of dress, and court propriety of women were extremely structured to where their life was never their own. Men were meant to symbolize the strength of the nobility where women were expected to exemplify their beauty and grace. The codification of etiquette was essential for Louis XIV’s reshaping of noble identity to compel the nobility to visualize itself as entitled socialites instead of highborn warriors. The intent behind this was a way to subdue the nobility, essentially turning them into petty aristocrats more worried about appearances than political maneuvering.

When the good fairy put the entire palace to sleep, Perrault conveys the message of the extreme wealth of the royal family. The Baroque was a time where wealth was to be flaunted, and nothing showed wealth off better than how many servants one had attending them. The extent to all of the servants Perrault lists gives the grand image that the princess was laid to rest with an excessive entourage, something that was done for the ancient pharaohs of Egypt. It is possible Perrault was attempting to deify the royals. Louis XIV saw himself as an Apollo figure, hence why he was called the “Sun King” (Chae). Perrault providing a litany of servants from governesses to cooks was deliberate as he is emphasizing the importance of royalty and the absolute obedience their servants ought to demonstrate.

The protection of the princess was symbolic of how women were essentially locked up until a husband was found for them. A woman’s purity was to be protected until marriage. This resulted in young women to be sheltered until a marriage could be arranged for them (Rosenthal, et al). In the tale, she was protected until her fated husband found her, just as the good fairy foretold.

The fated meeting of the princess and the prince fit all parameters relating to proper etiquette. First, a princess should marry no lower than a prince, and the goal would be to marry them to a king or an heir apparent. Second, the lady should be seen as pure when presented to her husband as anything else might jeopardize the marriage. Here, the princess was protected by the bramble that only opened for the prince. The princess was laid to rest in exquisite finery, the perfect image for the prince when he first sees her. When he made his way up to her chambers, all protocol was followed. The prince and the princess quickly courted then were wedded in the chapel shortly after. The fact that they fell in love was the cherry on the top of everything. What

makes their match magical was that they married within class and that they both loved each other.

The queen mother, on the other hand, represents exactly how women should not behave. Perrault makes her an ogress because it should be impossible for any woman to act like her. She acts with complete selfishness, jealousy, and malicious intent. However, the ogress herself cannot help the way she acts as it is in her “inhuman” nature to do so. When she becomes the regent after the king is off to war, she completely abuses her power and decides to eat her grandchildren due to her ogre nature. She is also the opposing force that women sometimes face when dealing with mothers-in-law.

The idea that a man leaves his mother to join his new wife sometimes causes the mother to feel betrayed. From the onset, the son hid his new wife from his mother, even though she suspected it from the beginning. She was kept in the dark of an extremely important part of her son’s life, and she had no control over it. She was betrayed from the beginning, making it easier to dislike her daughter-in-law.

When the chef went to kill the young queen, she was willing to die because the queen mother willed it, and she would be able to join her children that she thought had died. Here, the young queen honors the chain of command as she knows she cannot oppose the queen mother who was acting as regent. The young queen took away what used to be the queen mother’s, the role of being *the* queen. So, the ogress made sure to assert her dominance and the best time to do this was when the king is away.

The ogress not only did evil things but delighted and prided herself in doing them. Thanks to the kind-hearted servants, her plans did not come to fruition. Even when she found out that she was tricked, she doubled down and, in her rage, decided to gruesomely kill everyone

involved in the deception and the three she meant to kill. However, she got a taste of her own medicine when it was the ogress who ended up dying a death as vile as her intent.

Comparing Basile and Perrault

Basile and Perrault's variants each paint different pictures about court life. Basile expresses the reality of the Neapolitan nobility where Perrault reinforces the etiquette demanded of the French nobility. Perrault was aware of and used Basile's variant as a basis for his own tale (Camus and Duggan). It is possible that Perrault understood the meaning behind Basile's tale and how it was a way to describe Basile's distaste of the Neapolitan nobility. From this, Perrault may have seen how he could use tales as a way to reflect the proper way the French nobility should act. Perrault's tale was written in a way that upholds the etiquette demanded of the nobility, contradictory to the message Basile's tale conveys.

A big difference between Basile and Perrault's tale is that of infidelity. In Basile's tale, the king betrays his wife with Talia. Neither the queen nor Talia are at fault for this. In Perrault's variant, the princess is not violated by the prince and the two are married before any intimate relations. In addition, the prince was free to marry and was not cheating on his wife. During the seventeenth century, it was normal for kings and powerful nobles to have mistresses. Ironically, the French kings were notorious for their mistresses and their relationships were very public. Similar to Basile's tale, the French queens felt enraged and humiliated by their husbands flaunting their young beautiful mistresses. Even though Basile's tale has infidelity as a main theme, it is the French nobility that were the most public in their infidelity.

The identity of the antagonist is another key difference that demonstrates familial conflicts. For Basile, this is the queen who becomes fueled with rage after knowing her husband has fallen in love with another woman. This is a marital conflict between husband and wife. For

Perrault, the antagonist is the queen mother who is an ogress. Perrault makes her an ogress as it would be absurd for any woman to act in such a barbaric and malicious way, and to be a cannibal. However, the dynamic between the queen and queen mother is an in-law conflict.

The catalyst of the conflicts also differs as in Basile's variant it is the king's actions that create conflict where in Perrault's variant it is the queen mother who starts the conflict. These familial conflicts are universal and have occurred for millennia and will occur in the future. This gets to the heart of human nature. In each tale, without conflict there is no triumph for the protagonist. Humans learn through hardship and opposition and are content when the conflict ceases. For both tales, the king and queen are able to live their lives without misery by the death of the antagonist.

Conclusion

The literary fairy tale provided a medium that allowed the authors to express their opinions under the guise of a story. The variants by Basile and Perrault give firsthand perspectives into how they viewed society. These accounts allow contemporary readers to learn history and culture through a literary fairy tale.

Basile used the fairy tale to express his contempt for the Neapolitan nobility, whereas Perrault exemplifies the idealistic etiquette expected of the French nobility. Both authors were part of the societies they depicted, making their works integral to understanding how each society operated. Understanding how societies operated in the past gives comparative instances of how society has changed, evolved, and/or digressed throughout time. History tends to repeat itself, so studying the past assists in shaping the future by learning from past accomplishments and mistakes.

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