The Fairy-Tale Vanguard:

Literary Self-Consciousness in a Marvelous Genre

Edited by

Stijn Praet and Anna Kérchy

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

The Fairy-Tale Vanguard:
Literary Self-Consciousness in a Marvelous Genre

Edited by Stijn Praet and Anna Kérchy

This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Cover image: Detail from the frontispiece to Jonathan Swift, *Le conte de tonneau*, trans. Justus van Effen (1757), vol. 2, p. 87. After Bernard Lens and John Sturt. © Swift Studies (Ehrenpreis Centre)

Cover design: © Jonas Gezels

ISBN (10): 1-5275-3472-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-3472-8

CHAPTER TWO

PERRAULT'S VANGUARD EXPERIMENTATION WITH APULEIUS, BASILE, AND HISTORY: SLEEPING BEAUTY, PSYCHE, AND THE BOURBON PRINCESS

UTE HEIDMANN

Charles Perrault's tales are the result of a complex literary experimentation with stories, texts and generic forms that already existed in Latin, Italian and French literatures. The comparative textual and intertextual analysis conducted in this chapter shows how Perrault ingeniously composed "La Belle au bois dormant" ("The Beauty Sleeping in the Wood") by drawing on several episodes of the ancient tale of Psyche embedded in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, also called *The Golden Ass*. Perrault has this complex 'intertextual dialogue' with the Latin *fabella* underlain with another dialogue simultaneously held with Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti* (1634-1636) (*The Tale of Tales*), more precisely with two *cunti* already referring to Apuleius' narrative of Psyche, yet in another way.[1] Countering Nicolas Boileau's ideological prescription to imitate the Ancients, Perrault invents a truly vanguardist "non-imitative" and "differential" way to refer to the ancient text and its Italian intertextual and generic reconfigurations. The precise analysis of the paratextual and discursive dimensions of the dedication manuscript (1695) and the first printed editions of "La Belle au bois dormant" (1696, 1697) reveals a potentially subversive political dimension of this bold poetic experimentation. Inviting the Princess Elisabeth Charlotte d'Orléans, niece to Louis XIV, to read the volume with "a certain degree of penetration", Perrault enables her to detect the significant relations between Psyche's, Sleeping Beauty's and her own

[1] I have defined the concepts of "intertextual dialogue" or "response", "intertextual" and "generic reconfiguration" in Heidmann, *Intertextualité* 34-36, 37-40.

destiny and political role, and decipher the "very relevant moral" encrypted in the tale.

In the programmatic preface to his versified volume entitled *Griselidis, Nouvelle avec le conte de Peau d'Asne* [...] (*Griselidis, Novella with the Tale of Donkey Skin)* published in 1694 Perrault comments on Apuleius' famous *fabella* in the following terms:

> Concerning the hidden Moral of the Fable of Psyche, in itself a very pleasant and ingenious Fable, I will compare it to the one of *Donkey Skin* as soon as I know it, but until now I have not been able to guess it. I know well that Psyche means Soul, but I do not understand at all what it means that Amor is in love with Psyche, that is to say the Soul, even less so when one adds that Psyche should be happy as long as she would not know that the one who loves her was Amor himself, but that she would be very unhappy as soon as she would get to know him: to me, all of this is an impenetrable enigma.[2]

This ironic comment on the *fabella*'s "hidden moral" calls into question the secular tradition that had invested the Apuleian narrative with an allegorical meaning.[3] Proceeding from this rather iconoclastic statement, Perrault composes his own tales by reconfiguring the ancient "Fable of Psyche" through innovative textual, intertextual and generic procedures. Inscribing them into the socio-cultural and discursive context of court society, Perrault transforms the ancient Fable and its Italian rewritings into tales of his own time.

Thirty years earlier, Jean de La Fontaine had rewritten Psyche's story by relocating it in the gardens of Versailles, then under construction in order to receive the court of the young Louis XIV, who had decided to make it the seat and symbol of his absolute power. Perrault's colleague had embedded the famous *fabella* into metapoetical *roman* (*novel*) entitled *Les Amours de Psiché et de Cupidon* (*The Loves of Psyche and Cupid*) published in 1669. In the novel, a certain Poliphile reads out a modernized

---

[2] Unpaginated Preface, *Griselidis*. "À l'égard de la Morale cachée dans la Fable de Psiché, Fable en elle-mesme très agréable & tres ingénieuse, je la compareray avec celle de Peau-d'Asne quand je la sçaurai, mais jusques icy je n'ay pû la deviner. Je sçay bien que Psiché signifie l'Ame; mais je ne comprens point ce qu'il faut entendre par l'Amour qui est amoureux de Psiché, c'est-à-dire de l'Ame, encore moins ce qu'on ajoûte, que Psiché devoit estre heureuse, tant qu'elle ne connoistraist point celuy dont elle estoit aimée, qui estoit l'Amour, mais qu'elle seroit tres malheureuse dès le moment qu'elle viendroit à le connoistre: voilà pour moy une enigme impénétrable". All translations of Perrault are mine.

[3] See Gély, *Invention*.

version of Psyche's story from his own working manuscript as he is visiting the gardens of Versailles with three of his friends. In the process, Apuleius *fabella* is reconfigured into a *conte galant* (tale of gallantry), a generic form La Fontaine had brought into fashion. Poliphile's rewriting of the eventful love story between Psyche and Cupid contains oblique allusions to the young monarch's adulterous love affair with the young Louise de La Vallière.[4] Two years later, La Fontaine's reconfiguration of Psyche's story had been staged by Molière and Corneille as a dance performance, in which the Sun King himself took on the role of Cupid. It was subsequently transformed into an opera by Lully. These *mondaine* reconfigurations of Psyche's story were still present in the memory of the court society when Perrault decided to take up the intertextual and generic experimentation with the Apuleian text initiated by La Fontaine in order to give it another direction by inventing a new generic form that I have suggested to define as a "pseudo-naïve tale".[5]

By the end of 1694 or beginning of 1695, Perrault had composed a series of five narratives and had them copied by a scribe into a luxurious dedication manuscript intended for the Princess Elisabeth Charlotte d'Orléans, daughter of Louis XIV's only sibling Philippe d'Orléans and the Princess Palatine.[6] She was nineteen years old when she received the dedication manuscript with her coat of arms stamped on both covers representing a crown with three lily flowers, the emblem of the Bourbon dynasty. The volume opens on a page with the handwritten title *Contes de ma mere L'Oye* (*Tales of My Mother Goose*) and the indication of the year, 1695. The second page presents a colored gouache drawing of a plain interior with a spinning domestic who is telling such "Mother Goose Tales" (explicitly suggested by the wooden plaque on the wall behind her). She obviously addresses the young man sitting by the fireplace while she is intensely listened to by a royally dressed boy and a girl in whom Elisabeth Charlotte d'Orléans might have recognized herself at a younger age, when she and her brother Philippe d'Orléans had been told such old wives' tales themselves by nurses and domestics.[7]

---

[4] See Heidmann, "Histoire ou conte".

[5] Concerning Perrault's intertextual dialogue with La Fontaine, see Heidmann, *Intertextualité* 65-69, 91-101 and *Expérimentation* 64-66.

[6] The manuscript was discovered in Nice in 1953, purchased by the Pierpont Morgan Library and reproduced and edited by Jacques Barchilon under the title *Perrault's Tales of Mother Goose* in 1956.

[7] In the printed edition, Perrault has this gouache drawing of the manuscript's first page transformed into a frontispiece now facing the more complex title *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, Avec des Moralitez.*

Fig.1. Full page drawing on the second page of the 1695 manuscript

The third page opens on a vignette crowning the dedicatory letter that personally addresses the princess by her official title "Mademoiselle" and runs on for five pages. Next, we see another colored gouache vignette, placed above the first narrative of the volume, "La belle au bois dormant". Then come "Le petit chaperon rouge" ("The Little Red Cap"), "La Barbe bleue" ("The Blue Beard"), "Le Chat botté" ("Puss-in Boots") and "Les Fées" ("The Fairies"), each of them likewise 'crowned' by a colored vignette. This alternation of texts and images in the dedication manuscript (as well as in the enlarged printed edition of 1697) and the precise order in which the narratives follow one another hold an important function in Perrault's poetical experimentation.[8]

The dedicatory letter establishes a series of meaningful relations between the "real" historical Princess Elisabeth Charlotte, the literary Princess Psyche and the unfortunate princess of Perrault's tale. The Bourbon Princess is meant to perceive the subtle parallels and differences

[8] A comparative analysis of the 'iconotextual dynamics' of the dedication manuscript and the printed 1697 edition can be found in Heidmann, *Images*.

between the three princesses' destinies and draw useful and relevant instructions from them concerning her own personal and political situation. She can find the first allusion to Psyche in the vignette topping the dedicatory letter, which deserves special attention here.

The image represents an oval frame with a painted plaque placed on a socle and flanked by two winged Amor-figures. This artful object resembles the type of pivoting mirror that not-coincidentally would later be referred to as a "Psyche", suggesting that the woman looking into the mirror will see herself as beautiful as Psyche. The Amor-figure on the left is pointing its finger at a lily blossom painted on the oval plaque, recalling once again the emblem of the Bourbon dynasty. Instead of the pleasures of love suggested by Psyche and Cupid's happily ending story, which the Bourbon Princess knew very well,[9] the figure reminds Elisabeth Charlotte of her political role and personal situation as a princess of "pure" Bourbon blood.

Fig. 2. Vignette on the third page of the 1695 manuscript

[9] The palaces of the Bourbon dynasty were decorated with paintings, tapestries and objects representing various episodes from the famous ancient Fable. See Heidmann, *Fabella*.

The banderol floating above the scene bears an inscription in Latin, a *devise* or motto that summarizes her political destiny in four words: PULCHRA ET NATA CORONAE.[10] "Pulchra", meaning "beautiful", hints at Psyche's well-known epithet, which Perrault's tale also uses for the Princess called "La Belle". Making sure that the meaning of this *devise* can also be understood by readers without knowledge of Latin, he includes a French translation in Alexandrine verse on the socle. While the Latin *devise* captures the situation and political role of the Bourbon Princess in a phrase without pronoun and verb (PULCHRA ET NATA CORONAE, "beautiful and born for the crown"), the French translation adds them, transforming the *devise* into a direct speech that is put in the mouth of the Princess herself, making it a kind of personal insight: "Je suis belle et suis née / Pour estre couronnée", "I am beautiful and born to be crowned". Thus the dative form "coronae" ("for the crown") becomes "born to be crowned", insinuating that the Princess' beauty and her very existence (her being born) had to serve the one purpose to maintain the power of the Bourbon dynasty.

Looking at the dedicatory vignette would remind the Princess of her own personal and political situation that everyone at the court knew very well. Since the age of twelve, Elisabeth Charlotte d'Orléans had been the object of negotiations aimed at marrying her off to a person who would best serve the political interest of her almighty uncle and the financial interest of his brother, her father, who had ruined himself with the luxurious entertainment of his minions. By 1688, Louis XIV had decided to wed his niece to Louis Auguste de Bourbon, Duke of Maine, born in 1670 from his adulterous relation with Madame de Montespan. The marriage with the Bourbon Princess of "pure" royal blood would allow the king to legitimize his illegitimate offspring. With the agreement of her own father being paid for the deal by his royal brother, Elisabeth Charlotte would have been literally sold off to "the Montespan's bastard". To the great relief of the firmly opposed Princess Palatine (who uses this expression) the contract was finally not concluded, as she explains in her very outspoken letters.[11] By 1695, the Bourbon Princess was still unmarried, but she must have certainly understood that she would *not* share Psyche's destiny and enter into a marriage based on mutual love. *Her* royal destiny was to serve as human capital in the struggle for political and financial power of the Bourbon dynasty and especially Louis

[10] According to Barchilon (in Perrault, *Mother Goose Tale's* 31), the inscriptions in the vignette are by Charles Perrault's own hand.
[11] See Princesse Palatine, *Lettres* 112-114.

XIV, who had invested himself with absolute power over *all* his subjects, including the members of his closest family.

Reading the dedicatory letter after having examined the vignette placed above it, the Bourbon Princess receives more instructions on how to gain insight into her personal and political situation by comparing her destiny to those of Psyche and Sleeping Beauty.[12] The dedicatory letter first apologizes for the disproportion between what could appear at first sight as "the childish simplicity of the narratives" and the Princess' intelligence, complimenting her on the "amazing amount of enlightenment given to [her] by nature and education".[13] This first impression, however, will prove to be false, because each tale contains "une Morale très-sensée", a "very relevant moral". This moral will "reveal itself more or less according to the degree of penetration of those who read them".[14] When examined thoroughly ("Si on examine bien ces contes"), the Princess would understand the "very relevant moral" the tales hold in store for those who were able to read them with the requested degree of penetration. This reading instruction clearly hints at the fact that the narratives in the dedication manuscript are not authentic but feigned 'Contes de ma mère L'oye'. Defined as "ridiculous fables of the kind that old people used to tell children to amuse them",[15] spontaneous 'Mother Goose tales' would not demand such a hermeneutic effort.

The end of the dedicatory letter underlines the metapoetical importance of having chosen the historical Bourbon Princess as the emblematic reader of the volume: "Could I have done a better choice to show that the incredible things told in the fable are likely to happen in reality?"[16] The

---

[12] The dedicatory letter is signed with the initials P.P. for Pierre Perrault, Charles Perrault's son, who was seventeen years old in 1695 and serving as a lieutenant in the Grand Dauphin's army. See Heidmann, *Intertextualité* 56 and Heidmann, *Efficacité*.

[13] "la simplicité enfantine de ces récits", "l'amas surprenant des lumières que la nature et l'éducation ont rassembles en vous". La "simplicité enfantine de ces récits" will be substituted by "la simplicité de ces Récits" in the printed edition of 1697 and the "amas surprenant des lumières que la nature et l'éducation ont rassembles en vous" by "les lumières de votre esprit. (Unpaginated dedicatory letter).

[14] Perrault, *Histoires* 2. "qui se découvre plus ou moins, selon le degree de penetration de ceux qui les lisent". The "ceux qui les *lisent*" in the printed edition Perrault substitutes the earlier "ceux qui les *entendent*".

[15] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise* 239. "Des fables ridicules telles que sont celles dont les vieilles gens entretiennent & amusent les enfants".

[16] "Pouvais-je mieux choisir pour rendre vraisemblable, / Ce que la Fable a d'incroyable?" End of the unpaginated dedicatory letter. In the unpaginated

importance of this rhetorical question deserves more critical attention than it has received until now. It implies a crucial statement about the relation between fiction and historical reality and an essential instruction on how to read Perrault's tales. As the title of the printed edition clearly indicates, they are meant to be read *simultaneously* as *contes du temps passé*, that is to say, in relation to existing Latin, Italian and French tales "of the past time" used as intertexts by Perrault[17] and as *histoires du temps passé* that had happened or were likely to happen under the reign of Louis XIV. As such, they are to be read in connection to the historical reality of the Bourbon Princess. The following comparative intertextual analysis suggests such a twofold reading of "La belle au bois dormant".[18]

"La belle au bois dormant" draws on Apuleius' description of the most difficult mission Venus inflicts on Psyche, sending her to the Underworld with the following order:

> 'Take this small box'. and she gave it to her, 'find your way at once to the Underworld and to the gloomy dwelling of Orcus himself. Then bring the box to Proserpine and tell her: Venus asks you to send her a little bit of your beauty, just enough for one tiny day'.[19]

Being aware of the impossibility for mortals to return alive from the Underworld, the desperate Princess decides to commit suicide by jumping off a high tower. The tower comes alive, stops her attempt to kill herself and gives her helpful advice regarding the traps waiting for her there: "After you cross the river and walk on a bit, weaving crones that are busy constructing a warp will ask you to give them a hand for a while. But even

---

preface of his earlier book containing "Grisilidis" and "Donkey Skin", Perrault had defined "vraisemblable" as denoting "things likely to happen".

[17] These "tales of the past time" embrace different generic forms, the Latin *fabella,* the Neapolitain *cunto* and the French *conte galant*. Perrault's intertextual experimentation thus implies an "intergeneric" experimentation in the process of their creative reconfiguration.

[18] Meant to pay tribute to the high complexity of Perrault's innovative poetical and audacious political experimentation, the analysis presented here cannot be as complete as I would have wished because of space limitation. My still ongoing research on the socio-discursive context of the French narratives of the last decade of the seventeenth century reveals numerous elements confirming the relevance of his poetical and political project and the fact that he shares and elaborates it in an intense dialogue with authors of his time as Marie Jeanne Lhéritier and Fénelon. See Heidmann, "L'Efficacité" and *Intertextualité*.

[19] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 488-489. "'Sume istam pyxidem', et dedit; 'protinus usque ad inferos et ipsius Orci ferales penates te derige[t]'".

this you are not allowed to touch".[20] Well-advised by the helpful tower, Psyche thus manages to resist the "treacherous pleas of weaving women", eager to cut off the thread of her life.

With the episode of Psyche's encounter with the dangerous *textrices* in mind, Perrault composes the following scene for his own tale:

> After fifteen or sixteen years, the King and the queen having gone to one of their Houses of pleasure, it happened that the young Princess, running around the Castle one day, and climbing from room to room, went to the top of a donjon and entered a little garret where a good Old woman was alone spinning with her spindle.[21]

The parallels are evident and the differences even more striking: the donjon which the young Princess climbs like Psyche does the tower does *not* come alive to advise her, but remains a lifeless element of the setting. Not being warned about the trap waiting for her, she does exactly what her intertextual sister Psyche had been able to avoid. The French Princess engages in a lively conversation with the unknown spinning woman: "'What are you doing there, my good woman', said the Princess. 'I am spinning, my beautiful child', answered the woman who did not know her. 'Ha! How pretty this is', the Princess continued, 'How do you do this? Give it to me, that I may see if I can do the same'".[22] Not only does the Princess speak without precaution; she also touches the spinning woman's tools. By comparing the two scenes, the attentive reader understands all the better that she does so because she does not know that it is dangerous to put her hand on the spindle; the Princess has never received any warning from her royal parents, even though they are responsible for the curse weighing on their innocent daughter–the King having neglected to invite the mighty old fairy to court when the child was first born.

---

[20] Ibid. 507. "'Transito fluuio modicum te progressa<*m*> textrices orabunt anus telam struentes, manus paulisper accommodes, nec id tamen tibi contingere fas est'".

[21] Perrault, *Histoires* 9-10. "Au bout de quinze ou seize ans, le Roi & la reine estant allez à une de leurs Maisons de plaisance, il arriva que la jeune Princesse courant un jour dans le Château, & montant de chambre en chambre, alla jusqu'en haut d'un donjon dans un petit galetas, où une bonne Vieille estoit seule à filer sa quenoüille". All translations of Perrault's texts are mine.

[22] Ibid. 10-11. "Que faites-vous là, ma bonne femme, dit la Princesse; je file, ma belle enfant, luy répondit la vieille qui ne la connaissoit pas. Ha! que cela est joli, reprit la Princesse, comment faites vous? Donnez-moy que je voye si j'en ferois bien autant".

On the day of the fatal encounter with the old spinning woman, the royal couple has gone to "one of their houses of pleasure" ("une de leurs Maisons de plaisir") without worrying about their daughter's safety. As opposed to Psyche, Perrault's Princess is abandoned without any advice, and ignorant of the dangers waiting for her in the little garret of the donjon. Considered within the socio-discursive context of Louis XIV's reign, the Princess' striking ignorance and lack of information hint at a problem that had been made explicit by François Fénelon in his treatise on the education of girls, published in 1687 and reedited in 1696: "Nothing is more neglected than the education of girls [...] It is assumed that one has to offer only little education to the female sex".[23] This statement proves right for the Princess' father, who has completely omitted to inform his daughter of the historical and political reasons (including his own diplomatic mistake) why spindles represent a mortal danger to her.

Instead, the King has preferred to take great political action by "publishing an Edict whereby everybody was forbidden by pain of death to spin with a distaff and spindle or to have spindles at home".[24] The narrator's choice of the legal term "Edict" (note the officializing capital letter) situates this action within the discursive context of Perrault's own time: the King's absurd decision to forbid the entire population an essential and economically important activity for the sake of one person (who could have simply been informed of the problem) recalls the numerous "Edicts" imposed by Louis XIV on his subjects. In the last decade of the seventeenth century, the economic ruin of the kingdom progressively revealed the absurdity and egocentricity of his absolutist politics. Fénelon, who acted as a preceptor of the monarch's grandson between 1689 and 1696, addresses this problem non-ambivalently in an anonymous letter to Louis XIV written in 1693:

> All the talk is of the King and his pleasure. Your income and your expenses have been infinitely increased [...] Your subjects whom you should love like your children [...] die from hunger. Agriculture has been nearly abandoned. The cities and the country are depopulated. All handcrafts languish and they cannot nourish the workers any more. [25]

---

[23] Fénelon, *Education* 1. "Rien n'est plus négligé que l'education des filles [...] on suppose qu'on doit donner peu d'instruction à ce sexe".

[24] Ibid. 9. "de publier aussi tost un Edit, par lequel il deffendoit à toutes personnes de filer au fuseau, ny d'avoir des fuseaux chez soy sur peine de la vie".

[25] Fénelon, *Lettre* 544, 547. "On n'a parlé que du roi et de son bon plaisir. On a poussé vos revenus et vos dépenses à l'infini. [...]. Cependant vos peuples que vous devriez aimer comme vos enfants, et qui ont été jusqu'ici si passionnés pour vous, meurent de faim. La culture des terres est presque abandonnée. Les villes et

The King's absurd "Edict" proves useless for the Princess' safety, because it has not reached the old woman spinning in the donjon: "No sooner had she taken hold of the spindle than–because she was very lively, a bit dizzy and because the Decree of the fairies had ordained it this way– she pierced her hand with it and fell down fainting".[26] Perrault ingeniously conflates two well-known episodes from the Apuleian narrative in this scene. The prick of the spindle reconfigures the moment when Psyche pricks herself with Cupid's arrow, discovering his beauty in the light of the oil lamp, and "of her own accord [falls] in love with Love".[27] Beauty's immediate "falling down in a faint" refers to another suggestive scene described later in the Apuleian narrative when Psyche opens the box filled by Proserpine with "an infernal and truly Stygian sleep, which [...] seized her as she collapsed on the spot, on the very path. And she lay without moving, nothing other than a sleeping corpse".[28]

Perrault uses the suggestive force of Apuleius' image of the sleeping corpse to make it a central element of his own tale. Sleeping Beauty is indeed "nothing other than a sleeping corpse", but the narrator once again introduces a meaningful difference to distinguish her destiny from Psyche's.

In Apuleius' *fabella*, the Princess is almost immediately assisted by Cupid who "raced to help his dear Psyche; carefully wiping off the sleep and putting it back in its previous place in the box, he roused Psyche with a harmless prick from his arrow [...]".[29] In striking contrast to her intertextual sister, Perrault's Princess has to wait a hundred years to be awoken, and for a particular reason: "the Decree of the Fairies had ordained it this way" ("L'Arrêt des Fées l'ordonnait ainsi"). The use of yet another official legal term with a capital letter relates it to the King's Edict, both being instruments of state power. Here again, it is worthwhile

---

la campagne se dépeuplent. Tous les métiers languissent et ne nourrissent plus les ouvriers". All translations of Fénelon's text are mine.

[26] Perrault, *Histoires* 11. "Elle n'eust pas plutost pris le fuseau, que comme elle estoit fort vive, un peu estourdie, & que d'ailleurs l'Arrest des Fées l'ordonnoit ainsi, elle s'en perça la main, & tomba évanouie".

[27] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 285. "Sic ignara Psyche sponte in Amoris incidit amorem [...]".

[28] Ibid. 522. "sed infernus somnus ac uere Stygius, qui statim coperculo reuelatus inuadit eam crassaque saporis nebula cunctis eius membris perfunditur et in ipso uestigio ipsaque semita conlapsa<*m*> possidet".

[29] Ibid. 524. "Uelocius prouolans Psychen accurrit suam, detersoque somno curiose et rursum in pristinam pyxidis sedem recondite Psychen innoxio punctulo sagittae suae suscitat [...]".

reading the text with the "degree of penetration" recommended in Perrault's dedicatory letter:

> Assure yourselves, King and Queen, your daughter will not die of this: it is true that I do not have enough power to undo entirely what my elder has done. The Princess shall pierce her hand with a spindle, but instead of dying, she shall only fall into a profound sleep, which shall last a hundred years, at the expiration of which the son of a King shall come and wake her.[30]

The Fairy's quite official speech serves mainly to reassure the King and the Queen about their dynastic ambitions, announcing that their daughter will be awoken by "a King's son". The royal couple seems to understand immediately what this implies: their sole heiress, who must guarantee the continuation of their royal lineage, will be married to a Prince and eventually be crowned queen. The *devise* "PULCHRA ET NATA CORONAE" inscribed in the dedication vignette for the Bourbon Princess would indeed become reality for the Princess of the tale. Thus, the Fairy's Decree to have the Princess sleep for a hundred years actually suits the parents, but it causes serious problems for the Princess herself. When she wakes after a hundred years of sleep, once again she will be utterly ignorant of the dangers that lie in wait for her.

She addresses the unknown man sitting at her bedside with a startling familiarity: "As the end of the enchantment had come, the Princess woke and looked at him with eyes more tender than a first glance would seem to permit; is it you, my prince, she said to him, you have been waited for quite a while".[31] The narrator highlights the inadequacy of her behavior, offering as a possible reason that "the good Fairy had provided her with pleasant dreams during such a long sleep".[32] However, he ironically adds that "l'Histoire n'en dit pourtant rien", "the history, however, doesn't say

---

[30] Perrault, *Histoires* 8. "Rassurez-vous, Roi & Reine, vostre fille n'en mourra pas: il est vrai que je n'ay pas assez de puissance pour défaire entierement ce que mon ancienne a fait. La Princesse se percera la main d'un fuseau, mais au lieu d'en mourir, elle tombera seulement dans un profond sommeil qui durera cent ans, au bout desquels le fils d'un Roi viendra la réveiller".

[31] Ibid. 19. "Alors comme la fin de l'enchantement estoit Venuë, la Princess s'éveilla; & le regardant avec des yeux plus tendres qu'une première veuë ne sembloit le permettre; est-ce vous, mon Prince, luy dit elle, vous vous estes bien fait attendre". The corresponding passage in the dedication manuscript is the same, except some small typographical differences.

[32] Ibid. 27. "que la bonne Fée pendant un si long sommeil, luy avoit procuré le plaisir des songes agréables".

anything about that", playing on the double sens of *Histoire* meaning *Story* and *History*. The readers of the dedication manuscript and the first print edition of Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, Avec des Moralitez* will thus remain in doubt about the true reason of the Princess's imprudent behavior towards the unknown Prince, whom she marries some hours later without knowing that he is not only the "son of a King", but also the son of an ogress!

Those among Perrault's readers who read Sleeping Beauty's story with the high "degree of penetration" recommended to the Bourbon Princess would learn more about her strange behavior upon meeting the Prince by reading the 1696 February issue of the *Mercure Galant*, a widespread magazine that informed readers across France and abroad about life at the court of Louis XIV. They would find in this issue a more extensive rewriting of the 1695 version intended for Elisabeth Charlotte d'Orléans. Extracting it from the meaningful paratextual framing of the dedicatory vignette and letter, the Academician addresses the modified version of his tale to a wider circle of readers interested in the *mondaine* life of court society. This inscription of the narrative into another generic form and discursive practice–the *mondaine* magazine–are part of Perrault's intertextual and interdiscursive experimentation with the genre. He transforms and extends parts of the narrative into direct speech, thus rendering his protagonists more talkative and explicit about themselves. Instead of having the narrator speculate about the reason of the Princess' odd behavior at her awakening, Perrault has her explain the problem herself:

> 'Yes, my dear Prince', answered the Princess, 'looking at you I feel indeed that we are made for each other. It is you I saw, entertained and loved during my sleep. The Fairy had filled my imagination with your image. I knew that the one who would disenchant me would be more beautiful than Amor, and that he would love me more than himself, and as soon as you appeared, I recognized you without any difficulty'.[33]

Without having ever seen the Prince before, the Princess claims to have "recognized" him. According to her testimony, the Fairy had 'programmed'

---

[33] Perrault, "Belle" 98-99. "*Ouy, mon cher Prince*, lui répondit la Princesse, *je sens bien à votre vuë que nous sommes faits l'un pour l'autre. C'est vous que je voyois, que j'entretenois, que j'aimois pendant mon sommeil. La Fée m'avoit rempli l'imagination de vostre image. Je sçavois bien, que celuy qui devoit me desenchanter, seroit plus beau que l'Amour, & qu'il aimeroit plus que luy-mesme, & dès que vous avez paru, je n'ay pas eu de peine à vous réconnoistre*" (original italics).

her mind with his image, together with the firm belief that the unknown man who would present himself at her bedside in a hundred years' time would be the man of her life–even without knowing who he really was where he came from and who his parents were. She indicates that the Fairy had drawn up a hyperbolic portrait of her future husband, promising that he "would be more beautiful than Amor" himself. This hint to the Fairy's stereotypical allusion to the Amor-figure is of course highly ironic on the background of Perrault's own differential way of drawing on the Apuleian text. The Princess' naïve confession that her mind had been "programmed" reveals the process of psychological manipulation serving the marital politics of the royal dynasty. The "good" Fairy actually serves the dynastic plan of the parents by filling their daughter's imagination with the stereotyped and idealized image of the person to marry. The Princess having been programmed since her childhood to assume a dynastic marriage imposed on her, differs, here again, from Psyche, who "of her own accord fell in love with Love".

Having been gifted by the fairies with "a mind like an angel",[34] Sleeping Beauty remains under the impact of the idealized image of her husband without ever questioning his strange behavior. After the wedding night, he rushes home to his parents without telling them about his marriage, claiming that he had got lost in the forest. Never talking about his mother's cannibalistic desires to his wife, the prince does not "declare" his marriage and the birth of their two children until the death of his father, when he becomes King himself. In search of military glory, he immediately declares war on his neighbour, the Emperor Cantalabutte. Then, he does something that is quite baffling:

> He left the Regency of the Kingdom to the Queen his mother and strongly recommended his wife and his two children to her: He would be at war the whole summer, and as soon as he departed, the Queen Mother sent her Daughter-in-law and her children to a country-house in the woods in order to satisfy her horrible desire more easily.[35]

Instead of protecting the Princess from his cruel mother like Cupid, whom after all he is said to surpass in beauty and love, he simple abandons her and their children to the Queen Mother's "horrible desire" for the sake of his own vainglorious ambitions.

---

[34] Perrault, *Histoires*, 34. "un esprit comme un ange".

[35] Ibid. 43. "Il laissa la Regence du Royaume à la Reine sa mere, & luy recommanda fort sa femme & ses deux enfans: il devoit estre à la guerre tout l'Esté. & dés qu'il fut parti, la Reine-Mere envoya sa Bru & ses enfans à une maison de campagne dans les bois, pour pouvoir plus aisément assouvir son horrible envie".

Here again, the contrast with the intertextual script is striking: Cupid does not abandon Psyche, who is pregnant with his child, to his cruel mother, but tries to protect her from Venus' murderous attacks by seeking help from a higher power: "Meanwhile Cupid, consumed with a mighty love and looking unhealthy, in deep fear at his mother's unexpectedly sober behaviour, [...] made supplication to great Jupiter and pleaded his case".[36] The happy ending of Psyche's story is due to Jupiter's intervention which puts an end to Venus' wicked invectives and gives Psyche the status of a goddess, thus bringing the conflict down to the dynastic problem of a *mésalliance*: "And you, daughter [i.e. Venus], do not be troubled or have any fear for your great lineage and status as the result of a marriage with a mortal. I will now make this marriage not an unequal one but legal and in accordance with civil law".[37]

Perrault engages with Giambattista Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti* to offer two more intertextual alternatives to attract attention on the treacherous behavior of Sleeping Beauty's idealized Prince. Perrault could find them in the fourth and fifth narrative of the "Fifth Day" in Basile's "Lo turzo d'oro" ("The Golden Trunk") and "Sole, Luna e Talia" ("Sun, Moon and Talia"). Both reconfigure the famous "ancient Fable" by inscribing the action in the socio-discursive context of early seventeenth-century Naples. In "Lo turzo d'oro" the "Neapolitan Psyche", called Parmetella, has a lover who is the son of an ogress represented by Basile as a grotesque version of Venus. Unlike Sleeping Beauty's cowardly Prince, the "Neapolitan Cupid", Truone-e-lampe, informs Parmetella very explicitly about the dangers posed by his voracious mother and actively helps her to escape them.

The same goes for "Sole, Luna e Talia". A king discovers an abandoned palace while hunting where he finds the "sleeping corpse" of the beautiful princess Talia who had fallen into a death-like sleep because of a splinter of flax getting in her finger when she touched a loom. The King does not resist the temptation of making love to Talia in her sleep. He returns home to his wife and discovers nine months later, upon returning to the abandoned palace, that Talia has given birth to twins. By sucking on her finger in search of milk, the children have drawn out the splinter, thus reviving their mother. Named "Sole" (Sun) and "Luna"

---

[36] Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 529. "Interea Cupido amore nimio peresus et aegra facie matris suae repentinam sobrietatem pertimescens ad armillum redit alisque pernicibus caeli penetrato uertice magno Ioui supplicat suamque causam probat".

[37] Ibid. 542. "'Nec tu,' inquit 'filia. Quicquam contristere nec prosapiae tantae tuae statuque de matrimonio mortali metuas. Iam faxo nuptias non impares sed legtimas et iure ciuili congruas'".

(Moon) in Basile, Perrault transforms them into Sleeping Beauty's children called "Aurore" and "Petit Jour" (Dawn and Early Morning). In spite of the fact that the King in Basile's *cunto* is not the legitimate spouse of Talia, he comes to her and their children's rescue, when his jealous wife, transformed into an enraged Medea, is about to kill them. He intervenes to have his own spouse burned at the stake that she had destined for Sun, Moon and Talia.

All three intertexts, with Cupid and the two Neapolitan lovers intervening actively to protect Psyche and her intertextual sisters, shed a very critical light on Sleeping Beauty's treacherous Prince who might have had his historical model in Louis XIV himself. The narrator's use of terms denoting the political reality of the Bourbons, such as "Edict", "Decree", "Regency", "Kingdom", "Queen Mother", all with capital letters, invite the perspicuous readers to put into relation the events of *Conte* and *Histoire.* The striking incongruity of Sleeping Beauty being abandoned to the ogress can indeed be explained if it is referred to the political and personal events that had occurred shortly after Louis XIV had officialized his relation with the young Louise de La Vallière, whom La Fontaine had represented in his mondaine Psyche-figure thirty years before. Like the cowardly Prince in Perrault's tale, Louis XIV had taken a long time to recognize their two illegitimate children who had been brought up secretly by Madame Colbert. Shortly after that, Louis XIV had left for the Franco-Dutch War, abandoning Louise de La Vallière and their children to the wrath and jealousy of her dangerous rival, Madame de Montespan, the King's new lover. In his anonymous 1693 letter, Fénelon had reproached Louis XIV to have initiated this war for his own glory[38] holding him entirely responsible for "so many horrible troubles that have desolated all of Europe for more than twenty years, so much blood being shed, so many scandals committed", the "disastrous consequences of this war of 1672 undertaken for you glory".[39]

Against the background of Apuleius' and Basile's *tales of times past* and Louis XIV's *histoires du temps passé*, the attentive readers of Perrault's modern tale and especially the historical Princess Elisabeth Charlotte could perceive the irony with which the narrator has Sleeping Beauty's "charming prince" return from war at the very moment when his cruel mother is about to throw the Princess and their two children in a tank

---

[38] Fénelon, *Lettre* 544.

[39] Ibid. 545. "tant de troubles affreux, qui ont désolé toute l'Europe depuis plus de vingt ans, tant de sang répandu, tant de scandales commis, tant de villes et de villages mis en cendres", "les funestes suites de cette guerre de 1672 entrepris pour votre gloire".

full of snakes. The King claims to be very astonished ("tout estonné") at the sight of this horrible spectacle, but he refrains from actively intervening. The Ogress Queen Mother throws herself into the tank out of anger when she sees her son arrive, so that it becomes clear that the Princess and her children survive merely by chance. Reading the tale with the recommended "degree of penetration", the Bourbon Princess Elisabeth Charlotte could indeed understand its encrypted "very relevant moral": not to trust anyone in the vainglorious and hypocritical court society placed under the absolute power of Louis XIV.

Works Cited

Apuleius. *Apuleius Madaurensis Metamorphoses. Books IV 28-35, V and VI 1-24, The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. Eds. Maaike Zimmerman et al. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2004. Print.

Basile, Giambattista. *Lo cunto de li cunti.* ed. Michele Rak, Milan: Garzanti, 2006. Print.

Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise, dédié au Roy. Paris: Coignard, 1694.

Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe. *Education des Filles. Par Monsieur l'Abbé de Fénelon.* Paris: Pierre Auboin, Pierre Emery et Charles Clousier, 1687.

—. "Lettre à Louis XIV". *Œuvres.* Vol. 1. Ed. Jacques le Brun. Paris: Gallimard, 1983. 544-547. Print.

Gély, Véronique. *L'invention d'un mythe: Psyché. Allégorie et fiction du siècle de Platon au temps de La Fontaine.* Paris: Honoré Champion, 2006. Print.

Heidmann, Ute. "Intertextualité et dialogicité des contes". *Textualité et intertextualité des contes. Perrault, Apulée, La Fontaine, Lhéritier...* Ute Heidmann and Jean-Michel Adam. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010. 15-152. Print.

—. "Expérimentation générique et dialogisme intertextuel. Perrault, La Fontaine, Apulée, Straparola, Basile". *Féeries* 8 (2011): 45-69. Print.

—. "La *fabella* de Psyché dans les contes de Perrault, où comment faire des contes *modernes* avec un conte *ancien*?" *Psyché à la Renaissance.* Eds. Philipp Vendrix, Véronique Gély and Lorraine Mailho. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013. 217-231. Print.

—. "Ces images qui (dé)trompent... Pour une lecture iconotextuelle des recueils manuscrit (1695) et imprimé (1697) des contes de Perrault". *Féeries* 11 (2014): 47-69. Print.

—. "L'efficacité heuristique du concept de *scénographie* pour l'étude comparative des contes". *Analyse du discours et dispositifs d'énonciation. Autour des travaux de Dominique Maingueneau*. Eds. Johannes Angermuller and Gilles Philippe. Limoges: Lambert Lucas, 2015. 147-156. Print.

—. "Histoire ou conte du temps passé et critique du temps present: *La Belle au bois dormant* dédiée à la niece de Louis XIV". *Conte et Histoire, 1690-1800*. Eds. Marc Hersant and Régine Jourmand-Baudry. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018. 241-267. Print.

Perrault, Charles. *L'Apologie des Femmes. Par Monsieur P**. Fac-similé de l'édition Coignard*. Paris: Coignard, 1694.

—. *Griselidis. Nouvelle avec le conte de Peau d'Asne, et celuy des Souhaits ridicules. Fac-similé de la quatrième édition Coignard*. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1929 [1694]. Print.

—. "Contes de ma mère Loye. Fac-similé du manuscrit d'apparat". *Perrault's Tales of Mother Goose*. Ed. Jacques Barchilon. New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1956 [1695].

—. "La Belle au bois dormant. Conte". *Mercure galant. Dédié à Monsiegneur Le Dauphin.* Paris: Brunet, 1696, 75-117.

—. *Histoires ou contes du temps passé. Avec des moralités. Fac-similé du second tirage de l'édition Barbin*. Paris: Firmin Didot, 1929 [1697]. Print.

Princesse Palatine. *Lettres de Madame, Duchesse d'Orléans, née Princesse Palatine (1672-1722).* Ed. Olivier Amiel. Paris: Mercure de France, 1981. Print.