



## **“The Golden Root”: Cupid, Psyche, and Basile’s *Pentamerone***

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### **Abstract**

This paper traces the literary genealogy of the *Tale of Cupid and Psyche* from Apuleius to Disney, with a primary focus on the role that Basile’s *Pentamerone* played in this transmission. Through an analysis of different versions of fairytales, this paper discusses the literary relationship between Apuleius and Basile, which became a major part of the Western fairytale canon due to Basile’s influence on the tales of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm. The common motifs of these various accounts point towards the influence that the folktale nature of myth had on the later fairytale genre.

### **Keywords:**

Apuleius; Giambattista Basile; *Cupid and Psyche*; *Beauty and the Beast*

### **Introduction**

Apuleius’ Golden Ass is known for its early use of inset tales, a tradition that has since been practiced by Boccaccio in his Decameron, by Chaucer in The Canterbury Tales, and even by the modern comedy troupe Monty Python. While it is well-known that Boccaccio and Chaucer relied heavily on Apuleius, the seventeenth-century writer Giambattista Basile, a less popular author, also relied on Apuleius’ Tale of Cupid and Psyche and incorporated that specific inset tale into his own collection of fairy tales known as the Pentamerone. Focusing largely on the importance of Basile’s Pentamerone as a literary conduit, this paper will trace the history of the Tale of Cupid and Psyche from its Apuleian roots to its Disney “ever afters”.

Apuleius, author of the only complete surviving ancient Latin novel, the Golden Ass, was born c. 120 AD in Madauros in North Africa (Gaisser, 2008). Apart from his written work, he was also known as both a Platonic philosopher and a rhetorician, a persona that “peeks out tantalizingly

from time to time in the Golden Ass" (Gaisser, 2008, p. 5; O'Donnell, 2020). His most famous work, this eleven-book novel, includes various inset tales surrounding the central plot of the story: the transformation of the protagonist into an ass through the use of magic. One such inset tale is that of Cupid and Psyche, which is told by an old woman to a kidnapped bride. Through the mouthpiece of the old woman, Apuleius calls the tale a *fabula*, and as such it "is often considered the first fairy tale in Western literature" (Ziolkowski, 2007, p. 58). The relationship between Apuleius and fairy tale only begins here, however. As this paper will discuss, the Tale of Cupid and Psyche has a long literary history and can be traced from modern depictions back to the original source. Basile was a key player in this transmission, as his collection of fairy tales was influenced by the ancient novel.

Basile was an Italian poet and writer born c. 1566 in the Kingdom of Naples (Hurbánková, 2018). His most famous work, the *Pentamerone*, is a two-volume collection of fairy-tale stories published posthumously by his sister between 1634 and 1636 (Hurbánková, 2018). Originally titled *Lo Cunto de li Cunti overo Lo trattenemiento de' peccerille* (The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones), the *Pentamerone* gained its nickname by "bind[ing] up the fifty stories into a *Pentamerone* in the same manner as the *Decamerone*" (Croce, 2001, p. 881). The collection is set up as a frame story, with ten women each chosen by a prince to entertain his pregnant wife before she gives birth, telling one story per day over a series of five days. Although the stylization is reminiscent of Boccaccio, the subject matter and oral tradition of the stories influenced later fairy-tale writers, such as Perrault and the Brothers Grimm (Maggi, 2015). These storytellers adapted several of Basile's variants, many of which are the oldest known versions of the stories in existence and have had an impact on the modern fairy-tale audience through their reception as twentieth-century Disney movies. These include *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and *Cinderella* (1950) (Swann Jones, 1995).

Although only *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* can be directly traced back to stories from Basile, the relationship of *Beauty and the Beast* to both Basile and Apuleius is equally as interesting. The *Pentamerone*

included at least four variants of the Tale of Cupid and Psyche (The Padlock, The Golden Root, The Serpent, and Pinto Smauto).<sup>1</sup> These variants, as well as Beauty and the Beast (which is itself another Cupid and Psyche variant) all belong to the Aarne-Thompson-Uther folktale type “The Search for the Lost Husband” (ATU 425). This ATU type includes and combines episodes from the subtypes “The Animal as Bridegroom” (ATU 425A), “Son of the Witch”/Cupid and Psyche (ATU 425B), and “Beauty and the Beast” (ATU 425C).<sup>2</sup>

Both the Cupid and Psyche variants and the Disney “ancestors” inherited and adapted many plot-devices and motifs from the original account told by the old woman to the kidnapped bride, Charite, in the *Golden Ass*. As Hurbánková explains, “*Beauty and the Beast* is a family of stories that arose as a result of the transfer of Cupid and Psyche from Latin to various languages” (Hurbánková, 2018, p. 79). Following a manuscript tradition from the late Middle Ages, the tale was originally printed in Latin in the mid-fifteenth century. It was then subsequently translated into various European languages and spread throughout the continent (Bottigheimer, 2000). Each of these translations, of course, has their own peculiar style and distinct adaptation of the tale. Following both Maggi’s and Hurbánková’s conventions, I shall first focus on two of Basile’s *Cupid and Psyche* variants: *The Padlock* and *The Golden Root*. Then, I examine the history of the *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* stories. These variants will then be discussed in relation to our modern Disney portrayal of these tales.

Besides the obvious similarities in story plots and motifs, Basile’s *Pentamerone* and Apuleius’ *Golden Ass* also share their depictions of the

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<sup>1</sup> Maggi (2015) and Hurbánková (2018) discuss the relationship between *Cupid and Psyche* and Basile’s *The Padlock* and *The Golden Root*. However, Jack Zipes classifies four stories from Basile (*The Padlock*, *The Golden Root*, *The Serpent*, and *Pinto Smauto*) as Beauty and the Beast tales (see Zipes, 2000, p. 54). Nancy Canepa, whose translation of the *Pentamerone* I have used for this paper, also classifies the four tales mentioned as having similar motifs to *Cupid and Psyche* (see Basile, 2007, pp. 169–404).

<sup>2</sup> For detailed classifications of these types and subtypes, see Uther (2004) and Ashliman (1987, pp. 85–89, 107–108). The original Aarne-Thompson Classification System of fairytales is designated as “AT.” The updates to this index by Hans-Jörg Uther are designated “ATU.”

lower classes, which arose as the result of “the interaction between oral and literary sources” (Maggi, 2015, p. 31). While oral folktales acted as etiological explanations of natural phenomena or as celebrations of certain rites, it is important to remember that by writing down their stories, Basile and Apuleius removed the mutable nature of the oral sources and prescribed them a place among “a different social class,” one which consisted of literate writers and readers (Zipes, 1995, p. 22). This relationship would have an important influence on the subject matter of the tales.

In line with Maggi and Hurbánková, although the two variants have their own distinct nuances, *The Padlock* and *The Golden Root* are Basile's closest rewritings of *Cupid and Psyche*. Both argue that the stories are “two versions of the Latin myth [...] [and] that the two Italian tales emphasize different moments of Apuleius' story” (Maggi, 2015, p. 34; Hurbánková 2018, p. 81). In order to better understand the relationship between Apuleius and these lesser-known fairytales, I provide a brief summary of them below.

### ***The Padlock***

In this story, a poor mother has three daughters. The youngest, Luciella, goes to the fountain to fetch water in which to boil cabbage. There, she comes across a handsome slave who asks her to follow him to a grotto nearby where he will have nice things waiting for her. She takes the jug home, returns to the fountain, and the slave takes her to a magnificent underground palace. Here, she is given new clothes by “two lovely pieces of servant girls” (Basile, 2007). They give her a bed to sleep in, where “as soon as the candles were put out, someone came and lay down beside her” (Basile, 2007). The girl begins to miss her family and is allowed to visit them a few times, bringing money for her mother, as long as she does not tell them “where she was coming from or where she was staying” (Basile, 2007). Eventually, the envious sisters discover what their sister is doing from an ogress. They tell Luciella that she is taking a potion each night which makes her unaware that she sleeps beside a “splendid young man,” and convince her to forgo the potion on a certain night and open a padlock they give her (Basile, 2007). This will

break the spell and make her the “happiest woman in the world” (Basile, 2007). Luciella does as instructed, lights a candle, and views her handsome bedmate. As she is in awe, a passing group of women drop a yarn skein and Luciella calls for them to pick it up, thus waking the young man. Annoyed, he gives her rags back and sends her away. She then goes to her sisters, who also reject her.

The girl then wanders around the world and undergoes a thousand torments, all the while “pregnant and big-bellied” (Basile, 2007). She eventually arrives at a royal palace, where a lady-in-waiting aids her in giving birth to “a son as beautiful as a golden ear of wheat” (Basile, 2007). That night, a handsome young man visits the baby and says: “O lovely son of mine; if my mother only knew, she would wash you in a basin of gold and swaddle you in layers of gold, and if the rooster never sang, I would never part from you!” (Basile, 2007). Upon discovering that this happened every night, the lady-in-waiting tells the queen. The queen then has all of the roosters in the city killed. When the man returns that night, the queen, “who was ready with her weapon and wasn’t wasting her time sorting lentils,” realizes that the man is her son and hugs him (Basile, 2007). An ogress had cursed him, for he would not stop wandering far from home until “his mother embraced him and the rooster stopped crowing” (Basile, 2007). The spell now broken, the mother has a new grandson and Luciella gains a handsome husband. The sisters come to Luciella but learn for themselves that “the son of envy is heartache” (Basile, 2007).<sup>3</sup>

### ***The Golden Root***

This story features a girl named Parmetella, the daughter of a poor peasant, who has two jealous older sisters. Parmetella discovers a “tree with golden leaves” and, after stripping the tree of its leaves and trunk over time, eventually finds “a beautiful porphyry staircase underneath” the roots (Basile, 2007). After climbing down the stairs, she comes to a beautiful palace with ekphrastic images on the walls and a table set for a meal. While eating, a handsome slave enters and tells her that he wants

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<sup>3</sup> My abridgement of the story adapted from Basile (2007).

her to be his wife and make her “the happiest woman in the world” (Basile, 2007). Parmetella agrees and is given many nice things, including “a number of monkeys wearing golden robes” as her personal maids (Basile, 2007). That night, when going to bed, the slave tells her that she must put out the candle first in order to not to ruin anything. After falling asleep she is then awoken by the slave—now changed into a handsome young man—who takes advantage of her. In the morning, the slave leaves and “got back his dark veneer,” while Parmetella remains ignorant of whom she shared a bed with (Basile, 2007). The next night, after the man comes to her bed and falls asleep, Parmetella lights a candle and discovers the truth, that “the ebony had turned to ivory” (Basile, 2007). The young man wakes up, angry, and tells her he will have to “perform this accursed penance for another seven years” (Basile, 2007).

The girl is then sent from the palace and encounters a fairy who warns her of the trials she is to face and gives her seven spindles, seven figs, a jar of honey, and seven pairs of iron shoes which she must walk in until they are worn out. The fairy tells her what to do after this journey, when she will stumble upon seven ladies spinning thread. Parmetella must only reveal herself after they have sworn by Thunder-and-Lightning that they will not hurt her. She does this and also finds out that Thunder-and-Lightning is both the brother of the seven women *and* the man with whom she was sleeping in the palace. They then tell her what she must do to get their mother, an ogress, to swear by Thunder-and-Lightning that she will not hurt her.

Parmetella does this but the ogress still wants to eat her, so she gives the girl three impossible trials. The first trial is to sort out twelve sacks of beans that were all mixed together. Parmetella is able to do this with the aid of Thunder-and-Lightning, whose seven-year exile has ended, and who gets ants to complete the task for her. The second task is to fill twelve ticks with feathers before the end of the day. The young man aids her again by helping her trick birds into dropping their feathers. The third task is to visit the ogress’ sister and ask for a musical instrument with which to celebrate the marriage of her son. The ogress also told her sister to kill and cook Parmetella, “the traitor,” so that they can eat her together (Basile, 2007). The young man stops her on her way and gives

her three gifts. The gifts help her to trick the ogress' sister and steal the music box. She is also instructed not to open the box of instruments, advice that she does not heed, instead opening the box. As Parmetella is running after the instruments, which have all leapt from the box, the ogress asks for her sister's help in catching the girl. But no one helps her, and her sister replies "I don't want to trample her, for she gave me some hay to chew on" (Basile, 2007).

Thunder-and-Lightning appears and helps Parmetella get the instruments back inside the box. Then, at the wedding of the young man to a new bride, who is called "a plague, a cancer, a harpy," Parmetella is asked for a kiss from the young man (Basile, 2007). She denies him and instead gives his marriage her blessing, even while admitting that she loves him. The bride, surprised at Parmetella's refusal, admits to kissing a shepherd for two chestnuts. Angry, Thunder-and-Lightning slits his new wife's throat, digs her a grave in the cellar, and goes to bed with Parmetella. The next morning, the ogress finds the two together in bed and discovers that her sister killed herself as a result of her visit from Parmetella. The ogress then turns herself into a ram and "banged her head against the wall so many times that her brains came splattering out" (Basile, 2007). The couple make peace with the seven sisters and "they were all happy and content" (Basile, 2007). The story ends by stating, as the true saying goes, "those who resist win" (Basile, 2007).<sup>4</sup>

Maggi's appraisal of these stories as *Cupid and Psyche* divided into two parts seems to be a worthy observation of how the two tales work in conjunction with the original story. As my summaries indicate, *The Padlock* is "what happens to Psyche up to her discovery of her lover's identity," while *The Golden Root* is "what happens to Psyche after her ill-fated discovery" (Maggi, 2015, p. 44). To begin with, the two tales have quite a lot in common. Like the story in Apuleius, both recount what happens to the youngest of three daughters: the two elder sisters are envious of the youngest, the girl is led to a splendid palace with servants,

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<sup>4</sup> My abridgement of the story adapted from Basile (2007).

she has a secret visitor at night with an unknown identity, the girl lights a candle and sees his beautiful visage, the man gets angry and banishes the girl, and there is a final marriage between the two. *The Padlock* even has the sisters convince the girl to uncover her bedmate's identity, a characteristic of the original story that *The Golden Root* leaves out.

However, in *The Padlock*, the story is focused on what happens *before* the girl discovers her lover's identity. Following this encounter, the story becomes vague and brief. While Luciella "wanders" and comes to a queen's palace, reminiscent of Psyche's wandering and subsequent arrival at the palace of Venus, the tasks that Venus gives to Psyche are very clearly missing from this story. Beyond this, Luciella is largely absent from the second half of the story; it is the lady-in-waiting who sees the young man visiting the baby at night and the queen who breaks the spell. Rather than focusing on the character of Psyche, *The Padlock* is more concerned with the transformation of the character of Cupid (Maggi, 2015). Indeed, it is the young man who is cursed and whose curse is broken; it is the young man who wanders; and it is he who finally finds his happily ever after. Luciella is, quite simply put, just along for the ride.

The second half of this tale is also worth considering owing to the characterization of the queen as the opposite of Psyche. While waiting for the young man to appear in the evening, the queen "was ready with her weapon and wasn't wasting her time sorting lentils" (Basile, 2007, p. 202). This appears to be a direct allusion to the *Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. Rather than possessing the implied passivity of Psyche, the queen is active and takes matters into her own hands. However, while in Apuleius only Psyche is in need of (divine) aid, in Basile both Luciella and the prince are unable to change their "unfortunate condition alone" (Maggi, 2015, p. 39). Luciella is guided by the slave in the palace, while the prince's curse is broken only after the lady-in-waiting catches him visiting the baby. This allows his mother to then kill all of the roosters and embrace her son, thus ending the spell the ogress had placed on him. Unlike the titular characters in *Cupid and Psyche*—one immortal, one mortal who becomes immortal—*The Padlock* does not concern the divine. Rather, Basile "presents two all-too-human anti-heroes," whose stories does not concern their love at all (Maggi, 2015, p. 39). These

human characters are reliant on those around them to influence their futures and are less concerned with forming a love story for themselves.

Yet, while the story differs from the original in this respect, it does incorporate a very important theme from Apuleius. The last sentence of *The Padlock* ends with the moral, “the son of envy is heartache” (Basile, 2007, p. 202). At first sight, this seems to be a reference to the elder sisters and the strife caused by their envy of Luciella. Although this idea easily translates to the fate of the jealous sisters in Apuleius, it is also representative of a wider motif. In the *Golden Ass*, Venus is presented as full of envy. Upon the discovery of “the outrageous transference of divine honors to the worship of a mortal girl,” Venus becomes enraged and full of indignation. She is envious of Cupid’s worship of Psyche as if she were Venus herself, and her anger becomes palpable when she learns of her son’s relationship with the girl. This saying from Basile is thus easily transferable to *Cupid and Psyche*. The son (Cupid) of envy (Venus) is heartache, for there is much heartache caused by the emotions of the goddess. Venus’ negative feelings towards her future daughter-in-law are “essential for the whole story,” since Cupid first went to the girl at the insistence of his mother (Hurbánková, 2018, p. 85). However, as we know, the envy subsides by the end of the story in order for the cast of characters to end up “happily ever after.” Or, as Jupiter tells Psyche, “*sed istae vobis erunt perpetuae nuptiae*” (Apuleius, 1990, p. 115).<sup>5</sup>

As previously mentioned, Luciella, who reflects Psyche in *The Padlock*, is characterized by her inaction. Instead, it is her mother-in-law who takes control of the situation and breaks the curse that was placed upon her son. It is only in the second story, *The Golden Root*, that the heroine acts following the discovery of her bedmate and his subsequent banishment. Parmetella’s story thus complements Luciella’s and gives her the same “decision to act” as Psyche from the tale upon which hers was based (Hurbánková, 2018, p. 86). Both Psyche and Parmetella bring themselves before the villains of their respective stories (the mothers) and are assigned a series of tasks by these figures.

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<sup>5</sup> “But this will be an everlasting marriage for both of you”. My translation of the original Latin from Apuleius.

These are not the only similarities between the two stories, however. For instance, both are first tasked with sorting a pile of beans and grain; both are aided in their tasks by the men they are searching for (whether directly as in the case of Parmetella or indirectly as with Psyche); both are tasked with bringing back a box that they are forbidden to open; both open the box and must be saved from its contents by the Cupid figure; both are rebuked for their curiosity; and both end their stories married to their original bedmate (Hurbánková, 2018). Even the reticence of Juno and Ceres, the goddesses to whom Psyche begs for help, can be understood in *The Golden Root* through the refusal of the door, horse, and dog to help the ogress capture the girl. However, in this case, the refusal is reversed. Parmetella's kindness to the door, horse, and dog is her saving grace, whereas Venus' wrath prevents her sisters from aiding Psyche.

The ending aphorism of *The Golden Root* is also applicable to the story on which the tale is based. The phrase "Those who resist win" can be equally applied to both protagonists. On the surface level, Parmetella and Psyche both resist their "evil" mothers-in-law. Of course, as an ogress, Thunder-and-Lightning's mother must be killed in order for the happy ending to be achieved. Venus, as a goddess, does not endure this same fate, and instead must yield to the fortune of having Psyche as an immortal daughter-in-law. Yet, on a deeper level, the two young women do not resist their curiosity, which is more central to their misfortune. They do not resist the temptation to know the identity of their lover, nor do they resist the desire to open the box of beauty instruments. Nevertheless, they both end up with their happy ending. In direct opposition to the final saying of *The Golden Root*, they both win.

Just as Cupid and Psyche get their happy ending, the corresponding characters in Basile's story also live happily ever after. It is, therefore, at the beginning of these stories that we must find Basile's true diversion. After all, "the problem with Basile's two retellings is that they presuppose an initial chapter" (Maggi, 2015, p. 47). Before the start of the stories, both the unnamed prince and Thunder-and-Lightning are cursed. The unnamed prince is cursed by an ogress to whom we are never introduced, while Thunder-and-Lightning is cursed by someone

completely unidentified. This is further complicated by the role reversal inherent in the stories. It is the men who are cursed in Basile, whereas Luciella's and Parmetella's luck only turns after their curiosity overcomes them. In Apuleius, Psyche is cursed before she even meets Cupid. First by her beauty, which encourages no one to come "as a suitor desiring her in marriage," and then by Venus, whose envy causes the young woman's funereal marriage (Apuleius, 1990, p. 45). As Bottigheimer describes, Psyche is cursed to marry "a fierce serpent who flies through the skies and to whom even the gods are subject" (Bottigheimer, 1989, p. 4). While the two princes in Basile are less monstrous than Cupid is said to be, this idea of sleeping with an unknown monster is apparent in *Beauty and the Beast*.

As suggested above, tales following the general storyline of *Beauty and the Beast* arose as a direct result of the translation of the *Tale of Cupid and Psyche* into various languages. It directly "inspired the two classical versions of *Beauty and the Beast* by Mme de Villeneuve and Mme Leprince de Beaumont" (Bottigheimer, 2000, pp. 21–22). Disney's version was based on Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* (1756), as well as the French film of the same name (1946) directed by Jean Cocteau and also adapted from Beaumont's story. Beaumont's story was an abridged and rewritten adaptation of Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's *Beauty and the Beast* (1740). Through the many adaptations and abridgements of this type of tale over the centuries, the central theme seems to have also adapted.

Basile's tales, *Beauty and the Beast* stories, and the story in Apuleius all share the common theme that "the husbands in each story are reputed, but not actual, monsters" (Bottigheimer, 2000, p. 47). In Apuleius, however, this is only the starting point for a narrative with a much larger trajectory. Depending on the perspective, *Cupid and Psyche* is possibly about a rite of passage, whether that be spiritual, maturational, matrimonial, or religious. Alternatively, it may be a "philosophical allegory of the progress of the rational soul towards intellectual love" (Stevens, 2000, pp. 332–333). While *Beauty and the Beast* tales may contain some of these previous themes from Apuleius, the key narratives are based on the idea of a beautiful woman loving a

bestly husband (Bottigheimer, 2000). As with Basile's *The Padlock*, *Beauty and the Beast* ends with the transformation of the "beast" back into a man. Following the discovery of his true identity, the story becomes less about Belle's journey—whether that be to enlightenment or to a new stage in life, as in *Psyche's* case—and more about the Beast's journey back to his true self, to someone who is capable of being loved despite his appearance (this being his *actual* true identity). Therefore, while there is a clear transformation in these stories from "beast" to man, the circumstances surrounding such transformations are less clear.

As in Basile, "beast" type characters are those cursed by a witch or ogress and who must ultimately break the curse to be free of their bad fortune. However, as already intimated, the reader never learns the reason for these curses. In Beaumont's tale, we learn that it was a wicked fairy who condemned the prince, yet here too the explanation of his condemnation is absent. It seems, therefore, that this detail was not necessary to the stories that both Basile and Beaumont wished to tell. What is important to remember in both of these tales is that the "beast" is capable of being loved despite his imperfections. It is only in Disney's version that we finally get an explanation for the curse.

In Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, the prince is cursed by an enchantress after he turns her away from shelter. In the guise of an ugly, old, beggar woman, the beautiful enchantress warns him "not to be deceived by appearances, for beauty is found within" (Trousdale and Wise, 1991). The prince does not listen, however. Her reason for cursing him thus becomes about "learning to love another and earning her love in return" (Trousdale and Wise, 1991). Reminiscent of Venus' envy of *Psyche*, the "beast" is punished for his pride. In the Disney version, however, the enchantress punishes the "beast" himself. In *Apuleius*, *Psyche* is punished by Venus for her own pride.

This history of the "beast" character is seemingly insignificant in Beaumont's version of the tale. Instead, it is Beauty's familial history that is central to the story. Although there are clear similarities between Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* and *Apuleius' Cupid and Psyche*, it is the differences between the two that point back to the aforementioned narrative of Beaumont's tale—a beautiful woman loving a bestly

husband.<sup>6</sup> This theme becomes even more lucid when the story is considered as an allegory for a transactional marriage. The father is the one who first finds the magical palace and is condemned to death. Moreover, it is the downfall of the family's wealth, not the jealousy of a goddess, that initiates the entire affair. Thus, *Beauty and the Beast* is more about the transaction of marriage (Beauty being traded to the Beast in exchange for righting the family's prosperity) than about Psyche being whisked away for supernatural reasons (Bottigheimer, 1989).

When examined from this perspective, we can better appreciate how Disney's version builds on the principal elements of the story. In Disney, this transactional account is appropriated so as to harmonize with the more modern idea of caring about someone based on who they are, not just how they look. This idea is unmistakably absent from Apuleius, and only surfaces in Basile first and then Beaumont's retelling. Beauty cares for the Beast despite his looks, in direct contradiction to the story from which it originates. Psyche's adoration of Cupid is, at least initially, based on her awe of his beauty. This adoration continues, not by choice, but because she accidentally pricks herself on one of the god's love-arrows. Basile, then, is able to set the scene for the less mythologized account of the tale that we find in the modern versions and incorporates the idea of parental wealth or a lack thereof. The succeeding story is thus the result of that lack of wealth rather than the jealousy of a god.

*Beauty and the Beast* and its variants are the result of a very specific publishing history. All modern animal-as-bridegroom tales were created from a "uniform canonical source," namely, the *Golden Ass* (Bottigheimer, 1989, pp. 9–10). Other stories, such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella*, are the result of a more varied literary history and can less easily be traced to *Cupid and Psyche*. Nevertheless, these stories still incorporate

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<sup>6</sup> Here are some of the main similarities between Beaumont's *Beauty and the Beast* and Apuleius' *Cupid and Psyche*: the titular girl is from a wealthy family which loses its fortune (in Apuleius, this fortune is not monetary but the lack of marriage and a husband for Psyche); the daughter is sent off in a sacrificial capacity; the daughter has two older sisters (pretty, but arrogant); the girl is then delivered to a palace where she meets the "beast" and spends time with him; the girl is allowed to visit her home; the jealous sisters are the ones who cause her to hurt her relationship with the "beast" (overstay her time away versus lighting a candle to see his true identity). See Leprince de Beaumont (1783, pp. 45–67).

many motifs from Apuleius, particularly as a result of to their relationship with Basile, who was very clearly aware of Apuleius.

Although Basile has thus far been discussed exclusively in relation to his *Beauty and the Beast*, the Neapolitan writer also included early variants of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* in the *Pentamerone*. The ATU folktale classification system categorizes “Sleeping Beauty” as its own tale type (ATU 410). This classification means that it includes a royal daughter who is cursed to fall into an enchanted sleep, from which she is eventually awoken by a prince who either kisses or impregnates her. As Uther (2004, pp. 244–5) writes, “she gives birth to two children, one of whom sucks the fiber out of her finger and thus disenchant her.” Basile’s *Sleeping Beauty* variant *Sun, Moon, and Talia* falls into this category and has, as Hurbánková (2018, p. 79) claims, “a long literary lineage.”<sup>7</sup> It is an adaptation of a story first seen in the fourteenth-century French prose work *Perceforest*, a tale which incorporates many Apuleian motifs and even takes characters directly from *Cupid and Psyche* (McNeill Cox, 1990).

In this story, Troylus and the princess Zellandine fall in love. While Troylus is away performing tasks (in order to be worthy of the princess), Zellandine falls into an enchanted sleep. Troylus finds the girl and impregnates her in her sleep, leading to the birth of a child who sucks out the cursed flax from her finger. Troylus returns and the two go off to Great Britain to be married. Among the similarities between the French romance and the story from Apuleius are the inclusion of Love (son of Venus), the goddess Venus, and Zephyr, who takes Troylus to the castle which houses the sleeping Zellandine. While visiting her there, the tale includes a direct reference to *Cupid and Psyche*: Troylus lights a candle to better see the princess’ face and, upon seeing it, he “felt more love than ever” (McNeill Cox, 1990, p. 129).

An adaptation of this story was subsequently published in Basile’s collection, with one major alteration: the story does not end when the princess awakes. Rather, the main part of this story is what happens

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<sup>7</sup> As Hurbánková explains, *Sun, Moon, and Talia* “derives from an Italian translation of the late medieval French romance *Perceforest*, itself based on Spanish and Catalonian tales.” See McNeill Cox (1990, pp.118-139).

when she awakes. Each tale in the *Pentamerone* begins with a brief summary of what is to follow, and the summary for *Sun, Moon, and Talia* begins with the words “Talia dies” (Basile, 2007, p. 413). It then goes on to recount what happens after she is woken by her child sucking the flax from her finger. In this version, the king’s wife becomes vengeful after finding out about her husband’s affair. She tricks Talia into first sending her children to the castle, where she attempts to cook and feed them to the king. Then, she tricks Talia into coming to the castle and attempts to burn her alive. The story ends with the king burning his wife in the fire instead, the children being saved by a kind cook, and Talia living happily ever after with the king and their children.

No longer is the story of *Sleeping Beauty* about love, as we see in *Perceforest* and later in the accounts of Perrault, the Grimms, and Disney (Maggi, 2015). As Maggi points out, the married king does not free Talia from her sleep through his love for her, but instead he “rapes the sleeping girl and walks away” (2015, p. 19). This story is therefore focused not only on the jealousy of the wife but also on maternal love. As soon as Talia awakens, she is enthralled by her “jewels” (her children), and it is they who save her from the enchanted sleep.

While these details may seem to refer to a quite different story than Cupid and Psyche, just as with *Perceforest*, Basile’s *Sun, Moon, and Talia* has much in common with the Apuleian original. Basile’s tale includes invisible servants who aid the princess; contains the idea of *curiositas* (which causes both Talia and Psyche to prick themselves and be put into an enchanted, death-like sleep); has a vengeful character connected to Cupid (here, the king’s wife instead of his mother); and evokes the theme of losing and finding one another again (Talia must go to the castle in order to see the king again and have her happy ending, albeit with much strife along the way).

Following the version in Basile’s collection, this tale was further adapted by Charles Perrault as *La Belle au bois dormant* in 1697, and it was this version that the Brothers Grimm published as *Little Briar Rose* in 1812. Perrault largely mimics Basile’s story, with certain important changes. First, he includes an exact number of fairies who bestow gifts on Sleeping Beauty, which is important because, as in the Brothers

Grimm, it is an extra uninvited fairy who curses the baby princess. Perrault also changes the character of the jealous wife into the prince's ogress mother. The two together are an amalgamation of Venus, the original jealous mother in the *Golden Ass*. However, in Perrault's version as well as in Basile's, the character of Venus is not part of the final happy ending: while Venus joins the happy ending alongside Cupid and Psyche in the original, the jealous wife and the ogress mother both end up dead (Perrault, 2003). Perrault's key change from Basile, however, which greatly influenced the later Disney movie, is the reversion back to Sleeping Beauty's awakening by the kiss of a loving prince. The version of this story by the Brothers Grimm is truncated, ending, as in *Perceforest*, after the prince's kiss awakens Briar Rose (Grimm, 2015).

Disney returns to this ending of the story, this time concentrating most of the movie on Sleeping Beauty's experience while awake. The Disney version expands the story of the princess *before* she is cursed in the enchanted sleep (Geronimi, 1959). This is a great change from Basile's story, which largely portrays what happens *after* she "dies." Unlike Psyche, who goes in search of Cupid, Basile's Talia is complicit in what the other characters do to her. This is most evident through the king's rape of the girl and the wife's attempt at burning her alive. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by her reliance on the prince's help, Disney's Sleeping Beauty still lacks much agency.

Another Disney movie with a similar literary history to Sleeping Beauty is Cinderella (1950), which also has its own ATU type (510A) "Cinderella," which is derived from "The Persecuted Heroine" (AT 510). This type embodies tales in which a young woman is "mistreated by her stepmother and stepsisters and has to live in the ashes as a servant" (Uther, 2004, p. 293). Cinderella must accomplish an impossible task while they are at a ball. After this, a supernatural being helps Cinderella go to the ball herself. There, a prince meets and falls in love with her, but she is forced to leave early and loses a shoe. The prince wishes to marry the woman whose foot fits the shoe, so Cinderella's stepsisters mutilate their own feet in order to fit the shoe. The shoe fits Cinderella and she marries the prince (Uther, 2004).

The oldest known written version of this story in Europe is in Basile's *Pentamerone* (Uther, 2004). Here, the tale is called *The Cinderella Cat* and tells the story of a young woman whose father is a prince. After killing her first cruel stepmother, Cinderella gains another cruel stepmother and six stepsisters, who force her to work for them. While the number of stepmothers is doubled in this version, they serve the same purpose. However, the reader is less inclined to feel compassion towards Cinderella as she murdered her first stepmother. From there, *The Cinderella Cat* proceeds largely as would be expected. A fairy (rather than a fairy godmother) emerges from a magic date tree and uses magic to help Cinderella attend the ball. A king sees and pursues her but is left only with a shoe covering that Cinderella lost. The king wishes to marry whomever the shoe covering fits. Unlike Venus, her *Cupid and Psyche* counterpart, in this story, as in *Sleeping Beauty*, the queen is punished. The sisters, on the other hand, are punished in a manner that recalls Psyche's punishment of her own cruel sisters.

The Cinderella stories by Basile, Perrault, and Disney all have an interesting detail in common with the *Beauty and the Beast* tales mentioned earlier. In all three stories, the cruel stepsisters are characterized by their vanity. This is especially apparent in *The Cinderella Cat*, in which the father goes on a trip to Sardinia and asks the daughters "what they wanted him to bring them on his return" (Basile, 2007, p. 85). The stepsisters all ask for material items, but Cinderella asks for a gift from nature. Beauty's sisters, just like Psyche's, are similarly portrayed as more interested in wealth and renown than kindness. Basile's story includes many other aspects reminiscent of the *Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. The most obvious of these are the impossible task, the need for the couple to find one another after losing each other, and the incorporation of evil sisters. Just as the ants, reed, and eagle aid Psyche in Apuleius's tale, it is magical animals and parts of nature that help Cinderella complete her tasks and get her to where she needs to be in Basile's tale.

Perrault's version of *Cinderella* incorporates many aspects of Basile's original with certain alterations that have made their way into Disney's animated movie. These alterations notably include the fairy godmother

as a replacement for the tree fairy, the culling of the stepsisters down to two, and the lack of step-matricide (Perrault, 2003). However, while Perrault removed the detail of animals aiding Cinderella in her tasks, Disney reincorporates this idea and enlarges the animals' role in the story (Geronimi et al., 1950). Yet, Disney's *Cinderella* lacks much of the grit apparent in *The Cinderella Cat*. As Nancy Canepa states, Basile's Cinderella is "far from the epitome of feminine passivity for which she has come to be known" (Canepa, 2000, p. 43). She is no longer a murderous daughter who tells her father "your arm, your sleeve," meaning "If you don't keep your word, all the worse for you" (Basile, 2007, p. 85). Disney's Cinderella is only ever characterized by her kindness, hope, and hard work.

While this paper has traced the literary genealogy of the Tale of Cupid and Psyche from Apuleius to the twentieth-century Disney interpretations, much ink has been spilt on the tale's ongoing transformation. This scholarship focuses on the feminist, or "subversive" reception of the tale and discusses how these revisions transform it into modern contexts. While ancient interpretations of the *Tale of Cupid and Psyche* typically emphasized the balance between the titular characters, later interpretations have emphasized "Psyche's curiosity, her dependency, and her rapturous salvation through divine intervention," characteristics that serve to minimize her "autonomy and heroism" (McNeel and Sabnis, 2021, p. 3). The feminist reception of the tale thus seeks to overturn these gender stereotypes, or at least call attention to them.

Moreover, modern scholars have examined the ways in which the reception of the myth, in all its forms, interacts with the creators' own context. One way in which recent reception has brought the tale into the contemporary world is by incorporating it into the tradition of "true love," a notion stressed throughout Disney's movies. However, as Glasner notes, simply "transforming the heroine into a more resourceful and determined one [...] does not suggest a new paradigm," as the overall goal of love and marriage remains key for the female character (Glasner, 2017, p. 213). Therefore, although Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* portrays a Psyche character with modern adaptations (a love of reading,

outspokenness, the ability to refuse the Beast), the story nevertheless maintains the importance of true love. This is evidenced by the culmination of the film coinciding with Belle finding her “happily ever after” in the form of true love. While Disney and other adaptations preserve this feature from Apuleius’ original, attention has been placed on attempts to refocus or subvert this trope.

Nevertheless, Disney and its predecessors are crucial instruments in the reception of the Tale of *Cupid and Psyche*. Through the analysis of the fairytale versions found in the *Pentamerone*, this paper has brought to light the literary relationship between Apuleius and Basile.<sup>8</sup> The *Beauty and the Beast* type tales evident in Basile, as well as his early versions of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella*, have had a profound effect on the modern fairytale audience. The connecting motifs of these various accounts show the influence that the folktale nature of the original Apuleian myth had on the later fairytale genre.

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<sup>8</sup> The influence Basile had on the Brothers Grimm is very clear. The Grimms even published their own German renderings of Basile’s stories. See Maggi (2015, p. 22) and appendix for further details.

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