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Mythological Intertextuality in Nineteenth Century Ballet Repertory

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Mythological Intertextuality in Nineteenth Century Ballet Repertory

**Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Thesis
Skidmore College
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March 2006**

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Abstract

This paper will posit the idea that, while nineteenth century ballet purported to turn away from the mythological librettos that had graced the ballet stages of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they actually maintained ties to their mythological heritage. After a brief review of a few pertinent classical Greek myths, we will look at two ballets from the early Romantic period: La Sylphide and Giselle, and finish with two from the late nineteenth century: Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake to discover what ties they retain to mythology.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished; and they have been the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind. It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth.”
 - Joseph Campbell (Campbell 3)

Since the dawn of civilization, mankind has created myths and stories as metaphors to explain life’s passages and society’s rites. As a result, the same themes cross all cultural boundaries, resurfacing again and again: the importance of social values, the crossing of thresholds, the transformation from child to adult, birth, death, and resurrection as a symbol of rebirth of the new self and death of the old. Myth deals with the struggles of life and the difficulties we humans sometimes encounter when trying to traverse our path through the labyrinth of life’s cycles and seasons.

When we turn... to consider the numerous strange rituals that have been reported from the primitive tribes and great civilizations of the past, it becomes apparent that the purpose and actual effect of these was to conduct people across those difficult thresholds of transformation that demand a change in the patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life.
 (Campbell 10)

These themes are fundamental to the human condition and as such make up the very thread from which we weave our great stories. No matter the color or design of our tapestry, the fabric of the cloth remains the same. Through our literature and art, our textiles and pottery, our music and dance, we express our shared heritage. Consequently, as humans, we have developed a shared understanding of certain symbols and imagery used to convey our myths.

These signs help us to read the meaning behind the veil that is the superficial reading of the narrative. When we encounter one of these symbols, we are able to instantly draw upon our subconscious well that stores our knowledge of all the other places where we have encountered that symbol and we are able to relate them to each other to give us a deeper and richer context in which to understand the symbol and that which it signifies. When a symbol or motif appears in one text and recalls to our mind its use in another text, it is as though the texts converse with one another, sharing their meanings and enriching each other's tales. This process is called "intertextuality". Intertextuality is the "purposeful positioning of a creative work at the center of a rich network of echoes and references to other works" (de Marinis 81). By deliberately utilizing this network of references and intertexts, "pre-existing codes are brought into play and new ones created in a conversation between the old and the new" (Adshead-Lansdale 111). Hollywood constantly draws upon our knowledge of symbols to help to visually clue us into the storyline of a movie. Villains may be dressed in black while the hero is in white. Storm clouds, thunder and lightening warn of a bad omen. We know these symbols because we have encountered them in other texts, movies and plays. Sometimes, the entire plot is an archetype with references to similar tales. West Side Story for example relies upon the audience's familiarity with Romeo and Juliet. A knowledge of other tales and myths of the world would reveal many more stories dealing with marrying outside one's own kind and the triumph of love over death.

Joseph Campbell, one of the world's foremost experts on comparable mythology, asserts that there is very little variation in the pattern and structure of the archetypal myth:

The hero's journey varies little in essential plan... There will be found astonishingly little variation in the morphology of the adventure, the character roles involved, the victories gained. If one or another of the basic elements of

the archetypal pattern is omitted from a given fairy tale, legend, ritual, or myth, it is bound to be somehow or other implied. (Campbell 38)

Campbell maintains that all myths conform to the same basic outline and sets it forth as follows: (Campbell 36)

The Departure:

- 1) The Call to Adventure
- 2) Refusal of the Call (in some cases)
- 3) Supernatural Aid
- 4) The Crossing of the First Threshold
- 5) The Belly of the Whale, or the passage into the realm of night

Trials:

- 1) The Road of Trials
- 2) The Meeting with the Goddess, the Great Mother
- 3) Woman as the Temptress
- 4) Atonement with the Father
- 5) Apotheosis
- 6) The Ultimate Boon

The Return

- 1) Refusal of the Return
- 2) The Magic Flight
- 3) Rescue from Without
- 4) The Crossing of the Return Threshold
- 5) Master of the Two Worlds
- 6) Freedom to Live

In the first stage, referred to by Campbell as the “Call to Adventure,” the hero has been summoned by destiny and must leave the comfort of the society in which he lives to travel through the great unknown, which can take the form of a far off realm under the sea, above the sky, underground, in a forest, in a dream state, in the land of the dead, or any other similarly distant land. These places usually house magical beings and involve extremes of delight and torment as well as near impossible deeds (Campbell 58). Occasionally this Call to Adventure is refused. This refusal is usually

a refusal to give up what one takes to be one’s own interest....One is bound in by the walls of childhood; the father and mother stand as threshold guardians,

and the timorous soul, fearful of some punishment, fails to make the passage through the door and come to birth in the world without...some power of transformation carries the problem to a plane of new magnitudes, where it is suddenly and finally resolved. (Campbell 60-62)

This is illustrated clearly in the case of Aurora in Sleeping Beauty who cannot accept growing up and refuses to choose a suitor. In Swan Lake too, Siegfried refuses to choose a bride. In both cases, a “power of transformation” intervenes. Even in Giselle and La Sylphide the two male protagonists refuse the planned marriage to their fiancées and instead run after unattainable women.

In any case, whether or not the hero answers the call to adventure, he will either willingly proceed or be lured to the threshold of the adventure, often led by a guide. Usually he will encounter a shadowy entity that guards the way. Either he defeats the guardian by battle, by cunning, with an offering, or with some magical talisman and proceeds alive, or he will be killed and will proceed through death.

The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died... This popular motif gives emphasis to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation. (Campbell 90)

In whatever manner the threshold is breached, the hero's journey has begun. He has entered a new world and will there face the trials and tests he needs to undergo in order to complete the purpose of his call to adventure.

Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. This is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region. (Campbell 9)

Eventually, after all the trials and tests are passed, the hero undergoes his ultimate test and gains a supreme reward. This could include marriage, reconciliation, rebirth, immortalization, transfiguration, illumination or freedom. Once this has occurred, the hero returns to the everyday world, bringing restoration to the world (Campbell 245-246).

The basic mythological motif proposed by Campbell appears again and again throughout literature:

Oral folk tales, which contain wondrous and marvelous elements, have existed for thousands of years and were largely told by adults for adults. Motifs from these tales, which were memorized and passed on by word of mouth, made their way into the Bible and the Greek classics such as the Iliad and the Odyssey. The early oral tales which served as the basis for the development of literary fairy tales were closely tied to rituals, customs, and beliefs of tribes, communities, and trades. (Zipes, *Dreams 2*)

In the Greek classics as well as in children's fairy tales, at the movies and onstage, mythology is a part of the fabric of our society. Opera and ballet have long relied upon mythology and fairytales for their librettos.

Mythology and Ballet

During the early development of ballet in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Greek classical aesthetic had predominated on the ballet stage. Ballet had been born in Italy and therefore it had naturally turned to the Greco-Roman myths.

Ballets based on Greek and Roman mythology were common to the world of dance long before the French Revolution... Since the 16th century, mythology had been taught methodically in school... Handbooks describing the adventures of Olympian gods provided pretexts for French opera, which became popular at the same time as ballet. Mythical metaphors absorbed courtiers from their schooldays on, and in the hands of court poets, Greco-Roman mythology was a veritable mine of ideas for livrets.

(Chazin-Bennahum 29)

Ballet was also the province of the aristocracy and European aristocrats prided themselves on a thorough classical education. Noverre, the father of the ballet d'action, frequently refers to such classical authors as Lucian, Plutarch, Phrynicus and Aristotle in his famous book of 1760, entitled Letters on Dancing and on Ballets (Noverre 32 and 52-53). Père Claude-François Menestrier, a 17th century ballet master lists suitable subjects for ballets: "history, mythology, natural history, poetical inventions, and pure caprice...histories of ancient heroes, who are sons of a god and mortal woman, or of a goddess and a mortal man, and thus involve both heaven and earth in their enterprises. Such were Hercules, Theseus, Orpheus, Castor and Pollux, Jason..." (Winter 8-9). A glance at a list of titles of ballets and opera divertissements of the 1700s at the Paris Opera reveals the influence of Greek mythology (Guest, *Enlightenment appendix A* 418 - 420):

12 Dec 1770	Medée et Jason
21 Jan 1772	Castor et Pollux
17 Mar 1773	Endymion
2 Aug 1774	Orphée et Euridice
24 Sep 1779	Echo et Narcisse
1 Mar 1782	Thésée
2 July 1782	Apollon et Daphné
7 Sept 1784	Diane et Endymion
30 Nov 1784	Dardanus
9 Dec 1785	Penelope
21 Nov 1786	Phèdre
1 Feb 1787	Oedipe à Colonne
30 Apr 1790	Antigone
23 Feb 1790	Telemaque dans l'île de Calypso
14 Dec 1790	Psyche
11 Dec 1791	Bacchus et Ariadne
6 Mar 1793	Le Jugement de Paris

The fact that the ballet public of the time was so familiar with these myths, enabled the ballet masters to communicate readily with the audience through the use of familiar mythological symbols and motifs. Visual imagery is very important in an art form that does not use language for expression. Even opera that has the benefit of the use of words also relied upon certain conventions to convey meaning to the audience- such as placing the bad in the lower right of the stage (audience left) and the good at the left (audience right). The reasoning for this is that the 'right-hand man' of the King or of God appears reversed when viewed by a spectator, so that God's right is the viewer's left. Meanwhile, characters representing deities and royalty, naturally, were always placed higher than everything else.

In 1789, the French Revolution swept in on the heels of the Enlightenment, bringing with it drastic changes in French society and paving the way for the beginnings of the Romantic era - a time when ballets turned away from mythological subjects and when sylphs and wilis drifted across moonlit stages. Despite this trend, the age of mythological ballets,

which had predominated on the stage of the Paris Opera Ballet throughout the prior century, was recent enough to still be a part of the people's cultural consciousness.

After the Revolution, Napoleon tried to draw comparison between the new French Empire and ancient Rome by encouraging a classical revival (Guest, *Paris* 7). Even popular fashion, following the Revolution, copied ancient dress. Cumbersome panniers were discarded. A new vogue for the Greek toga and sandals developed. The low heels and clothes which were lighter made advances in ballet technique possible. Suddenly the world stood poised on the brink of the Romantic era (Winter 179). But, because of its mythological heritage and the recent Greek revival, ballet retained the vestiges of mythology even when it actively tried to jettison the subject during the romantic era. For, as Zipes and Campbell have pointed out, myth reverberates through all our tales. So when ballet turned to fairies and sylphs for librettos, they turned only to a different form of the myths. Often times, the old symbols were even incorporated, relying on intertextuality and the audience's education in the classics to help convey the themes of the ballet.

Greek myths seep down through the ages not only into literature and ballets of the Romantic Era, but also into the age of Petipa. In subsequent chapters, we will turn to examine four of the major ballets of the nineteenth century: two representing the crowning achievements of the romantic ballet, La Sylphide and Giselle, and two representing the crowning achievements of the great classical tradition of Petipa, Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake. A close examination of these ballets will reveal the myths woven into their folds. However, in order to recognize these myths as they peek from behind their veils, it will be helpful to briefly introduce a few of them.

The Labyrinth Mythologies

One myth that seems to have been used to position not only several romantic ballets, but also later dance works as well, is the mythology surrounding the labyrinth. Penelope Reed Doob explains the labyrinth as a “splendidly ordered complexity that confuses us only when we cannot comprehend its underlying system” (Doob 160). She includes in a list of “labyrinthine qualities: ambages and involutions; the psychological and moral confusion they engender; and, most clearly, inextricability” (Doob 153). Ambages refer to choices of direction to take when faced with multiple paths. Labyrinths can either have many paths (multicursal), in which case, they are technically mazes, or they can have a single path (unicursal) that takes you to your destination in the longest fashion, involving many involutions, but no choices - except the choice to enter the labyrinth or to turn back. Doob describes the labyrinth of the Middle Ages as a “temptation to moral error” and she says that “the moral maze is intensely perilous, to be trodden carefully, avoided entirely, or escaped as quickly as possible” (Doob 145). Medieval mazes are often religious and carry themes of resurrection and salvation. Often times, “moral mazes are fatal” and can only be escaped with the guidance of someone of “exceptional virtue” (Doob 146). She maintains that there are two types of moral mazes: “lust, which engenders minotaurs and mazes, and heresy which entraps the ignorant first in *errores* and finally in damnation. Both kinds of sin involve serious mental confusion and impairment: earthly love is often a kind of madness, medieval writers tell us time and again” (Doob 160).

One such medieval writer was Boccaccio who wrote Il Corbaccio. In this allegorical work, the narrator falls asleep and enters a dream state in which he finds himself in a delightful seeming forest that quickly turns ferocious and forbidding, ensnaring him in a

tangle of thorns and briars. He meets a figure in a flaming coat who is the dead husband of the narrator's mistress. The husband tells him that the place has several different names: "Some call it the 'Labyrinth of Love' and others the 'Enchanted Valley' and a good number the 'Pigsty of Venus' and many the 'Valley of Sighs and Woe'" (Boccaccio 10). The dead husband warns the narrator of the perils of earthly love all the while surrounded by the wails of the condemned souls who are the "wretches ensnared by false love" (Boccaccio 14). His moral mission complete, the guide disappears and the narrator awakens to find himself cured.

Boccaccio's tale used as its structure the labyrinth as do many other literary works and the ballets looked at in the upcoming chapters. The prototype for the myth of the labyrinth however lies in Greek antiquity at Knossos with the legend of the Minotaur, Ariadne, and Theseus.

The Labyrinth

According to Greek mythology, King Minos, who was the son of Europa and Zeus in bull-form, had asked Poseidon to make him king over his brothers. Poseidon did this, and Minos was supposed to sacrifice a bull to Poseidon in appreciation. King Minos, however, did not hold up his end of the bargain. As punishment to Minos, Poseidon's daughter, Aphrodite, caused Minos' wife, Pasiphae, to fall in love with the bull. The ingenious inventor, Daedalus, helped her to mate with the bull and the offspring was the Minotaur- a beast that was half-man and half-bull. Daedalus, an inventor known for his complex artistry and ingenuity, was commissioned to build the labyrinth to imprison the beast. Every nine years, seven youths and seven maidens were sent from Athens to feed it. Theseus volunteered to go and was helped to defeat the Minotaur and find his way out of the labyrinth by Ariadne, Minos' daughter who had fallen in love with him. She gave him a clue of thread

to attach to the entrance of the labyrinth, so that he had only to wind it back up to find his way out (Plutarch 19). After Theseus successfully escaped, Ariadne went with him to an island where she became pregnant by Theseus, who had promised to marry her. Theseus, however, deserted her and she married Bacchus/Dionysos, who crowned her his queen, making her immortal, and set her amongst the constellations as a crown of stars (Ovid 8:175).

The myth of Theseus and the labyrinth has intertextual links in many other classical literary sources. In the *Iliad*, Ariadne's 'dancing floor' is described on Achilles' shield, as she traced the paths of the labyrinth (Homer 18:590-605). In "Poem 64" of the Poems of Catullus, a tapestry on the marriage bed of Peleus and Thetis depicts the abandonment of Ariadne. This same poem also describes the fates- the three Parcae: Klothos, Lachesis, and Atropos - spinners who draw out and spin the thread (reminiscent of Ariadne's thread), representing each person's fate. They decide when and where to cut the thread, causing that person's death:

Meanwhile the Parcae began to chant their prophetic song

 their bony hands practiced the task they will practice forever.
 The left hand held onto the distaff, wrapped up in soft wool,
 and the right carefully drew the thread out, with the fingers
 turned upward to shape it; then down went the thumb and neatly
 twirled the spindle poised on its circular flywheel
 ...
 Attend the true oracle which the three sisters deliver
 on this festive day! As Destiny follows your motion,
run, spindles, run, drawing the threads that wait for the weaving.
 (Catullus 64: 306-328)

Klothos, representing youth, spins out the thread symbolizing a person's life and destiny; Lachesis, representing middle age, measures out the thread of life; Atropos, an old

crone, cuts the thread. This is often seen as representing death, but can also be seen as a disruption or the end of one phase in order to proceed to the next (Kruger 138). Spinning then is associated with fate, destiny, and the stages of life and death, both physically and metaphorically. Ariadne, who is known as a spinner and is depicted with a bobbin at her waist, helped Theseus escape by means of a ball of thread. That she is depicted on a textile, described in a poem that mentions Ariadne and the three spinners of fate, hints at a connection between the labyrinth and spinning.

Arachne and Athena

In Ovid's Metamorphoses, a tale of spinning and weaving is told in connection with another type of labyrinth (Ovid 129-133). In the myth of Arachne and Athena, the mortal girl, Arachne, is full of pride at her ability to weave and not only gives no credit for her ability to Athena, the goddess of feminine crafts such as spinning and weaving, but even believes her weaving to be better than Athena's. The two engage in a competition in which Arachne weaves a chaotic tapestry bordered by Dionysian ivy (Kruger 68) depicting the social disorder engendered when the gods rape and deceive mortals. One of the scenes portrayed is the seduction of Europa by Zeus disguised as a bull which, as we know, led to the birth of Minos, father of Ariadne. Athena in contrast, produced a highly organized tapestry, depicting the Apollonian order of the gods on Mount Olympus. In Weaving the Word: the Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production, Kathryn Kruger says:

Of particular interest are...scenes in literature wherein weaving becomes, in the hands of women, a tool for signifying and their textiles represent a text inscribed with a personal and/or political message. If the weaver is in league with the dominant patriarchal society, this text will reproduce its signs of prerogative, but if she is not a confederate of the dominant culture, her textiles

will unmake these signs and represent them as marks of tyranny...In the ‘Arachne and Athena’ story as told by Ovid...the two rugs function not merely as different points of view but as dual opposites, the obverse of each other. They are potent and dangerous objects, powerful words that unleash a force of energy that threatens the existence of both weavers and the world in which they live...” (Kruger 23)

Though Arachne’s tapestry has no faults, her hubris and denial of the dominant patriarchal Apollonian order offends Athena, who turns Arachne into a spider, dooming her to hang forever by her own spinning and weaving. A spider’s web, of course, is the ultimate natural labyrinth. It is a confusing yet ingeniously designed labyrinth of threads crafted with Daedaelian artistry to entrap the unwary in its sticky paths and leading to a monster in the center, in this case not the Minotaur, but the spider.



Fig. 1 Athena and Arachne by Tintoretto

Recurrent themes associated with the labyrinth so far are:

- Apollonian order v. Dionysian chaos
- Spinning, weaving, fate
- Confusion, duality, deception, betrayal, abandonment
- Love, marriage, childbirth

But, the predominant theme of the labyrinth is death and resurrection. Theseus entered the labyrinth and faced death when he fought the Minotaur. Ariadne aided his return to the light. The conflict between Apollonian and Dionysian elements is related to this theme of traversing the realm of darkness and returning to the light, for Dionysos is called “Dionysos Nyktelios (nocturnal)” (Pausanias 1.43.6) while Apollo is a sun god. Often, the death is a metaphorical one, involving death of the old self and transformation into the new self. Thus the person is ‘re-born’ or resurrected. Kern says in Through the Labyrinth, “physical death can also be seen as the transformation of a former existence and the passageway to a new one. Accordingly, the labyrinth’s path also represents the path to the Underworld, the return to Mother Earth being associated with the promise of reincarnation” (Kern 31). Later, Theseus physically goes to the Underworld to try to steal Persephone. He is captured and later saved and resurrected.

Persephone

Persephone herself is a part of a major death and resurrection myth. Persephone was stolen by Hades. Orpheus attempted to rescue her and was told he could bring her back to life if he did not look at her until they were out of the Underworld. He was unsuccessful and returned alone to life. Persephone however, was allowed to return to the light every spring. Persephone, then, represents the renewal of life through the seasons.

Psyche and Cupid

Yet another death and resurrection myth associated with Persephone is the tale of “Psyche and Cupid”, which was very popular among ballet librettos in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In part of this tale, Venus commands Psyche to descend to the Underworld and obtain from Persephone a box containing a fragment of Persephone’s beauty. She is warned, however, not to look into the box. Psyche does look into the box, which contains not the beauty of Persephone, but the sleep of the dark night of the Underworld, and she is enveloped by this death-like sleep. Cupid flies to the rescue of his beloved sleeping Psyche and puts sleep back in its box. Zeus ratifies the marriage of Cupid and Psyche with a glorious wedding and they live happily ever after (Apuleius 4:28-6.26).

The rescue of a beautiful girl enveloped by a death-like sleep by someone with a name meaning desire sounds very similar to the fairy tale, Sleeping Beauty, in which the sleeping princess is rescued by Desir . The name Cupid is a variation on *Cupido*, meaning desire; Cupid’s Greek name is Eros, meaning love.



*Fig. 2 Cupid and Psyche,
By Sir Edward-Burnes Jones
Manchester City Art Gallery*



*Fig. 3 Ariadne by John William Waterhouse
an interesting comparison to the picture of Psyche*

The story of “Psyche and Cupid” is, in fact, considered by many scholars to be one of the earliest literary fairy tales:

The first appearance of a major literary fairy tale, Apuleius’s “Psyche and Cupid,”...was included in a book, The Golden Ass, which dealt with metamorphoses, perhaps the key theme of the fairy tale up to the present. However, whereas many oral wonder tales had been concerned with the humanization of natural forces, the literary fairy tale, beginning with “Psyche and Cupid,” shifted the emphasis more toward the civilization of the protagonist who must learn to respect particular codes and laws to become accepted in society and/or united to reproduce and continue the progress of the world toward perfect happiness. (Zipes 8)

The myth of “Psyche and Cupid,” then, marks the transitional point where myth began to merge into the literary fairy tale. Bruno Bettelheim says in The Uses of Enchantment, “some fairy and folk stories evolved out of myths; others were incorporated into them... myths and fairytales have much in common... A myth, like a fairytale, may express an inner conflict in symbolic form and suggest how it may be solved” (Bettelheim 26). The literary fairytale had developed from early oral folk tales, which had existed for thousands of years. Motifs from these early stories appear in the Bible and in Greek classics such as the Iliad and the Odyssey (Zipes 2). Given that both the Greek mythological classics and fairytales share the same origins, it is not surprising to find that an intertextuality exists between the two forms.

Thus, when ballet joined the Romantic Movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century, wishing to set aside mythological librettos in favor of folktales and tales of the

supernatural, mythological metaphor was still used as an underpinning to many of the romantic ballets, helping to enrich the new scenarios by connecting them to the texts of the past. “Even if Cupid and Psyche had their wings clipped, they returned in new shapes in Romantic Ballet as sylphs and swans” (Chazin-Bennahum 65). Mythology was hidden behind misty veils and shadowy moonlight as wilis, peris, and sylphs took flight on the romantic stage.

Chapter 2: La Sylphide



Fig. 4 Marie and Paul Taglioni in La Sylphide, 1834

La Sylphide was the first major work of the Romantic Period of Ballet and was first performed on March 12, 1832. It was choreographed to a score by Jean Schneitzhoeffter for Marie Taglioni by her father Filippo and was then restaged in 1836 by August Bournonville to a score by Herman Lovenskjold. Though a Romantic piece and therefore, supposedly breaking free from the mythological motifs of earlier ballet, La Sylphide contains references to Greek myths and incorporates themes of the labyrinth mythology, forming intertextual links between the ballet and the classical myths of antiquity.

La Sylphide opens with James asleep in a chair in front of the fireplace. James is engaged to be married to a village girl, called Effie. Watching him is the sylphide, a fairylike creature dressed in bridal white. The sylphide dances around James as he sleeps and then awakens him with a kiss. Kisses are evident in fairytales as transformative and often resurrecting devices, the obvious examples being Sleeping Beauty and Snow White. This is also reminiscent of ancient European May Day customs in which a person representing death is expelled from the town, suffers a mock death, and is revived by a girl's kiss (Kirstein 93-94). As was discussed in the previous chapter transformation and resurrection are among the main themes of the labyrinth. Here we are given a hint that James will leave the townsfolk because of love for the sylphide, represented by the kiss, which also denotes his ultimate resurrection.

When James awakes, he cannot find the sylphide, but arrives each time at the spot she has just left. In truly labyrinthine fashion, James cannot find his way to the sylphide and cannot see her. Finally he glimpses her, just as she disappears up the chimney. In fairytales the hearth or the fireplace is a magical location where fairies and witches work their magic. At Christmas time, it is through the chimney that Santa magically arrives and departs as he delivers gifts. However, while the hearth represents magic, it is also the symbol of human

home life, manifesting that duality so common to anything labyrinthine in nature. The hearth is an opening to the outside, and as such, marks the boundary between inside and outside. The visual iconography in the staging of La Sylphide represents the humans as living inside the farmhouse, while the magical/mythical beings are in the forest. Banes and Carroll suggest that,

perhaps this perfectly contradictory signification has to do with the liminal status of the hearth- its indeterminate status as a threshold between inside and outside...the sylphide has a special relationship to the apertures of the house (the chimney, the window, the door) and that [the witch] Madge, too is first sighted at the hearth. Both are liminal figures who straddle cultural boundaries – inside/outside, natural/supernatural. The sylphide is not only ambivalent, she is also ambiguous. For although she is childlike, seemingly innocent and fragile, she also has a seductive, perhaps demonic side... That the sylphide and Madge are never simultaneously present onstage may suggest that they are mysteriously related as reverse images. (Banes and Carroll 100)

Ambiguity is one of the primary features of the labyrinth, and we are reminded of Boccaccio's Il Corbaccio, in which the protagonist follows a seemingly delightful path to find himself suddenly lost in a nightmarish landscape (Boccaccio 6). The most dangerous sort of labyrinth, according to Doob, is that which seems beautiful: "When [labyrinths] are built by men or women, their artistry is more deceptive. In either case, danger is more prominent than artistry, even when that danger is disguised by beauty (and therefore the more dangerous)" (Doob 145-146). Banes and Carroll assert that "La Sylphide stands as a cautionary tale, admonishing men on pain of death to marry inside their own community and

not to be lured outside their own folk” (Banes and Carroll 92). The myth of the labyrinth itself deals with the identical issue because it was built to house the Minotaur, the hideous offspring of Pasiphae and the bull.

After the sylph disappears up the chimney, James’ friend, Gurn, who has been asleep in the room too, awakens. Gurn does not believe James’ tale about the sylphide. Effie arrives with her mother. Gurn is disconsolate because he too loves Effie and is soon to lose her to James. When Effie’s friends arrive, they all dance until Madge, the witch, suddenly appears at the hearth. They beg her to tell their fortunes, so she reads their palms. Clearly, Madge is a figure representing destiny and fate and heralding the call adventure of which Campbell speaks. When she comes to Effie, she tells her that James does not love her but that Gurn does. Angry, James sends Madge out of the house. Everyone else also leaves shortly after, leaving James alone once more. The sylphide reappears, again at an aperture to the house-this time on the windowsill. James is positioned kneeling low reaching up to the sylphide. She is high above him on a different level. Many commentators interpret



Fig. 5 Jeremy Ransom and Fiona Tonkin, the Australian Ballet, 1989

La Sylphide as a quest for the ideal. James is reaching for the unattainable by trying to go above his station in life as a mortal.

James tries to go to the sylph several times, but once again, she is elusive. When he finally does capture her and they dance together, he suddenly has a change of heart and sends her away from him. At this point, it seems, James has not yet made the fatal decision that will doom them to the labyrinth, but they are at its threshold. Seeing her tears, he relents and they dance again, until once more he sends her away. She entreats him and then, seeing the tartan scarf of his family clan draped over the chair, she wraps herself in it, indicating her



Fig 6. Maria Alexandova and Dmitri Gudanov

willingness to join his clan by marriage. This is an important textile that operates as no mere prop, but has a function in the plot. The images of textiles, weaving, and spinning recur along with all their connotations. The tapestry on the couch of Peleus and Thetis at their marriage depicting the abandonment of Ariadne echoes the main themes in the ballet of marriage and the betrayal of both Effie and the Sylph. The tapestries of Athena and Arachne, depicting order and chaos, warn us that disorder reigns when immortals and mortals try to

wed. They also remind us that it is dangerous to have too much hubris, as Arachne did, and to try to aspire to a level higher than one's social station. Arachne's punishment to hang forever by her own weaving as a spider, foreshadows the sylphide's entrapment by another woven textile – the enchanted scarf which will trap and kill her. One is reminded of the Parcae, the ancient spinners who decide one's fate with their thread, just as Madge decides the fate of James and the sylphide by creating her deadly textile.

James cannot resist the sylph when she is wrapped in his tartan and, succumbing to her charms, he kisses her. After sealing his fateful decision with the kiss, James seems to have joined the world of the sylph. His movements become more aerial and free, like the sylph's. While the sylphide's movements are free, floating and airborne and she often dances alone, the dances of the humans have been grounded, orderly, and usually paired in couples. The folksy style of the humans represents the people, the orderly sequences represent the social order, and dancing in pairs refers to marriage (Banes and Carroll 96-98). When James' movements break from the earthbound style and become freer, it is clear that he is breaking with the social order of his people.



Figs. 7 & 8 James is distracted by the sylphide, Paris Opera Ballet

Effie and the others return and the sylph hides under the scarf. James dances with Effie but pays her scant attention for he is distracted by the sylphide. Poor Effie cannot win because she is competing with an ideal. During their dance, the sylphide literally comes between Effie and James. Later, when Effie and James embrace, the sylphide floats above them – she is on a higher level than Effie, being both immortal and representing the unattainable ideal. After the dancing, the sylphide disappears and James stands alone pondering the ring he is to use at his wedding in just moments. The sylphide suddenly reappears and absconds with the ring into the forest with James in pursuit. Literally, the sylphide snatches his impending marriage from his grasp. Effie returns at this moment in her bridal attire and finds that James has abandoned her, just as Theseus abandoned Ariadne. And just as Ariadne ended by marrying someone else, perhaps this may hint at the fact that so too will Effie.

In the opening of Act II, we see Madge and her fellow witches around a cauldron from which Madge draws the second textile of the plot – the diaphanous and deadly scarf that is promised to help James stop his Sylphide from flying away from him. Like Arachne's diaphanous spider web, this is a textile meant to entrap and kill its prey.

The next scene shows James and the sylphide arriving in the forest and dancing with the other sylphs. James cannot easily distinguish his sylph from the others and becomes confused and loses his way. This confusion and the fact that it is hard to find what he seeks has implications of the presence of a labyrinth. The forest in literature is traditionally used as a metaphorical labyrinth. In Virgil's Aeneid, Nisus and Euryalus become trapped in the forest:

The forest spread wide with shaggy thickets and dark ilex; dense briars filled it on every side; here and there glimmered the path through the hidden glades...Where shall I follow again unthreading all the tangled path of the treacherous wood? Therewith he scans and retraces his footsteps and wanders in the silent thickets. (Virgil 9:379-393)

Like the labyrinth, the forest in literature is a place where transformation takes place: “In fairytales and other literary genres, the forest has transformative powers both psychologically and physically” (Banes and Carroll 93). Psychological changes can include falling in love, coming to maturity, or realizing ones errors. Physical changes such as the princess changing into a swan in Swan Lake, or Bottom changing into a donkey in A Midsummer Night’s Dream also occur in the forest. It is therefore associated with magic and is frequently inhabited by magical beings, such as witches and sylphs.

When the sun rises, all the sylphs vanish, leaving James alone. He finds himself at Madge’s cave, where she gives him the scarf telling him that if he wraps it around the sylphide, her wings will fall off and she will not be able to fly away from him anymore. However, when James wraps the scarf around the sylphide, not realizing that he is betraying



Fig. 9 The death of the sylph, Gudrun Bojesen and Thomas Lund, Royal Danish Ballet 2004



Fig. 10 The dead sylph is borne away, in an early Paris Opera production of the 19th century

her, his beloved Sylphide dies, as Madge knew she would. A mortal cannot wed an immortal and James cannot bring the sylphide down to his own level because she represents the ideal. To bring the ideal down is to destroy it. As the dead sylphide is borne away by her sisters up into the trees, James sees a sunlit path that leads out of the forest to where a wedding procession is taking place. It is Effie and Gurn who have decided to marry. He comprehends that, in his pursuit of the ideal, he has lost what he had that was real, and has thereby lost everything. Apollonian social order has prevailed and the sunlight represents Apollo the sun god as it shines down on social order and James sees the path out of the labyrinth and to the light of Apollo.

La Sylphide contains not only a labyrinth of love, much like Il Corbaccio, but also uses a forest to represent it. Like in the Corbaccio, the protagonist is ensnared by the net of false love and moral temptation. Like the labyrinth of Greek mythology, La Sylphide deals with the themes of betrayal and of marriage to one's own kind rather than to non-humans. Like La Sylphide, the next great ballet of the Romantic era, Giselle, was to invoke similar themes.

Chapter 3: Giselle



41. Carlotta Grisi in *Giselle* (Opéra, Paris, 1841).

Fig. 11 Carlotta Grisi in Giselle 1841

First performed in 1841, the scenario for Giselle was written by Théophile Gautier and Jules Henri Vernoy de Saint Georges. Interestingly, the ballet critic, Jules Janin, wrote in a review of Giselle in Le Journal des Débats on June 30, 1841: “It is Mons. de Saint-Georges, who has spun out the thread that keeps Mons. Théophile Gautier from losing his way in the labyrinth” (Garafola 240). Gautier was a renowned French poet and writer of the Romantic school and, as such, was well educated in the classics, though he was also “one of the most militant romantics” (Guest, *Paris* 3). Inspired by the descriptions of the wilis in Heinrich Heine’s De L’Allemagne, Gautier wrote the scenario for the ballet, Giselle.

Giselle is a young German peasant girl who loves to dance. She is in love with a young peasant, who uses the name Loys. As the action on the stage unfolds, it becomes apparent that, like Zeus pursuing Leda or other gods disguising themselves to woo mortal women, Loys is really Albrecht, the Duke of Silesia, who has disguised himself as a peasant to pursue Giselle. Hilarion, a huntsman who is in love with Giselle, is suspicious and discovers Albrecht’s secret. When a royal hunting party stops in the village to rest, Hilarion reveals the truth and Giselle discovers Albrecht’s identity and learns that he is already engaged. She goes mad with grief and kills herself with Albrecht’s sword, joining the band of wilis, who are the shades of girls who died before their wedding. If the wilis catch any man in the forest at night, they impel him to dance to exhaustion and then kill him. When Albrecht visits Giselle’s grave, the wilis try to kill him, but Giselle saves him by helping him last until dawn when the wilis disappear.

In the first scene of the ballet, Giselle’s cottage, as seen from the audience, is on the left side of the stage. Albrecht’s cottage is on the lower right. In Medieval iconography,

according to art historian, Penny Jolly, the lower right of a scene represents sin, while the left depicts goodness. Albrecht is clearly up to no good. He is lying and he will betray Giselle. A road leads between the two cottages and twists off through the forest in the distance. A twisted path that leads through a forest is clearly a labyrinth reference. This path leads up to Albrecht's castle, which towers above on a rocky precipice. The castle represents Apollo and social order. The first scene of Giselle is described in the libretto by Theophile Gautier:

Hillocks weighed down with russet vines, yellowish, warmed and sweetened by the autumn sun; those beautiful vines from which hang the amber-coloured grapes which produce Rhine wine, form the background; at the summit of a grey and bare rock, so precipitous that the vine tendrils have been unable to climb it, stands, perched like an eagle's nest, one of those castles so common in Germany...the abode of Albrecht... [the] thatched cottage to the left is Giselle's... the hut facing it is occupied by Loys. (Gautier 52)



An early production of Giselle: Act I

Fig. 12 Act I scene I of Giselle

The opening scene of Giselle reveals much about the central theme of the ballet and foreshadows its conclusion. The visual cues from the moment the curtain rises on Giselle

warn us that what Albrecht is doing is wrong, namely going against the social order and deceiving an innocent girl. That the social order will be restored is foreshadowed by the location of the castle in the place of Heaven. “The castle is at once a reminder of Loys’ noble birth and of the difficulty of bridging the gap between castle and cottage” (Beaumont, *Giselle* 103). That this will involve a labyrinthine transformation is hinted at by the twisting path separating Giselle’s cottage from Albrecht’s cottage. Albrecht’s decision to deceive Giselle is a fatal ‘*errore*’, causing him to stray from the path of social order and leading him and Giselle into a ‘labyrinth of love’ extricable only by death or special guidance.

If we think of Arachne’s disordered tapestry depicting the wrongs gods do by disguising themselves to deceive mortal women, and Minerva’s tapestry depicting Apollonian law and order, again, we can guess the outcome of the ballet: Apollo and social order will triumph over Dionysos and chaos. Nobility cannot marry peasantry. Indeed, Gautier points out that even the grape vines (always associated with Dionysos/Bacchus) cannot climb the rock to the castle because it is too steep and too high above them (Gautier 52).

The Bacchic association with grapes continues, when the villagers return from harvesting grapes. Tellingly, on their cart is a statue of Bacchus/Dionysos. In modern productions, this is often a part played by a small child. Notice that in the lithograph of Carlotta Grisi who danced the first *Giselle* (Fig. 13), she is portrayed holding a Bacchic thyrsus. Thus, *Giselle* is firmly associated with Bacchus/Dionysos. *Giselle* is crowned with a Bacchanalian wreath of grape leaves and named Queen of the Vintage. “A little figure of Bacchus sitting astride a cask is borne in triumph, according to an ancient local custom. *Giselle* is surrounded. She is declared Queen of the Vintage” (Beaumont, *Giselle* 43).



Fig. 13 Carlotta Grisi, the first Giselle



Fig. 14 Dionysos with thyrsus



Fig. 15 Ariadne being crowned with a crown of stars by Venus and Bacchus, by Tintoretto

Like innocent and deceived Ariadne, Giselle is made Bacchus' Queen and crowned by him. Here we have an interesting juxtaposition of a nobleman pretending to be a peasant and a peasant being crowned a "Queen". Nothing is what it seems. We are in the labyrinth. Disorder and confusion, the province of Dionysos, reign.

Dionysos is Lord of the Dance (Lawler 14, 128, 135) and Giselle loves nothing better than to dance, which she does immediately upon being crowned Queen of the Vintage. In the midst of these festivities, the royal hunting party, including Albrecht's fiancée, Bathilde, arrives in the village to rest. Giselle is fascinated by the cloth that Bathilde's dress is made of and she reaches out to touch the fabric. Here, we are reminded of other textiles



Fig. 16 Giselle touches the cloth of Bathilde's dress

and threads – the two textiles in La Sylphide, the tapestries of Arachne and Minerva, Ariadne's thread, the tapestry on the marriage bed of Peleus and Thetis depicting Theseus abandoning Ariadne, and the Parcae spinning out each person's thread of fate and deciding when they die. How much this small and seemingly trivial action reveals about the unfolding of the plot. We are at once reminded that order will triumph over disorder, even at the expense of the innocent; that the ballet is about marriage; that Albrecht will abandon Giselle; that Giselle will be Albrecht's guide; and that someone is fated to die. Almost in case we missed this small gesture and all its connotations, Bathilde turns to Giselle and asks her why she is touching her dress to which Giselle replies that she is a spinner and a weaver.

Giselle steals timidly near Bathilde and, attracted by the silken sheen of her dress, kneels beside her and furtively fingers the material. Bathilde, touched

by Giselle's artless pleasure in her dress, places a finger under her chin and bids her rise. Then she walks with her to centre and asks her the nature of her work. She replies that she spins and weaves. (Beaumont, *Giselle* 97-98)

As the scene continues, Bathilde asks Giselle if she is in love, and Giselle tells her that she is engaged. Bathilde tells her that she, too, is engaged and gives Giselle a gold necklace. Giselle dances for Bathilde and then seems to have heart problems, a foreshadowing that her heart will soon be broken, just as Ariadne's heart was broken by Theseus. Her mother warns her that if she doesn't stop dancing she will die and become a wili.

At the end of Act I, this prophesy is realized when Hilarion presents Albrecht's sword as proof of his nobility, literally cleaving the two lovers apart, as he lowers the hilt between them. When Giselle realizes the truth, she goes mad and kills herself with Albrecht's sword, underscoring Albrecht's complicity in her death. It is not surprising that Giselle goes mad, given that in most medieval labyrinths of love, according to Penelope Reed Doob, love is depicted as a madness (Doob 160).

Act II finds Albrecht in the forest, a notoriously labyrinthine place. That the plot of the ballet would necessitate Albrecht entering this sylvan labyrinth was foreshadowed by the scenery of Act I. Recall that the winding path went through the forest before twisting up to the castle. Albrecht must be transformed in the labyrinth before social order is restored.

The forest tends to house magical or mythical beings, and this forest is no exception, for it is home to the wilis – the kingdom of the shades of the girls who have been betrayed by their lovers and died. Truly this is a labyrinth of love. Indeed, in Il Corbaccio, the protagonist finds himself in “a desolate wilderness, rough and harsh, rankly overgrown with trees, thorns, and brambles, without track or path...I heard the roars, howls, and shrieks of

many ferocious animals..... the wretches...who have been caught in the net of false love” (Boccaccio 6-7 & 14). In *Giselle*, these ferocious monsters ensnared by false love are the wilis.



Fig. 17 veiled Wilis in Giselle Act II

Heinrich Heine describes the wilis as being “attired in their bridal dresses, with garlands of flowers on their heads, and shining rings upon their fingers” (Beaumont, *Giselle* 19). That the wilis first appear in veils, denotes that in life they were young brides-to-be. However, Lincoln Kirstein also notes that “some orgiastic dancers tossed veils and these feminine symbols were used by men in their impersonations of Dionysiac theatrical dancing” (Kirstein 33). Interestingly, Gautier also describes the wilis as “young beings...with stars on their foreheads” (Beaumont, *Giselle* 56), another association with Bacchus, who crowned Ariadne with stars. The wilis rise from the dead and, like the Bacchantes- the wild women of Dionysos/Bacchus, they dance their hapless male victims to death. Heinrich Heine himself describes the wilis as “lifeless Bacchantes” (Beaumont, *Giselle* 19), and in Gautier’s description of the death of Hilarion, he says: “The victim, ever enmeshed in this graceful and

deadly web, soon feels his knees give way under him...The wilis, led by their triumphant Queen, begin a joyous bacchanale” (Beaumont, *Giselle* 49). Like Aeneas, Albrecht must go through the land of the dead, the forest of the wilis, to have a chance at redemption. Both the land of the dead and the forest are types of labyrinths and the return from the labyrinth is seen as a rebirth.

Albrecht approaches Giselle’s tomb, marked by a cross on which her wreath of ivy and grape leaves is hung - a reminder of Giselle’s connection with Bacchus/Dionysos. Kirstein notes that “the worship of Dionysos fused with dances around ancestral tombs” (Kirstein 66). Indeed, ‘Dances around tombs’ would be an appropriate title for the second act of *Giselle*.



Fig. 18 Albrecht at Giselle’s tomb, marked by a cross

When Giselle appears, Albrecht, in typically labyrinthine fashion, can’t find her. Then he hears someone coming and hides. The wilis enter, chasing Hilarion, whom they dance to exhaustion and kill. Next we witness Giselle’s initiation into the wilis. She arises from the dead and, at the command of Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis, she spins around wildly and then awakens.

After Giselle's initiation, the wilis find Albrecht. Giselle tells Albrecht to cling to the cross. Here Giselle shows herself to be Albrecht's guide through the labyrinth, while paradoxically she is also the reason he is there. Ironically, the "poor wretch" who was "ensnared by false love" is showing Albrecht the way out of the labyrinth of love through her true love for him. The way of redemption is, of course, as Boccaccio found, to cling to God. Albrecht however, is mesmerized by Giselle and leaves the cross to dance with her. Though she is a wili and must dance him to death, the power of her love for him allows her to help him survive until the first rays of dawn appear. Thus the sun god, Apollo, triumphs over Dionysos, and order triumphs over chaos. When the sun comes up, the wilis return to their graves and Albrecht is saved.



Fig. 19 Albrecht is saved at dawn

One cannot help but be struck by the fact that the wilis are repelled by both the cross and sunlight like vampires. It is interesting to note that, five years prior to *Giselle*, in 1836, Gautier had written one of the first Dracula antecedents, La Morte Amoureuse. Abraham Stoker did not publish his book Dracula until much later, in 1897. Beaumont suggests that the word “wili” is a German spelling of the word “vile” of Slavic origin, meaning vampire. In fact, Heinrich Heine states that the legend of the wilis is a Slavonic tradition in his book, D’Allemagne, upon which *Giselle* is based (Beaumont, *Giselle* 19).



Fig. 20 Alicia Markova as Giselle

At the conclusion of the original ballet, Bathilde and other nobles find Albrecht and Giselle entreats Albrecht to love Bathilde. He says farewell to Giselle and returns to his rightful place in society with Bathilde in the castle. In Modern productions, this ending has been changed. Albrecht is alone in the woods at the end of the ballet instead of being joined by Bathilde and “we leave the theater not knowing whether the social order will be restored or not. We do know that Albrecht has been powerfully transformed and destabilized by his experience and that this transformation is brought about by the wilis” (Bruner 109).

Chapter 4: Sleeping Beauty



Fig. 21 Veronika Part as the Lilac Fairy and Svetlana Zakharova as Aurora in the Kirov's reconstruction of the 1890 Sleeping Beauty, 1999.

As the nineteenth century progressed, ballet continued to express its messages with mythological references and archetypal motifs woven into popular fairytales. The fairytale had come into vogue in literature at the end of the seventeenth century, when Charles Perrault published his Histoires ou contes du temps passé, in 1697 (Canton 29). Ballets based on fairytales had been produced occasionally throughout the nineteenth century. Didelot had staged Cinderella in 1823 and Sleeping Beauty had been staged twice in Paris. However, it was not until Petipa that the fairytale became firmly established as a source for thematic material for ballet: “The romantic era of the beginning of nineteenth century Europe, with its infatuation with the supernatural and the ethereal ideal of the ballerina certainly set the ground for the fairy tale ballet format. But it was with Petipa that fairy tales turned into a prototype for ballet librettos” (Canton 67).



Fig. 22 Marius Petipa

At the end of the nineteenth century, Marius Petipa produced several ballets based on the literary fairytale. The first of these, premiering in 1890, was the Sleeping Beauty. The idea for producing the Sleeping Beauty is attributed to Ivan Vsevolovzhsky who had become

Director of the Imperial Theaters in Russia in 1881. In 1888, Vsevolozhsky proposed his idea for the libretto to Tchaikovsky. At the end of the same year, Petipa and Tchaikovsky met to work out the details. According to dance history scholar, Giannandrea Poesio, “the French ballet master and the great composer could have easily adapted a few *pièces d’occasion* to a rather plain plot...instead they both went through a detailed analysis of the project, taking into consideration the complex chromatic palette of symbols which lay within the tale” (Poesio, *Beauty* 38). A close examination of these symbols will reveal the richness of the web of intertexts contained within the ballet. Indeed, as we shall see, the Sleeping Beauty contains many associations with all of the aforementioned myths and a rich tapestry emerges from the interweaving of the different threads of the stories.

There have been many re-stagings of the Sleeping Beauty over the years since its premiere in 1890, however the version described below is the Kirov’s reconstruction of the original 1890 Petipa version, based on documents in the Sergeyev Collection at Harvard University. This version of the ballet has been chosen because the costumes, sets and staging are the closest to the original that the modern audience can see.

Prologue

The Overture begins and the drapes are drawn back, revealing a vase full of lilacs. To choose this scene as the opening of the ballet reveals the Lilac Fairy’s centrality to the plot, and perhaps foreshadows her ultimate triumph. But, more than this is not yet revealed, for the ballet has yet to begin.

The opening scene is set in a castle and recalls the court of Louis XIV. In a letter to Tchaikovsky, Vsevolozhsky specified that this was his intention: “I want to do the *mise-en-scène* in the style of Louis XIV. Here the musical imagination can be carried away, and

melodies composed in the spirit of Lully, Bach, Rameau” (Wiley, *Tchaikovsky* 104). In this court scene, entrances are made formally by rank. The scene is a display of social order and is thus associated with the Apollonian order of Olympus- a fact underscored by the reference to Louis XIV who was named the ‘Sun King’ because of his role as Apollo the sun god in Le Ballet de la Nuit. The sun association continues with the name of the princess: Aurora. “Aurora” is the name of the goddess of Dawn, the daughter of the sun god Hyperion. In mythology, she accompanied Apollo in a chariot across the sky, heralding the arrival of day. In Perrault’s original Sleeping Beauty, the princess gives birth to two children: Aurora and Jour, or Day in English. Similarly, in the Pentamerone (see appendix B), the antecedent to Perrault’s version, the two children are Sun and Moon, while the name of the princess is Thalia, who in mythology is one of the three graces – the personification of beauty, charm and grace, hence the sleeping ‘Beauty’. In Greek mythology Sun and Moon are Aurora’s siblings. Clearly, then, Aurora is associated with the coming of the light and the sun as well as Apollo and, therefore, Apollonian order.

Sleeping Beauty is an allegorical ballet, and its allegory is multilayered. First, the presentation of Aurora reproduces the life cycle, with each section of the ballet evoking infancy, youth, love & marriage, respectively. The name given by Vsevolovzhsky, Aurora, or Dawn, has implications of rebirth and springtime. This aspect was already perceived by Russian critics such as Boris Asafiev at the time of its première. (Canton 50)

After the arrival of the royal entourage, the guests enter, including a retinue of fairies, whose names symbolize the qualities of courtliness expected of a princess. Poesio says that although “contemporary audiences do not pay much attention to the names of ballet characters...these are an essential clue to the understanding of Sleeping Beauty” (Poesio,

Beauty 38). The fairy Candide, meaning ‘candid’, gives the gift of purity and truth. The Fairy Coulante is also known as Fleur de Farine. Coulante means flowing or running. Fleur de Farine has two meanings, one of which is ‘flour.’ Flour used for face powder, may refer to beauty. Fleur de Farine is also the common name of a flower purported to have the power of making people dance. Therefore, this fairy seems to be giving both the gift of beauty and the gift of dancing (a very important ability at the court of Louis XIV). The fairy called Miettes Qui Tombent, meaning ‘falling breadcrumbs,’ gives the gift of fertility because, according to Poesio, there is an old Russian tradition that spreading breadcrumbs on a girl’s cradle will ensure her ability to produce children (Poesio, *Beauty* 38). The fairy called Canari Qui Chant, or ‘canary that sings,’ bestows the gift of song. The next fairy is Violente (‘violent’) whose gives the gift of power and the ability to command (Poesio, *Beauty* 38). Finally, and most importantly is the Lilac Fairy. In Russian folklore lilac represents wisdom and is placed over a baby’s cradle as a blessing for wisdom (Poesio, *Beauty* 38). That the Lilac Fairy is the Fairy of Wisdom hints at a link with the goddess of wisdom, Athena. Together, these fairies establish the traits that are desirable in a princess: she should be able to dance and sing well, be able to provide an heir, and be able to command and rule with truth and wisdom.

However, before the Lilac Fairy can bestow her gift of wisdom, she is interrupted by the arrival of the uninvited fairy Carabosse. Interestingly, in Perceforest, a Sleeping Beauty antecedent, the guests are Venus (goddess of love and beauty), Lucina (goddess of childbirth), and Themis (goddess of justice). It is Themis who is slighted in this version. The implication of this is that Carabosse, as the ballet’s slighted guest, is linked with Themis and is therefore seeking justice by her curse. Her curse, of course, is that the princess will die by pricking her finger on a spindle. The association with spinning here is not arbitrary.

All of the Sleeping Beauty antecedents share in common that the princess pricks her finger on a splinter of flax used for spinning. Once again spinning is present in a story. The spindle then, is perhaps the central motif in the Sleeping Beauty. In one symbol it embodies the ideas of Apollonian order versus Dionysian chaos, transformation and resurrection, the death of one stage of life and the beginning of another, and fate and destiny. By choosing the spindle as the vehicle for her curse of death, Carabosse links herself with Atropos and fate. According to Joseph Campbell, the herald of adventure is often “dark, loathly, or terrifying, judged evil by the world” and is “representative of that unconscious deep...wherein are hoarded all of the rejected, unadmitted, unrecognized, unknown, or undeveloped factors, laws, and elements of existence...a veiled, mysterious figure [representing] the unknown” (Campbell 52-53). Carabosse is certainly dark, loathly and terrifying and, as Atropos, represents fate and the unknown future. The appearance of Carabosse at court disrupts the festivities, cutting them short. In the same way, Atropos cuts short the life thread of people’s destiny as Carabosse plans to cut short the life of Aurora.

At this time, however, the Lilac Fairy intervenes and, rather than bestowing her gift of wisdom, she bestows the gift of life. It is curious that this is reminiscent of another resurrection myth involving a spinner: that of Christianity’s Eve and the Fall of Man. In this case however, Eve made the mistake of choosing the Tree of Knowledge, rather than being content with the Tree of Life. Because of her, mankind falls from grace and becomes aware of nakedness, so Eve is sometimes depicted with a spindle to fashion clothes (Jolly 2, 83).



Fig. 23 Lutwin's *Eva und Adam*. National Library of Vienna

Furthermore, as we know, spinning is associated with the labyrinth and death and resurrection, which is why we see “Ariadne with a kind of bobbin at her waist... From that spool unwinds through all the maze’s corridors the string held, at the other end, by her soon to be faithless lover. The thread is his link to her and his means of safe rebirth into the light ” (Miller 121).

As we have seen, many myths, folktales, and fairytales involve a type of death and resurrection, and the Sleeping Beauty is no exception. For of course, although Carabosse curses the princess with death, the Lilac Fairy wisely intervenes, changing the curse so that it becomes only the death of the princess’ childhood stage of life. After one hundred years of sleep, the aptly named Princess ‘Aurora’ will awaken to the ‘dawn’ of the next stage of her life. After the Lilac Fairy has mitigated Carabosse’s curse in the prologue, we proceed ahead 20 years.

Act I

Act I opens by reminding us of the centrality of the spindle to the plot. Women caught spinning are threatened with death by King Florestan. Aurora too was threatened by death on account of a spindle. One wonders if the King is aware of the irony in this. Happily, and perhaps not coincidentally, they, like Aurora, receive a reprieve.

Next is Petipa's famous garland waltz. Peasant youths and maidens enter with baskets and flower garlands and perform what appears to be a May Day dance in celebration of the arrival of spring, reminding us of Persephone's springtime return. The fact that Dawn refers to the return of the sun and, therefore, spring, links Aurora with Persephone:

In ...folklore legends, both the act of sleeping and that of awakening are connected with the cycle of the seasons, and Perrault affirmed that he had been inspired by an old story of the Pyrenees according to which the Green Man was restored to life on May Day by the kiss of his fiancée. Aurora, therefore, can be seen as the symbol of spring and of the rising sun- hence Dawn...In Greek mythology, the tale of the *Sleeping Beauty* can be compared with that of Persephone who returns from the underworld in the springtime.
(Poesio, *Beauty* 39)

After the garland dance, we return to the court, where Aurora's birthday party is in progress. Though she dances with four suitors, she shows no preference for any of them. She refuses to move out of childhood and into adulthood by marriage. This must be accomplished for her via the curse of Carabosse, who as we determined earlier is the 'herald of the adventure'.

The herald's summons may be to live...or...to die. It may sound the call to ... "the awakening of the self."...The call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration- a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which...amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand. (Campbell 51)

Carabosse appears disguised as an old crone (like Atropos) and gives Aurora the spindle. Tchaikovsky himself describes the next part of the scene as follows: "As Aurora begins her '*danse-vertige*' before dropping lifeless, the [Carabosse] motif suddenly springs to life and reveals its power by actually 'spinning' the tune to which she dances, weaving the very web of witchcraft that is entangling her" (Pritchard). Tchaikovsky's choice of words is fascinating and reveals the composer's deliberate incorporation of the spindle theme into the very fabric of the music. Here, Tchaikovsky associates spinning with magic and enchantment. As Kruger points out, "Weaving by women is ...often linked to ideas of enchantment, for the Greeks recurrently associate textiles (and their production) with magic" (Kruger 54). Indeed, the verb "to weave" is defined by the ancient Indo-Europeans as having a correlation with the weaving of spells, poetry, and prophecy (Kruger 87).

The curse of Carabosse/Atropos disrupts or cuts the thread of time itself, causing it to stand still. According to Kruger, this element of the suspension of time is linked to weaving and spinning: "In the production of Penelope's unfinished shroud or Helen's tapestry woven as Homer weaves his poem, the weaving process becomes emblematic of timelessness, or time postponed" (Kruger 57). Carabosse then, associated with Atropos, is a spinner of fate whose main function is disruption. She disrupts scenes, disrupts life stages and disrupts time

itself. According to Zipes, scholar of fairy tales and folklore, this is precisely what makes her a villain:

The villains are those who use words intentionally to exploit, control, transfix, incarcerate and destroy for their benefit. They have no respect or consideration for nature and other human beings, and they actually seek to abuse magic by preventing change and causing everything to be transfixed according to their interest. Enchantment= petrification. Breaking the spell=emancipation. (Zipes 5-6)

The princess' state of suspended animation – her deathlike sleep- takes place when the princess is on the cusp between childhood and adulthood. When the princess awakens, she will immediately enter her new phase of adulthood and marriage. Interestingly, Penny Jolly notes that in the middle ages “sleep was associated with the abandonment of rational faculties in favor of sensual pursuits” (Jolly 32). Even today a popular euphemism for such activities is “sleeping” together. Given that, in the antecedent to Perrault’s version of Sleeping Beauty found in the Arabian Nights (see appendix C), the sleeping princess loses her virginity while asleep and begets two children, the association of sleep with “sensual pursuits” fits. It may also be that the loss of blood from pricking her finger may be a euphemism for the loss of virginity. In any case, Aurora is about to undergo the transformation from childhood to womanhood and to accomplish this, her previous self must undergo a type of death. Aurora pricks her finger and falls as if dead, and Carabosse throws off her cloak, revealing her identity, whereupon she is chased off-stage. A fountain with a statue of Neptune suddenly lights up and magical music plays as the Lilac Fairy puts the entire kingdom to sleep.



Fig. 24 Statue of Neptune, Act I Sleeping Beauty, Kirov 1999 (Scholl 43)

Why is attention brought to the fountain at this time and why is there a statue of Neptune? Perhaps the fact that Neptune is included here is a reference to Athena's mother, the Oceanid, Metis (also a goddess of wisdom). It could refer to Theseus, Poseidon's son, according to some. It may also refer to the fact that the flights of Aurora and her siblings starts and finishes from Oceanos. Perhaps, as Joseph Campbell elucidates in his analyses of myths, it heralds the call to adventure: "Typical of the circumstances of the call are the dark forest, the great tree, the babbling spring" (Campbell 51). Or again, perhaps the fountain is a reminder of the Christian baptismal font, a symbol of transformation and a reminder of resurrection, for in literature "...the water of transformation [is] known to all systems of mythological imagery" (Campbell 250-251). Perhaps, too, the fountain of water is used as a symbol while the castle inhabitants are being put to sleep because "the well is symbolical of the unconscious" (Campbell 74). If, as Campbell suggests, the fountain is, like the forest, the symbol of the call to adventure, the beginning of the magical journey, it is well placed at

this moment, for this is when Carabosse's curse takes effect and when the Lilac Fairy begins to weave her magic.

As the Lilac Fairy puts the kingdom to sleep, Vsevolovzhsky writes in the libretto, "ivy and creepers grow up out of the earth and cover the castle... Trees and large bowers of lilacs flourish magically as a result of the fairy's influence, and transform the royal garden into an impenetrable forest" (Wiley, *Century* 369). As Carabosse's curse takes over, the Castle, representing Apollonian society, is covered in ivy, symbolic of Dionysos. But, the curse is also mitigated by the Lilac Fairy, so there is also Lilac growing over the castle. Not only is the forest a symbol of the call to adventure it is also used in literature as a labyrinthine place where transformation takes place. Transformation is traditionally the theme of most fairytales: "More than any other literary genre, the fairy tale has persisted in emphasizing transformation...with spells, enchantments, disenchantments, resurrections, recreations" (Zipes 2).

Act II

Act II picks up the thread of the story one hundred years later, as is revealed by the change in dress of the characters. The setting is a woodland glade with a stream running through. In the background, the turrets of a castle can be seen above the trees. Here, we are introduced to Prince Desiré who is out on a hunting party. The party settles down to play blind-man's-bluff. As well as adding period flavor, this may refer to destiny and fate, since seers in mythology were frequently blind.

Next, in the original 1890 version, Tchaikovsky had composed four dances: the Dance of the Duchesses, the Dance of the Baronesses, the Dance of the Countesses, and the Dance of the Marquises. These were followed by a Farandole for the peasants, in which everyone participated together. Although it is unclear whether all of these dances were

actually performed at the premiere, it does seem that there was some intention to call attention to social order.

After the afore-mentioned dances, the party resumes its hunt and Prince Desiré remains behind. Almost immediately the theme of the Lilac Fairy is heard. The Lilac Fairy arrives aboard a boat. As though to confirm our hunch from the prologue, she appears dressed like Athena. Compare the following photo of the Lilac Fairy with the corresponding pictures of Athena (Minerva in Roman):



Fig 25. Veronika Part, as the Kirov's Lilac Fairy



Fig. 26. Minerva (Athena) By Peter Lely, Windsor Castle

The Lilac Fairy, like Athena, is wearing a plumed helmet and carries a staff or spear. Once again, like in the Athena and Arachne myth, we have an Apollonian spinner (the Lilac Fairy) versus a Dionysian spinner (Carabosse).

In Desiré's subsequent mimed conversation with the Lilac Fairy, we learn that he finds none of the court ladies pleasing. This is a direct parallel with Act I. Aurora danced with four suitors and showed no preference; Desiré watched four dances and found none of the ladies pleasing. According to Joseph Campbell this represents a refusal to grow up and

leave childhood behind and is seen in many other tales- Prince Siegfried in Swan Lake, Solor in La Bayadere, and Prince Kamar al-Zaman in the Arabian Nights, to name a few.

Like Aurora, Desiré is the Lilac Fairy's godchild. The Lilac Fairy is also Desiré's guide through the labyrinth. Joseph Campbell notes that:

The helpful crone and fairy godmother is a familiar feature of European fairy lore ...The thread of Ariadne brought Theseus safely through the adventure of the labyrinth...what such a figure represents is the benign protecting power of destiny...that though omnipotence may seem to be endangered by the threshold passages and life awakenings, protective power is always and ever present within the sanctuary of the heart. (Campbell 71-72)

In order to entice Desiré to begin his journey, the Lilac Fairy summons her powers to reveal to him a vision of Aurora's shade or spirit.

The fact that this scene takes place in a forest is indicative of the beginning of adventure, since the forest represents the labyrinth. During the vision scene, true to romantic tradition, Aurora remains elusive as the Prince tries unsuccessfully to catch her. The fact that he cannot find his way to her is also typically labyrinthine. In fact, Poesio describes the choreography of this scene as follows: "in the vision scene, the geometrical pattern followed by the nymphs – parallel lines, squares...circular groupings around the Lilac Fairy – reproduces the architecture of the typical maze of both seventeenth and eighteenth century royal gardens in which Desiré gets lost pursuing his vision" (Poesio, *Beauty* 39). Interestingly, in Renaissance Quarterly, Jennifer Nevile describes the similarities between the design of dance and the design of gardens, and how they are based on the same principles. "In the Renaissance there were close similarities between the static choreography of the formal gardens of the nobility and the moving choreographies performed by members of the

court. The principles of order and proportion, the expression of splendour, the geometrical forms were all fundamental principles of both” (Nevile 805). Like the labyrinth, she says that both the formal garden and court dance were designed to be viewed from above. One of the dances she mentions is described as being formed of “curious knots and mazes” (Nevile 830).



Fig 27. *Venus* by Botticelli, c. 1483 Uffizi, Florence



Fig. 28 Svetlana Zakharova as Aurora balances on a shell in the center of garlands (Scholl 35)

At the end of the vision scene, Aurora balances on a shell in a pose that recalls Aphrodite. Aurora is “Beauty” and Aphrodite is the “Goddess of Beauty”. Also remember that Aurora’s name in the Pentamerone was Thalia, one of the graces of Aphrodite. Remember that it was Aphrodite who, on Neptune’s command (recall the statue of Neptune in the previous act), caused Pasiphae to fall in love with the bull and produce the Minotaur in the myth of the labyrinth. Additionally, Aphrodite rules the three fates and is praised by nymphs. Throughout this scene Aurora is surrounded by dancing nymphs. Recall, too, that it was Aphrodite who sent Psyche to the underworld where she fell into a deep sleep and it was Aphrodite’s son, Eros (or Cupid) who went down to the underworld to put sleep back in its box and bring Psyche back to life. Aurora’s Aphrodite-like pose not only reminds us of Aphrodite’s association with beauty, love, and marriage (all themes of Sleeping Beauty), but

also lets us know that Desiré, like Eros, is going to go through the labyrinth of the Underworld to resurrect his beloved Sleeping Beauty. Indeed, Desiré immediately declares his love for Aurora to the Lilac Fairy and begs to be taken to the princess. They both step into the boat and the Lilac Fairy ferries him to the gates of the house of sleep. If one equates the ‘house of sleep’ with the ‘kingdom of death’ then the Lilac Fairy acts here as Charon the Ferryman and the river is the River Styx that separates the land of the living from the land of the dead.



Fig. 29 *The Lilac Fairy and Desire in the boat*



Fig. 30 *Veronica Part as the Lilac Fairy and Viktor Baranov as Desire, Kirov 1999 (Scholl 139)*

With the Lilac Fairy as guide, they easily find their way through the labyrinth and through the forest that has grown up around the castle to arrive at the gates. “With a wave of her magic wand the fairy causes the gates to open. The entrance hall is visible. The stage is obscured by dense clouds. Peaceful music is heard” (Wiley, *Century* 371). Desiré finds the princess and kisses her. The kiss was not from Perrault, who would have found it too distasteful (Canton 59). However, in the ballet it is the device used for resurrecting Aurora and the entire court. This marks the escape from the dark labyrinth of sleep and the Underworld and the return to light and life. At this point the ballet differs markedly from the

Sleeping Beauty literature, which usually involves the rape of and/or marriage to the princess and her subsequent bearing of children followed by a fight with an ogress relative (see appendices). As mentioned earlier, a reference to the children has been preserved in the name ‘Aurora,’ given to the princess. The only reference to childbirth is the Breadcrumb Fairy. The ogre connection has been kept among the divertissements at the wedding.

Act III

The wedding scene takes place in an appropriately sunny Louis XIV garden. Louis XIV is, after all, the Sun King and Apollonian order has, indeed, been restored. The royal entourage arrives followed by the guests, including many Perrault fairy tale characters as well as some from other tales. Also among the guests are the Fairies Candide, Canari, and Violente from the Prologue along with four new fairies: Diamond, Gold, Silver, and Sapphire. The Lilac Fairy is of course present and, this time, Carabosse has not been left off the guest list. In fact the two uninvited fairies appear to be Fleur de Farine and Miettes Qui Tombent. Why have they not been invited? Surely the fairy of dance and beauty and the fairy of childbirth ought to be present? But, think back to the Perceforest version of the tale in which two goddesses, Aphrodite (Venus) and Lucina were invited, but Themis was slighted. Themis, as we ascertained, is the goddess of justice and, being uninvited, is equivalent to Carabosse. Lucina is the goddess of childbirth and is therefore represented by Miettes Qui Tombent. Aphrodite is the goddess of beauty and is associated with dance by her attendants, the three graces. As mentioned earlier, the graces, in Greek mythology, were personifications of beauty, charm, and grace as well as dancing. It seems then that Themis has achieved her justice: this time she, represented by Carabosse has been invited, while Lucina (Miettes Qui Tombent) and Aphrodite (Fleur de Farine) have not.

The presence of the four new jewel fairies bears some attention. Why are these new characters suddenly introduced at the wedding? Petipa described the four fairies as representing a gold charm, the tinkling of silver coins, the five facets of sapphire (for good luck), and glistening sparkles like electricity (Poesio, *Beauty* 41). While these fairies all have their own individual associations, together their presence at the wedding suggests a dowry.

Finally, Desiré and Aurora are united in marriage. “The ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World” (Campbell 109). After the marriage takes place, the garden backdrop begins to ascend, revealing first a blue background with the French fleur-de-lis, indicating that the order of King Louis XIV’s/King Florestan XIV’s court has triumphed above (literally) all else. The backdrop, however, continues to rise until we see the clouds of heaven, above which Apollo in his chariot presides. The order of the court of Apollo the Sun God is a higher court than Louis (Florestan) the Sun King’s. Petipa describes this scene in his notes: “Apollo, as the sun king Louis XIV...When [Apollo] personifies the sun, he has a cock on his shoulder and is crowned with rays of sunlight. Four white horses draw his chariot, on which the signs of the zodiac are represented” (Wiley, *Tchaikovsky* 156). The sun is in its rightful place in the heavens and Apollonian order reigns supreme. Directly below Apollo, indicating her importance and centrality to the ballet, is the Lilac Fairy.



Fig. 31 *Apotheosis*, Kirov *Sleeping Beauty* 1890 Reconstruction, 1999 (Scholl 141)

If we were in any doubt as to whether she is a goddess or a fairy, her position in heaven assures us of her goddess status. The divinity of the other prologue fairies is also established as they take their place to the left (from the audience's perspective) of the Lilac Fairy. Carabosse is at audience-right, pursued by gods wielding spears. In medieval art and in baroque ballet and opera staging, the right side of a scene (from the viewer's perspective) is traditionally sinister, while the left is benevolent. For example, in the mural entitled



Fig. 32 *The Last Judgment*, Giotto c. 1305. Padua, Italy. Courtesy of Dr. Penny Jolly

The Last Judgment painted by Giotto c.1305 in Padua, Italy (see fig. 32) the righteous are located in the left of the picture, while the damned are at the right. Notice too that the righteous are presented in orderly fashion and are in light colors and that the damned are falling chaotically into the dark abyss. Heaven, naturally, is always located above everything else. Note the straight orderly rows of the heavenly court. In this painting too, Apollonian order reigns supreme, while Dionysian chaos leads to the murky void of the Underworld. The similarity between the structure of this painting and of the tableau vivant of the Sleeping Beauty apotheosis is striking. One could easily overlay the one over the other. In addition to Apollo, the other deities, and the fairies who populate the scene, there are many cherubs abundantly present, indicating the triumph of love. Just as Cupid saved Psyche from a deathlike sleep and had a grandiose wedding celebration presided over by gods, so too did Desiré.

Before the curtain closes, many garlands of roses are lowered. Besides representing love and protection as well as perhaps being a reference to Grimm's' Briar Rose version of the tale, the garlands are also reminiscent of the garland dance from Act I, in which peasants celebrated the arrival of Spring. Recall Poesio's assertion that the Sleeping Beauty is comparable to the myth of Persephone, who returns from the underworld every year to bring light to the world, releasing it from the dark of winter and heralding the start of spring. Like Persephone, Aurora leaves the dark world of sleep and brings the Dawn of light. Aurora is ready for spring and a new beginning. She is no longer reluctant to embark on the next stage of her life: marriage. This, it appears, was Perrault's point all along: that one should not delay marriage. Perrault gives, at the end of the story, his moral: "Though philosophers may prate how much wiser 'tis to wait, maids will be a-sighing still - young blood must when young blood will."

The tale of the Sleeping Beauty is rife with mythological symbols and allegory, however they are hidden from today's modern understanding because we are no longer familiar with the references. Of course, the spectator does not need to be able to understand and identify all of the key mythological images and symbols in the ballet. It can be enjoyed by the smallest child as simply the well-loved tale of the Sleeping Beauty. Yet, by peeling back the layers of meaning, a rich subtext is revealed, allowing the audience, to participate on a much deeper level in the conversation between the myths and the ballet. For those members of the audience willing to allow the Lilac Fairy to guide them through the labyrinth of intertexts in the Sleeping Beauty, they can emerge from the darkness of the theater auditorium and return to the world with their understanding of the ballet completely transformed.

Chapter 5: Swan Lake



Fig. 33 Margot Fonteyn in Swan Lake

As the 19th century drew to a close, another great Petipa classic was born, entitled Swan Lake. Petipa's version of this ballet, choreographed together with Lev Ivanov, premiered in 1895, five years after Sleeping Beauty. However, another version, choreographed by Julius Reisinger, had been staged earlier in 1877 unsuccessfully. That version was "too long and the story was too complex being derived... from a concoction of myths, legends, and fairytales" (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 459). The Petipa 1895 version, cleaned up the storyline, took Tchaikovsky's score from the earlier ballet, and started afresh with the dances. The persons to whom the new libretto was given credit were the artistic manager of the Bolshoi, Vladimir Begichev, and the Moscow dancer, Vasily Geltser. (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 465) The origins of the ballet libretto are rather murky and appear to stem from several sources, being a composite of many swan stories and myths of the world. "The main episodes of the plot are obviously inspired by some person or persons of culture who had either studied in detail the myth of the swan-maiden or was possessed of a considerable knowledge of the literatures of the world, from which he or they pieced together incidents appropriate to the theme" (Beaumont, *Swan* 12). What tales of the world then inspired the writers of the libretto and in what ways did mythology bubble up and send out its ripples across the surface of Swan Lake?

The Swan-Maiden myth is a very lovely and old tale that re-emerges around the world taking several variations. The main theme seems to engender the transformation of a woman into some type of bird, usually by means of an enchanted garment. Often this is made of feathers, but it can also be made of silk, or take the form of a girdle, a chain, or a ring (Beaumont, *Swan* 36).

From ancient times, the swan has been considered as a magical creature- a messenger

from another world (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 463). Poesio, mentions that angels are often portrayed with swan's wings. Similarly, the Hindus believe swans to be angels from Heaven:

The Asparas...who are the houris of the Vedic heaven, are said to have been visualized by the Hindus of old, who, seeing fleecy clouds passing over the blue waters of heaven, regarded these shapes as divine swans...able to descend to earth at will, when they cast off their feather-dresses, to become changed into beautiful maidens bathing in a pool. Sometimes a swan-maiden would be wooed by a mortal, who married her and with whom she lived happily, until yearning for her celestial home, she again put on her feather-dress and soared upwards to the mysterious region which lies beyond the sky.
(Beaumont, *Swan* 36)

Clearly then, so far swans are associated with transformation and the afterlife, two themes also associated, as we have seen with the labyrinth. Furthermore, according to Poesio, "from ancient Greece to Siberia, from Germany to Asia, the swan is regarded as the symbol of light, both solar masculine, and lunar, feminine. Myths and legends from different epochs and countries, moreover, insist the swan is always a human being in disguise, a creature with a double nature (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 463-464). This double nature, or duality, as we have seen is part of the nature of anything labyrinthine, as the labyrinth is both confusing and orderly. From within, no pattern can be discerned and one exists in Dionysian chaos and confusion. From without, its complex Apollonian artistry is apparent. It is also interesting that Poesio mentions the swan's association with light. The swan is a messenger associated with light just as Ariadne is Theseus' guide out of the labyrinth into the light. Ariadne represents the return of light, the return of spring, rebirth, and renewal, as does Aurora in *Sleeping Beauty*

and Persephone of Greek mythology. Similarly, Giselle helped Albrecht survive until the return of daylight. The labyrinth is associated both with the nocturnal Dionysos and Apollo the sun god. Furthermore, Apollo himself, according to Greek myth, was saluted by flying and singing swans at his birth (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 464). Apollo's lyre was carved in the form of a swan, and Greek art depicts him riding on the back of a swan or in a chariot drawn by swans. Swan myths, then, have occurred throughout classical literature as well as in folktales. One famous swan in Greek mythology is Cygnus who, according to Ovid, mourned the death of his friend Phaeton, who died trying to drive the chariot of the sun.

In other Greek myths the swan is Orpheus who was famous for his travels through the underworld and who was murdered by Thracian women under the influence of Dionysos. The swan was also the pet of Queen Cassiopeia, and swans bear the souls of sacrificial kings to Hyperborea. Zeus transformed himself into a swan in order to deceive and rape Leda- a scene depicted on Arachne's tapestry. The offspring of this illicit union was another one of the famous weavers, Helen of Troy.

In addition to these classical swan references, folktales from Germany, Denmark, and Russia all share the same elements of a hunter or hunters witnessing the transformation of swans into beautiful girls. One Russian source that may have influenced the libretto of Swan Lake is Sweet Mikhail Ivanovich the Rover or Pushkin's poem of the "Swan-Tsarevna" (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 465). Some historians believe the eighteenth century story of the Stolen Veil by Johan Musaus to be the primary source, since it tells the story of swan maidens bathing in a lake wearing golden crowns and it also contains a character named Benno- the name of Prince Siegfried's companion in Swan Lake. However, beyond these elements, there is little convergence between this tale and Swan Lake (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 465).

Swan Lake Libretto

According to Cyril Beaumont, “Act I, scene I, presents the world of everyday although here restricted to court life. The action passes in the castle grounds and serves to introduce the noble characters who live in the adjacent castle. The chief dance interest is the rousing peasants’ dance” (Beaumont, *Swan* 77). Swan Lake opens, in the original book written for the ballet, upon “the gardens of Prince Siegfried’s Castle...the background is dominated by the towers and crenellated walls of a gothic castle... watered by a stream, which can be crossed by a pretty little bridge” (Beaumont, *Swan* 90 & 19).

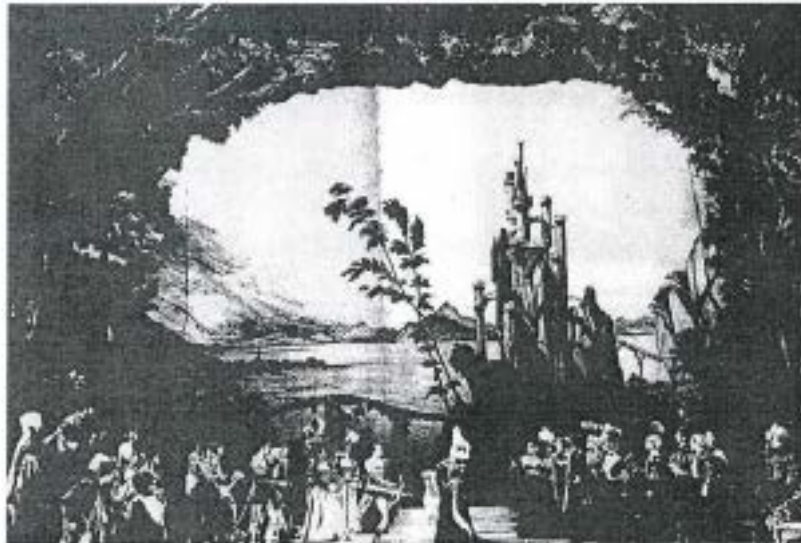


Fig. 34 Act I scenery by David Blair, Swan Lake, American Ballet Theatre, 1967 (Poesio, Swan March 553)

The castle, as we have seen in previous chapters, is representative of Apollonian social order. The presence of a stream with a bridge is significant because, according to Joseph Campbell, it signifies the call to adventure and that the time for crossing a threshold (in this case with a bridge thoughtfully provided!) is at hand:

The herald’s summons may be to live...or...to die. It may sound the call to some high historical undertaking. Or it may mark the dawn of religious

illumination. As apprehended by the mystic, it marks what has been termed “the awakening of the self.” ...But whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain always on a mystery of transfiguration- a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand. Typical of the circumstances of the call are the dark forest, the great tree, the babbling spring. (Campbell 51)

In addition water, he maintains, is symbolic of transformation and rebirth. The threshold of transformation and rebirth that the ballet opens upon is the scene of Prince Siegfried’s coming of age and passing into adulthood. The stream and bridge hint that he will need to transform himself via some journey or ordeal to be able to cross this threshold. As in the ballets looked at previously, this will involve a struggle between Dionysian chaos and Apollonian order. Indeed the Prince and his friends celebrate his birthday with much wine and even his tutor is drunk. “Wolfgang the tutor...is addicted to the bottle...In the Sleeping Beauty, Gallison, tutor to Prince Desire, is shown to be in the cups in the picnic scene in the forest” (Beaumont, *Swan* 77). A table of wine is set downstage right- the location associated with sin and the wine of course refers to Dionysos (Bacchus). This directly opposes the Apollonian castle located in the background and placed high representing godliness. As if to emphasize this conflict, the drunken revelry is interrupted by the entrance of the Prince’s mother who represents Apollonian social order, being of the castle. This is underscored when the guests and peasants bow to her. She then shows firmly that she is on the side of Apollo and not Dionysos when she mimes to the Prince, “I hope you have not been drinking.” She goes on to express her concern with preserving the social order by saying that

she wishes the Prince to marry while she is still alive so that she “can die in the knowledge that your marriage has brought no disgrace upon our famous line” (Beaumont, *Swan* 19). The Prince is not interested in marriage, but “is prepared to submit dutifully to her will” and asks her “whom she has chosen for his bride” (Beaumont, *Swan* 19). Siegfried seems to be still in the role of a child- obeying his mother and wanting her to make his choices. “I have selected no one,” she replies, “since I wish you to choose your bride yourself. Tomorrow I am giving a big ball at which the nobility and their daughters will be present. You must choose from among those maidens” (Beaumont, *Swan* 19-20). “When the Prince enquires to whom he is to be betrothed, the Princess replies that this will be decided at tomorrow’s ball to which she has been invited...all young girls eligible to become her daughter-in-law and his wife. From these maidens he himself will choose the one that pleases him the most” (Beaumont, *Swan* 47).

Clearly his mother expects him to grow up and make his own choice and she further expects him to follow social order by choosing one of the socially acceptable young ladies that she has invited to the castle (none of whom, it might be noted, includes a being who is half swan). In the [Dancing Times](#), dance scholar, Giannandrea Poesio says,

her role parallels... those of Madge in [La Sylphide](#), and Carabosse in the [Sleeping Beauty](#), for she embodies the ineluctable destiny; as such she reminds Siegfried and his friends of the reality of life. Her brief scene is a foreboding of pending events. As soon as the Princess Mother leaves the stage, Siegfried’s drama begins to build. It is not accidental that a few moments later, night falls; the prince’s troubled mood is clearly reflected by the approaching darkness. (Poesio, *Swan March* 555)

After the Princess departs, the Prince is gloomy and laments reaching the threshold of adulthood and leaving his childhood behind, saying, “this means an end to our merry-making...and farewell to my freedom” (Beaumont, *Swan* 20). As though to foreshadow the Prince’s ultimate repudiation of his mother’s apollonian values, the scene ends with a dance with wine cups - an emphasis on wine and dancing as night falls that are all symbolic of Dionysos. Swans are seen flying overhead and the men, along with Prince Siegfried, run off to hunt them.

Act II opens upon a “wild and mountainous countryside bounded on all sides by forest. In the distance, a lake, on the bank of which, to the audience’s right is a half-ruined stone building resembling a chapel. It is night and the moon is shining” (Beaumont, *Swan* 57). The wild and rocky landscape is reminiscent of the labyrinth in which the protagonist in Boccaccio’s *Il Corbaccio* finds himself. The fact that it is bounded by a forest also indicates a labyrinth as well as alluding to transformation and magic. The moonlight symbolizes both Dionysos and the time of magical enchantments. The lake, as previously stated, represents the water of transformation. The ruined chapel-like building as seen in pictures of Swan Lake scenery resembles a crypt and from some accounts, also may be similar to what the entrance to the labyrinth of King Minos looked like.



Fig. 35 Ruins in Lakeside scene, Swan Lake

(Poesio, *Swan* Feb 459)



Fig. 36 Knossos

The Prince and his companion, Benno, burst upon the scene exhausted and Benno gasps, "I can go no further." Benno is not going on this adventure. It is not Benno who must cross a threshold. Benno is not leaving the social order and has no need for transformation. He escorts the Prince to the boundary and can then go no further. The Prince responds, "We have probably come too far from the castle" (Beaumont, *Swan* 21), acknowledging that they are straying from Apollonian order as represented by the castle. At this moment, they see the swans and take aim. The birds vanish and the ruins become lit with a magical glow. "Strange," muses Benno, "the place must be bewitched." The Prince says, "we will look into this" and goes toward the ruins (Beaumont, *Swan* 21). This action and statement indicates the point at which the Prince decides to enter the labyrinth to begin his adventure. Out of the gates of the labyrinth, out of the ruins, "appears a girl dressed in white and wearing a crown of precious stones. The figure is radiant in the moonlight" (Beaumont, *Swan* 21). It is interesting that this description of Odette the swan-maiden, coincides with images of Ariadne with her crown from Dionysos, since it was Ariadne that led Theseus through the labyrinth, and here, Odette seems to be Siegfried's guide, or as Campbell would say, 'the threshold guardian.' When Odette asks the Prince why he is hunting her, the libretto says, "In confusion the Prince replies: I did not imagine...I did not expect..." (Beaumont, *Swan* 21). His stammering confusion is a state associated with being in a labyrinth where things are not what they seem and where confusion reigns.

Odette explains how she came to be enchanted. She explains that her mother fell in love with a knight and married him against her husband's wishes. "My mother was a good fairy, but, ignoring my father's wishes, she fell passionately in love with a noble knight and married him. Alas he brought her a sad end and she disappeared" (Beaumont, *Swan* 21).

Odette's family then, has a history of betrayal. Odette's mother, like Ariadne's mother, Pasiphae, betrayed her father. Ariadne in turn was betrayed by Theseus. Therefore we can suppose that, likewise, Odette will be betrayed by Siegfried. Odette goes on to explain that her father remarried and that the stepmother hated Odette. For this reason, Odette's grandfather took care of her because he had loved Odette's mother so much. When Odette's mother died, "he was so distraught at her death and wept so much that from his tears was formed this lake, into whose depths he descended and hid me away from all the world" (Beaumont, *Swan* 22). This sounds very similar to Ovid's tale of Cynus, the son of Apollo, who was "a lovesick, jealous young man, who after committing suicide because he felt deceived, was turned into a swan by Apollo and doomed to live in a lake made by his mother's tears" (Poesio, *Swan Feb* 464). Another version of the Cynus legend has it that Cynus had imposed three labors upon his lover as a test, the third of which was to lead a bull with his hands alone to the altar of Zeus. He accomplished all three tests but refused to give Cynus a bull he had won as a prize. It is also interesting to note that, once again there is the refusal to give a bull. Recall that King Minos refused to sacrifice a bull to Poseidon and that is why his wife Pasiphae was caused to fall in love with one and thereby produce the minotaur leading to the creation of the labyrinth. When his lover refused to give him the bull, Cynus saw this as a betrayal and committed suicide by throwing himself into the lake. His mother, in her grief, did the same. In Ovid's version of the tale of Cynus, we have the lake being made by tears and in this version, two people throw themselves into the lake and kill themselves. Both of these elements are included in Swan Lake and both are linked to a betrayal. This then does not bode well for Siegfried and Odette. In fact at this very moment in the ballet as Odette has told her story, the hoot of an owl is heard and Odette cries "that is



Fig. 37 Von Rothbart as an owl atop the ruins

a voice of ill omen” (Beaumont, *Swan* 22). A gigantic owl appears on the ruins and Odette says “this crown alone protects me” (Beaumont, *Swan* 22). The libretto never explains why the crown protects her. But as we noticed Odette’s resemblance to Ariadne in her earlier description, it is possible that this is a reference to the crown that Dionysos gave Ariadne that made her immortal. The fact that the owl sits atop the ruins, which resemble the entrance to the labyrinth, could be seen as a warning that entering this labyrinth is deadly, since the hoot of an owl was commonly associated with death.

However, Siegfried does not heed the warning and begins to dance with Odette and falls madly in love with her, swearing eternal love to her and swearing to break her curse. In a statement of foreshadowing, Odette says to him, “ I fear that you are simply deceived by



Fig. 38 Phyllis Spira as Odette in Swan Lake

your own imagination. Tomorrow at the ball... you will see many beautiful young girls. You will fall in love with one of them and soon forget me...I am filled with foreboding that the evil witch may contrive some misfortune for you that will wreck our happiness...tomorrow shall decide our fate” (Beaumont, *Swan* 22-23). As the swans fly off, the sun rises, heralding the arrival once more of Apollo and his rule, and ushering in the third act of the ballet.

Act III takes place in the Princess’s castle where a formal social order and Apollonian structure reign. The Master of Ceremonies receives each guest and sees that they are led to their appropriate place in the order of things. Prince Siegfried watches the proceedings with a bored air and seems detached and out of place.

The series of dances heightens the feeling of uneasiness caused by Siegfried’s aloofness, that permeates the scene from its beginning. When considered from this standpoint, both the introductory dances... and most of all the waltz of the six princesses, appear as choreographic devices that aim at stressing

Siegfried's detached mood. None of these events seems to interest or amuse him. Formality and cold court manners are mirrored in the princesses' waltz. Dressed all the same, they are presented to the public through Siegfried's eyes: equally uninteresting, distant human figures that seem to belong more to a nightmare than to reality. Although the Prince dances in turn with each Princess, there is hardly any involvement in the dancing; the steps ... are repeated almost mechanically. (Poesio, *Swan May* 765)

This is reminiscent of Aurora's dance with her four suitors, none of whom interested her—another young royal on the cusp of childhood who was refusing the call of marriage and adulthood. When Prince Siegfried is asked by his mother which maiden pleases him, he replies that though they are all pretty there is no one who appeals to him.



Fig. 39 Margot Fonteyn as Odile in triumph, Covent Garden 1972

Suddenly however, Von Rothbart and his daughter, Odile, in the likeness of Odette, enter the ballroom. Odette appears at the window of the castle and tries to warn the Prince not to be deceived, but Siegfried does not see her. Siegfried is infatuated by Odile's beauty and has eyes for her alone. Like in the Corbaccio, this infatuation with the superficial beauty of women leads to a deadly labyrinth. The dual role of Odette/Odile is representative of the dichotomy of women- the seductive side and the virtuous side; similarly Odette herself is also a dual character representing animal and human. Siegfried is convinced that Odile is Odette and chooses Odile. This duality and confusion is, of course, typically labyrinthine. As soon as the Prince declares his intention to marry Odile, the scene grows dark and the hoot of an owl is heard, forecasting the bad outcome of his decision. Von Rothbart's cloak falls from him and "he is revealed as a demon" (Beaumont, *Swan* 24). Odette appears again at the window- that liminal threshold between two worlds familiar to us from La Sylphide. The Prince races out of the castle, away from Apollonian order and, according to the libretto, there is, as always in any labyrinth, "general confusion" (Beaumont, *Swan* 50).

The final act of the ballet opens on a "desolate landscape", much as in Boccaccio's labyrinth of love. Odette enters in tears and her companions "beg her to dismiss the unfaithful lover from her mind" (Beaumont, *Swan* 25). Like Ariadne, she has been betrayed by her lover. Siegfried enters and searches for Odette, but her swan friends hide her and he runs from swan group to swan group searching for her, confused again, as he was with Odile, by how alike they all look. "Siegfried moves from one circle of swan maidens to the other, as if in his troubled state of mind, he is unable to distinguish Odette from the others" (Poesio, *May* 767). Once again, typical of being in a labyrinth, he cannot find his way to what he seeks. The scene grows darker, lightning and thunder flash, the lake roils as the

gathering storm approaches, symbolizing their impending doom. Siegfried, having found Odette at last, begs her forgiveness.

The libretto says of this scene that “there is no salvation for poor Odette. She is doomed to remain forever the victim of enchantment. It would be better while she is in her human form for her to perish in the waters of the lake” (Beaumont, *Swan* 50). The religious and moral overtones to this statement are quite clear. Odette’s soul needs ‘salvation’. Her baser animal side is to be abhorred, it is her human side that is virtuous, so she should die while human and thereby save herself and triumph and be worthy of heaven. She should ‘perish in the waters’ becoming baptized before her death. Interestingly, in some of the swan myths there are a couple of versions in which the swan maiden must become baptized. In the Russian tale Sweet Mikhail Ivanovich the Rover, when the swan alights upon the shore and changes into a maiden, he goes to her wanting to kiss her but “she warns him that she is an infidel and unworthy. If however he will take her to the holy city of Kiev, where she can be received into the Church of God, then she will marry him and he may kiss her as often as he wills” (Beaumont, *Swan* 38). Similarly, in the Irish legend the Children of Lir, the children are turned into swans by the jealous stepmother, and they are doomed to remain swans until the Irish become Christians (Beaumont, *Swan* 39).



Fig. 40 Moscow City Ballet 2005. Von Rothbart perishes after Odette and Siegfried drown in the lake

Accordingly, Siegfried and Odette throw themselves into the lake in a final act of transcendent love and disappear beneath the water. With their death, Von Rothbart is vanquished and the spell is broken by their ultimate sacrifice. The lake waters calm, the storm clears, and the scene lightens. Odette and Siegfried take the journey to “the world of eternal happiness” (Beaumont, *Swan* 50) in a “shell-like barque” (Beaumont, *Swan* 140) that is “drawn by a swan with a gold crown on its head” (Beaumont, *Swan* 50). So, their ultimate Baptism and self-sacrifice entitles them to salvation and resurrection, and admittance to heaven. A barque pulled by a swan is a clear reference to Apollo’s chariot drawn by swans, and the shell-like barque is clearly a reference to Venus and Poseidon. In the end, Apollonian order reigns supreme, as in *Sleeping Beauty*, as in *Giselle*, and as in *La Sylphide*.



Fig.41 Fonteyn and Helpmann in boat drawn by swans
(*Poesio*, *Swan March* 559)



Fig. 42 Apollo in chariot drawn by a swan

Chapter 6: Conclusion

By examining the myths and the labyrinthine structure that are used as an underpinning to the ballets of the previous chapters, the seemingly simple storylines reveal depths and possibilities that are lost without the understanding of the texts with which they resonate. Understanding the depths of the ballet has implications not only for the audience but also for the dancer and director. A dancer who knows that the Lilac fairy represents the goddess Athena, for example, would interpret the role quite differently than a benign flower fairy. Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, is also the Goddess of Martial Victory and, though benign when on your side, is not to be crossed. The director who understands the depths of the ballet and can make them visible to the audience has an opportunity to allow the audience to relate more with the themes of the ballet. Admittedly, this was easier to accomplish with a nineteenth century audience who was steeped in the study of classical literature than it is to accomplish with today's audience, many of whom seek only to be entertained. When the ballet scenarios were written in the nineteenth century, the average theatergoer was far more familiar with classical texts than a modern audience is. Art does not exist in a vacuum. Both the work and the viewer are products of their culture. The viewer must interact with the work to construct meaning. What images a symbol evokes will vary from culture to culture and will change as time passes. In order to begin to understand a work of art, it is, therefore, necessary to place it in context of its culture. In the Dancer's Image, Walter Sorrell states that "national characteristics and the sociocultural background of a country have decisive influence on the choice of subject matter and on the choreographer's closeness to the literary word" (Sorrell, *Image* 257). Then, as now, ballet had to deal with being able to convey meaning without words, relying instead on movement, music, and imagery. When an entire

culture shares the same references, the choreographer is able to convey much with an economy of imagery.

Although the writers and choreographers of the Romantic Ballet were striving for a new poetry in dance and rebelling against what they considered a stultifying concern with classicism, centuries of mythology had shaped each successive generation of literature and crept into even the romantic literature and scenarios. Greek myths echo not only down through the ages into literature and ballets of the Romantic Era, but have continued to resonate through the age of Petipa's Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake and on into the twentieth century with Isadora Duncan and Martha Graham, both of whom were strongly influenced by Greek mythology and the labyrinth.

By studying the background of the culture in which a ballet was written, we can be much more aware of the significance of a piece for us today, rather than dismissing it as trite or irrelevant. In the Dancer's Image, Walter Sorrell describes one drama critic's experience of Giselle:

To call Giselle the Hamlet of ballets is, if nothing else, a misleading comparison. Kenneth Tyman, one of the most astute drama critics, felt prompted by this comparison to see Giselle and came away from it with the observation of having seen a most stupid concoction. "Giselle itself is something of a hoax: where else but in the ballet world would you find a grown-up audience ready to believe that the betrayal of a village maid by a nobleman in mufti... was an emotional experience comparable in intensity to Hamlet ?_(Sorrell, *Image* 66)

One can hardly blame Mr. Tynan for missing the point because, as Campbell explains, “in the later stages of many mythologies, the key images hide like needles in great haystacks of secondary anecdote and rationalization; for when a civilization has passed from a mythological to a secular point of view, the older images are no longer felt or quite approved” (Campbell 248). Nowadays, well intentioned, though perhaps misguided, changes to modern productions have attenuated the ballet and obscured the intertextuality that gives the ballet its depth and pathos. Some elements have even been completely dropped from most modern stagings. For example, the statue of Bacchus is often no longer evident in Giselle, and Giselle being crowned Queen of the Vintage is also frequently omitted (Beaumont, *Giselle* 130). Modern scenery does not necessarily portray the castle towering above the village, and whether the path twists through a forest in the distance is a matter of the whim of the director.

The outlines of myths and tales are subject to damage and obscuration. Archaic traits are generally eliminated or subdued. Imported materials are revised to fit local landscape, custom, or belief, and always suffer in the process. Furthermore, in the innumerable retellings of a traditional story, accidental or intentional dislocations are inevitable. To account for elements that have become, for one reason or another meaningless, secondary interpretations are invented, often with considerable skill.

(Campbell 246- 247)

Because our culture no longer understands the references in the piece, we assume that small details are unimportant and we update and edit to ‘breathe new life into the work’ in an attempt to give it meaning to today’s audiences. Unfortunately, it is precisely by doing this

that we rob it of its meaning and its ability to resonate with audiences. Without the thread to guide us through the symbolism and textual references in ballets of the past, we have lost our way and are unable to read the symbols and images that lead us down the paths that connect the rich network of texts and myths that are woven into their very fabric.

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Appendix A: Sleeping Beauty by Charles Perrault

Illustrated by Gustave Dore

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who were grieved, more grieved than words can tell, because they had no children. They tried the waters of every country, made vows and pilgrimages, and did everything that could be done, but without result. At last, however, the queen found that her wishes were fulfilled, and in due course she gave birth to a daughter. A grand christening was held, and all the fairies that could be found in the realm (they numbered seven in all) were invited to be godmothers to the little princess. This was done so that by means of the gifts which each in turn would bestow upon her (in accordance with the fairy custom of those days) the princess might be endowed with every imaginable perfection.

When the christening ceremony was over, all the company returned to the king's palace, where a great banquet was held in honor of the fairies. Places were laid for them in magnificent style, and before each was placed a solid gold casket containing a spoon, fork, and knife of fine gold, set with diamonds and rubies. But just as all were sitting down to table an aged fairy was seen to enter, whom no one had thought to invite—the reason being that for more than fifty years she had never quitted the tower in which she lived, and people had supposed her to be dead or bewitched.

By the king's orders a place was laid for her, but it was impossible to give her a golden casket like the others, for only seven had been made for the seven fairies. The old creature believed that she was intentionally slighted, and muttered threats between her teeth.

She was overheard by one of the young fairies, who was seated nearby. The latter, guessing that some mischievous gift might be bestowed upon the little princess, hid behind the tapestry as soon as the company left the table. Her intention was to be the last to speak, and so to have the power of counteracting, as far as possible, any evil which the old fairy might do.

Presently the fairies began to bestow their gifts upon the princess. The youngest ordained that she should be the most beautiful person in the world; the next, that she should have the temper of an angel; the third, that she should do everything with wonderful grace; the fourth, that she should dance to perfection; the fifth, that she should sing like a nightingale; and the sixth, that she should play every kind of music with the utmost skill.

It was now the turn of the aged fairy. Shaking her head, in token of spite rather than of infirmity, she declared that the princess should prick her hand with a spindle, and die of it. A shudder ran through the company at this terrible gift. All eyes were filled with tears. But at this moment the young fairy stepped forth from behind the tapestry.

“Take comfort, your Majesties,” she cried in a loud voice; “your daughter shall not die. My power, it is true, is not enough to undo all that my aged kinswoman has decreed: the princess will indeed prick her hand with a spindle. But instead of dying she shall merely fall

into a profound slumber that will last a hundred years. At the end of that time a king's son shall come to awaken her.”

The king, in an attempt to avert the unhappy doom pronounced by the old fairy, at once published an edict forbidding all persons, under pain of death, to use a spinning wheel or keep a spindle in the house.

At the end of fifteen or sixteen years the king and queen happened one day to be away, on pleasure bent. The princess was running about the castle, and going upstairs from room to room she came at length to a garret at the top of a tower, where an old serving woman sat alone with her distaff spinning. This good woman had never heard speak of the king's proclamation forbidding the use of spinning wheels.

“What are you doing, my good woman?” asked the princess.

“I am spinning, my pretty child,” replied the dame, not knowing who she was.

“Oh, what fun!” rejoined the princess; “how do you do it? Let me try and see if I can do it equally well.”



The good woman had never heard of the king's proclamation

Partly because she was too hasty, partly because she was a little heedless, but also because the fairy decree had ordained it, no sooner had she seized the spindle than she pricked her hand and fell down in a swoon.

In great alarm the good dame cried out for help. People came running from every quarter to the princess. They threw water on her face, chafed her with their hands, and rubbed her temples with the royal essence of Hungary. But nothing would restore her.

Then the king, who had been brought upstairs by the commotion, remembered the fairy prophecy. Feeling certain that what had happened was inevitable, since the fairies had decreed it, he gave orders that the princess should be placed in the finest apartment in the palace, upon a bed embroidered in gold and silver.

You would have thought her an angel, so fair was she to behold. The trance had not taken away the lovely color of her complexion. Her cheeks were delicately flushed, her lips like coral. Her eyes, indeed, were closed, but her gentle breathing could be heard, and it was therefore plain that she was not dead. The king commanded that she should be left to sleep in peace until the hour of her awakening should come.

When the accident happened to the princess, the good fairy who had saved her life by condemning her to sleep a hundred years was in the kingdom of Matabain, twelve thousand leagues away. She was instantly warned of it, however, by a little dwarf who had a pair of seven-league boots, which are boots that enable one to cover seven leagues at a single step. The fairy set off at once, and within an hour her chariot of fire, drawn by dragons, was seen approaching.

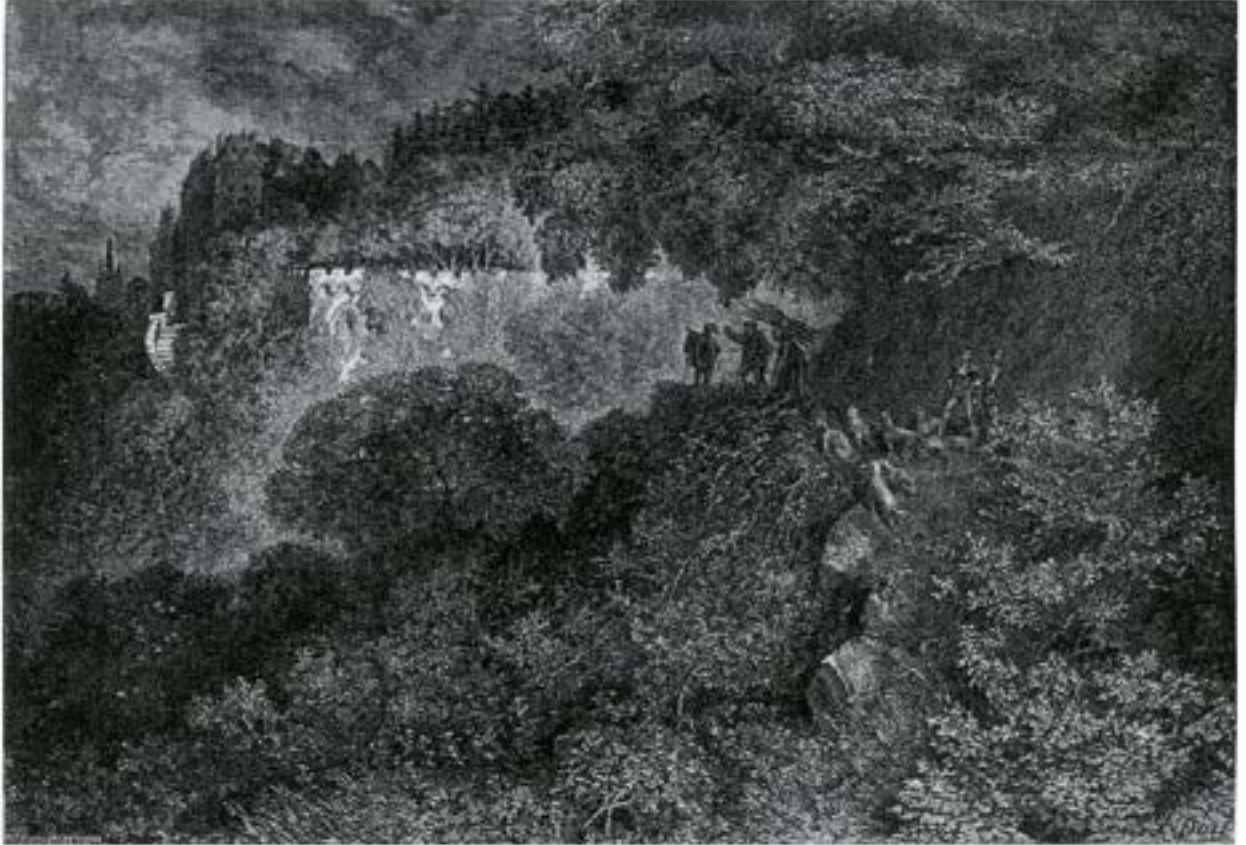
The king handed her down from her chariot, and she approved of all that he had done. But being gifted with great powers of foresight, she bethought herself that when the princess came to be awakened, she would be much distressed to find herself all alone in the old castle. And this is what she did. She touched with her wand everybody (except the king and queen) who was in the castle--governesses, maids of honor, ladies-in-waiting, gentlemen, officers, stewards, cooks, scullions, errand boys, guards, porters, pages, footmen. She touched likewise all the horses in the stables, with their grooms, the big mastiffs in the courtyard, and little Puff, the pet dog of the princess, who was lying on the bed beside his mistress. The moment she had touched them they all fell asleep, to awaken only at the same moment as their mistress. Thus they would always be ready with their service whenever she should require it. The very spits before the fire, loaded with partridges and pheasants, subsided into slumber, and the fire as well. All was done in a moment, for the fairies do not take long over their work.

Then the king and queen kissed their dear child, without waking her, and left the castle. Proclamations were issued, forbidding any approach to it, but these warnings were not needed, for within a quarter of an hour there grew up all round the park so vast a quantity of trees big and small, with interlacing brambles and thorns, that neither man nor beast could penetrate them. The tops alone of the castle towers could be seen, and these only from a distance. Thus did the fairy's magic contrive that the princess, during all the time of her slumber, should have nought whatever to fear from prying eyes.

At the end of a hundred years the throne had passed to another family from that of the sleeping princess. One day the king's son chanced to go a-hunting that way, and seeing in the distance some towers in the midst of a large and dense forest, he asked what they were. His attendants told him in reply the various stories which they had heard. Some said there was an old castle haunted by ghosts, others that all the witches of the neighborhood held their revels there. The favorite tale was that in the castle lived an ogre, who carried thither all the children whom he could catch. There he devoured them at his leisure, and since he was the

only person who could force a passage through the wood nobody had been able to pursue him. While the prince was wondering what to believe, an old peasant took up the tale.

“Your Highness,” said he, “more than fifty years ago I heard my father say that in this castle lies a princess, the most beautiful that has ever been seen. It is her doom to sleep there for a hundred years, and then to be awakened by a king’s son, for whose coming she waits.”



Seeing the towers, the king's son asked what they were

This story fired the young prince. He jumped immediately to the conclusion that it was for him to see so gay an adventure through, and impelled alike by the wish for love and glory, he resolved to set about it on the spot.

Hardly had he taken a step towards the wood when the tall trees, the brambles and the thorns, separated of themselves and made a path for him. He turned in the direction of the castle, and espied it at the end of a long avenue.



He turned in the direction of the castle

This avenue he entered, and was surprised to notice that the trees closed up again as soon as he had passed, so that none of his retinue were able to follow him. A young and gallant prince is always brave, however; so he continued on his way, and presently reached a large forecourt.



The figures of men and animals appeared lifeless

The sight that now met his gaze was enough to fill him with an icy fear. The silence of the place was dreadful, and death seemed all about him. The recumbent figures of men and animals had all the appearance of being lifeless, until he perceived by the pimply noses and ruddy faces of the porters, that they merely slept. It was plain, too, from their glasses, in which were still some dregs of wine, that they had fallen asleep while drinking.



Mounting the staircase, he entered the guardroom

The prince made his way into a great courtyard, paved with marble, and mounting the staircase entered the guardroom. Here the guards were lined up on either side in two ranks, their muskets on their shoulders, snoring their hardest. Through several apartments crowded with ladies and gentlemen in waiting, some seated, some standing, but all asleep, he pushed on, and so came at last to a chamber which was decked all over with gold. There he encountered the most beautiful sight he had ever seen. Reclining upon a bed, the curtains of which on every side were drawn back, was a princess of seemingly some fifteen or sixteen summers, whose radiant beauty had an almost unearthly luster.



Reclining upon a bed was a princess of radiant beauty

Trembling in his admiration he drew near and went on his knees beside her. At the same moment, the hour of disenchantment having come, the princess awoke, and bestowed upon him a look more tender than a first glance might seem to warrant. "Is it you, dear prince?" she said; "you have been long in coming!" Charmed by these words, and especially by the manner in which they were said, the prince scarcely knew how to express his delight and gratification. He declared that he loved her better than he loved himself. His words were faltering, but they pleased the more for that. The less there is of eloquence, the more there is of love. Her embarrassment was less than his, and that is not to be wondered at, since she had had time to think of what she would say to him. It seems (although the story says nothing about it) that the good fairy had beguiled her long slumber with pleasant dreams. To be brief after four hours of talking they had not succeeded in uttering one half of the things they had to say to each other.

Now the whole palace had awakened with the princess. Every one went about his business, and since they were not all in love they presently began to feel mortally hungry. The lady-in-waiting, who was suffering like the rest, at length lost patience, and in a loud voice called out to the princess that supper was served. The princess was already fully dressed, and in most magnificent style. As he helped her to rise, the prince refrained from telling her that her clothes, with the straight collar which she wore, were like those to which his grandmother had been accustomed. And in truth, they in no way detracted from her beauty.

They passed into an apartment hung with mirrors, and were there served with supper by the stewards of the household, while the fiddles and oboes played some old music and played it remarkably well, considering they had not played at all for just upon a hundred years. A little later, when supper was over, the chaplain married them in the castle chapel, and in due course, attended by the courtiers in waiting, they retired to rest. They slept but little, however. The princess, indeed, had not much need of sleep, and as soon as morning came the

prince took his leave of her. He returned to the city, and told his father, who was awaiting him with some anxiety, that he had lost himself while hunting in the forest, but had obtained some black bread and cheese from a charcoal burner, in whose hovel he had passed the night. His royal father, being of an easygoing nature, believed the tale, but his mother was not so easily hoodwinked. She noticed that he now went hunting every day, and that he always had an excuse handy when he had slept two or three nights from home. She felt certain, therefore, that he had some love affair.

Two whole years passed since the marriage of the prince and princess, and during that time they had two children. The first, a daughter, was called "Dawn," while the second, a boy, was named "Day," because he seemed even more beautiful than his sister.

Many a time the queen told her son that he ought to settle down in life. She tried in this way to make him confide in her, but he did not dare to trust her with his secret. Despite the affection which he bore her, he was afraid of his mother, for she came of a race of ogres, and the king had only married her for her wealth.

It was whispered at the Court that she had ogreish instincts, and that when little children were near her she had the greatest difficulty in the world to keep herself from pouncing on them. No wonder the prince was reluctant to say a word.

But at the end of two years the king died, and the prince found himself on the throne. He then made public announcement of his marriage, and went in state to fetch his royal consort from her castle. With her two children beside her she made a triumphal entry into the capital of her husband's realm.

Some time afterwards the king declared war on his neighbor, the Emperor Cantalabutte. He appointed the queen mother as regent in his absence, and entrusted his wife and children to her care. He expected to be away at the war for the whole of the summer, and as soon as he was gone the queen mother sent her daughter-in-law and the two children to a country mansion in the forest. This she did that she might be able the more easily to gratify her horrible longings. A few days later she went there and in the evening summoned the chief steward.

"For my dinner tomorrow," she told him, "I will eat little Dawn."

"Oh, Madam!" exclaimed the steward. "That is my will," said the queen; and she spoke in the tones of an ogre who longs for raw meat. "You will serve her with piquant sauce," she added.

The poor man, seeing plainly that it was useless to trifle with an ogress, took his big knife and went up to little Dawn's chamber. She was at that time four years old, and when she came running with a smile to greet him, flinging her arms round his neck and coaxing him to give her some sweets, he burst into tears, and let the knife fall from his hand. Presently he went down to the yard behind the house, and slaughtered a young lamb. For this he made so delicious a sauce that his mistress declared she had never eaten anything so good. At the same time the steward carried little Dawn to his wife, and bade the latter hide her in the quarters which they had below the yard.

Eight days later the wicked queen summoned her steward again.

“For my supper,” she announced, “I will eat little Day.” The steward made no answer, being determined to trick her as he had done previously. He went in search of little Day, whom he found with a tiny foil in his hand, making brave passes—though he was but three years old—at a big monkey. He carried him off to his wife, who stowed him away in hiding with little Dawn. To the ogress the steward served up, in place of Day, a young kid so tender that she found it surpassingly delicious.

So far, so good. But there came an evening when this evil queen again addressed the steward. “I have a mind,” she said, “to eat the queen with the same sauce as you served with her children.” This time the poor steward despaired of being able to practice another deception. The young queen was twenty years old, without counting the hundred years she had been asleep. Her skin, though white and beautiful, had become a little tough, and what animal could he possibly find that would correspond to her? He made up his mind that if he would save his own life he must kill the queen, and went upstairs to her apartment determined to do the deed once and for all. Goading himself into a rage he drew his knife and entered the young queen’s chamber, but a reluctance to give her no moment of grace made him repeat respectfully the command which he had received from the queen mother.

“Do it! Do it!” she cried, baring her neck to him; “carry out the order you have been given! Then once more I shall see my children, my poor children that I loved so much!” Nothing had been said to her when the children were stolen away, and she believed them to be dead. The poor steward was overcome by compassion. “No, no, Madam,” he declared; “you shall not die, but you shall certainly see your children again. That will be in my quarters, where I have hidden them. I shall make the queen eat a young hind in place of you, and thus trick her once more.”

Without more ado he led her to his quarters, and leaving her there to embrace and weep over her children, proceeded to cook a hind with such art that the queen mother ate it for her supper with as much appetite as if it had indeed been the young queen. The queen mother felt well satisfied with her, cruel deeds, and planned to tell the king, on his return, that savage wolves had devoured his consort and his children. It was her habit, however, to prowls often about the courts and alleys of the mansion, in the hope of scenting raw meat, and one evening she heard the little boy Day crying in a basement cellar. The child was weeping because his mother had threatened to whip him for some naughtiness, and she heard at the same time the voice of Dawn begging forgiveness for her brother.

The ogress recognized the voices of the queen and her children, and was enraged to find she had been tricked. The next morning, in tones so affrighting that all trembled, she ordered a huge vat to be brought into the middle of the courtyard. This she filled with vipers and toads, with snakes and serpents of every kind, intending to cast into it the queen and her children, and the steward with his wife and serving girl. By her command these were brought forward, with their hands tied behind their backs.

There they were, and her minions were making ready to cast them into the vat, when into the courtyard rode the king! Nobody had expected him so soon, but he had traveled post-

haste. Filled with amazement, he demanded to know what this horrible spectacle meant. None dared tell him, and at that moment the ogress, enraged at what confronted her, threw herself head foremost into the vat, and was devoured on the instant by the hideous creatures she had placed in it. The king could not but be sorry, for after all she was his mother; but it was not long before he found ample consolation in his beautiful wife and children.

Moral

*Many a girl has waited long
For a husband brave or strong;
But I'm sure I never met
Any sort of woman yet
who could wait a hundred years,
Free from fretting, free from fears.*

*Now, our story seems to show
that a century or so,
late or early, matters not;
True love comes by fairy-lot.
Some old folk will even say
it grows better by delay.*

*Yet this good advice, I fear,
helps us neither there nor here.
Though philosophers may prate
How much wiser'tis to wait,
Maids will be a-sighing still--
Young blood must when young blood will!*

Appendix B: The Pentamerone by Giambattista Basile: Sun, Moon, and Talia

Translation by John Edward Taylor in 1847, published by Macmillan and Co., London 1911.



The king and the falcon outside the palace

It is a well-known fact that the cruel man is generally his own hangman; and he who throws stones at Heaven frequently comes off with a broken head. But the reverse of the medal shows us that innocence is a shield of fig-tree wood, upon which the sword of malice is broken, or blunts its point; so that, when a poor man fancies himself already dead and buried, he revives again in bone and flesh, as you shall hear in the story which I am going to draw from the cask of memory with the tap of my tongue.

There was once a great Lord, who, having a daughter born to him named Talia, commanded the seers and wise men of his kingdom to come and tell him her fortune; and after various counsellings they came to the conclusion, that a great peril awaited her from a piece of stalk in some flax. Thereupon he issued a command, prohibiting any flax or hemp, or such-like thing, to be brought into his house, hoping thus to avoid the danger.

When Talia was grown up, and was standing one day at the window, she saw an old woman pass by who was spinning. She had never seen a distaff or a spindle, and being vastly pleased with the twisting and twirling of the thread, her curiosity was so great that she made the old woman come upstairs. Then, taking the distaff in her hand, Talia began to draw out the thread, when, by mischance, a piece of stalk in the flax getting under her finger-nail, she fell dead upon the ground; at which sight the old woman hobbled downstairs as quickly as she could.

When the unhappy father heard of the disaster that had befallen Talia, after weeping bitterly, he placed her in that palace in the country, upon a velvet seat under a canopy of brocade; and fastening the doors, he quitted for ever the place which had been the cause of such misfortune to him, in order to drive all remembrance of it from his mind.

Now, a certain King happened to go one day to the chase, and a falcon escaping from him flew in at the window of that palace. When the King found that the bird did not return at his call, he ordered his attendants to knock at the door, thinking that the palace was inhabited; and after knocking for some time, the King ordered them to fetch a vine-dresser's ladder, wishing himself to scale the house and see what was inside. Then he mounted the ladder, and going through the whole palace, he stood aghast at not finding there any living person. At last he came to the room where Talia was lying, as if enchanted; and when the King saw her, he called to her, thinking that she was asleep, but in vain, for she still slept on, however loud he called. So, after admiring her beauty awhile, the King returned home to his kingdom, where for a long time he forgot all that had happened.

Meanwhile, two little twins, one a boy and the other a girl, who looked like two little jewels, wandered, from I know not where, into the palace and found Talia in

a trance. At first they were afraid because they tried in vain to awaken her; but, becoming bolder, the girl gently took Talia's finger into her mouth, to bite it and wake her up by this means; and so it happened that the splinter of flax came out. Thereupon she seemed to awake as from a deep sleep; and when she saw those little jewels at her side, she took them to her

heart, and loved them more than her life; but she wondered greatly at seeing herself quite alone in the palace with two children, and food and refreshment brought her by unseen hands.

After a time the King, calling Talia to mind, took occasion one day when he went to the chase to go and see her; and when he found her awakened, and with two beautiful little creatures by her side, he was struck dumb with rapture. Then the King told Talia who he was, and they formed a great league and friendship, and he remained there for several days, promising, as he took leave, to return and fetch her.

When the King went back to his own kingdom he was for ever repeating the names of Talia and the little ones, insomuch that, when he was eating he had Talia in his mouth, and Sun and Moon (for so he named the children); nay, even when he went to rest he did not leave off calling on them, first one and then the other.

Now the King's stepmother had grown suspicious at his long absence at the chase, and when she heard him calling thus on Talia, Sun, and Moon, she waxed wroth, and said to the King's secretary, "Hark ye, friend, you stand in great danger, between the axe and the block; tell me who it is that my stepson is enamoured of, and I will make you rich; but if you conceal the truth from me, I'll make you rue it."

The man, moved on the one side by fear, and on the other pricked by interest, which is a bandage to the eyes of honour, the blind of justice, and an old horse-shoe to trip up good faith, told the Queen the whole truth. Whereupon she sent the secretary in the King's name to Talia, saying that he wished to see the children. Then Talia sent them with great joy, but the Queen commanded the cook to kill them, and serve them up in various ways for her wretched stepson to eat.

Now the cook, who had a tender heart, seeing the two pretty little golden pippins, took compassion on them, and gave them to his wife, bidding her keep them concealed; then he killed and dressed two little kids in a hundred different ways. When the King came, the Queen quickly ordered the dishes served up; and the King fell to eating with great delight, exclaiming, "How good this is! Oh, how excellent, by the soul of my grandfather!" And the old Queen all the while kept saying, "Eat away, for you know what you eat." At first the King paid no attention to what she said; but at last, hearing the music continue, he replied, "Ay, I know well enough what I eat, for YOU brought nothing to the house." And at last, getting up in a rage, he went off to a villa at a little distance to cool his anger.

Meanwhile the Queen, not satisfied with what she had done, called the secretary again, and sent him to fetch Talia, pretending that the King wished to see her. At this summons Talia went that very instant, longing to see the light of her eyes, and not knowing that only the smoke awaited her. But when she came before the Queen, the latter said to her, with the face of a Nero, and full of poison as a viper, "Welcome, Madam Sly-cheat! Are you indeed the pretty mischief-maker? Are you the weed that has caught my son's eye and given me all this trouble"?

When Talia heard this she began to excuse herself; but the Queen would not listen to a word; and having a large fire lighted in the courtyard, she commanded that Talia should be thrown into the flames. Poor Talia, seeing matters come to a bad pass, fell on her knees before the Queen, and besought her at least to grant her time to take the clothes from off her back. Whereupon the Queen, not so much out of pity for the unhappy girl, as to get possession of her dress, which was embroidered all over with gold and pearls, said to her, "Undress yourself--I allow you." Then Talia began to undress, and as she took off each garment she uttered an exclamation of grief; and when she had stripped off her cloak, her gown, and her jacket, and was proceeding to take off her petticoat, they seized her and were dragging her away. At that moment the King came up, and seeing the spectacle he demanded to know the whole truth; and when he asked also for the children, and heard that his stepmother had ordered them to be killed, the unhappy King gave himself up to despair.

He then ordered her to be thrown into the same fire which had been lighted for Talia, and the secretary with her, who was the handle of this cruel game and the weaver of this wicked web. Then he was going to do the same with the cook, thinking that he had killed the children; but the cook threw himself at the King's feet and said, "Truly, sir King, I would desire no other sinecure in return for the service I have done you than to be thrown into a furnace full of live coals; I would ask no other gratuity than the thrust of a spike; I would wish for no other amusement than to be roasted in the fire; I would desire no other privilege than to have the ashes of the cook mingled with those of a Queen. But I look for no such great reward for having saved the children, and brought them back to you in spite of that wicked creature who wished to kill them"

When the King heard these words he was quite beside himself; he appeared to dream, and could not believe what his ears had heard. Then he said to the cook, "If it is true that you have saved the children, be assured I will take you from turning the spit, and reward you so that you shall call yourself the happiest man in the world."

As the King was speaking these words, the wife of the cook, seeing the dilemma her husband was in, brought Sun and Moon before the King, who, playing at the game of three with Talia and the other children, went round and round kissing first one and then another. Then giving the cook a large reward, he made him his chamberlain; and he took Talia to wife, who enjoyed a long life with her husband and the children, acknowledging that--

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

Appendix C: 1001 Nights-The Ninth Captain's Tale

Mathers, Powys, trans. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*. Rendered into English from the literal and complete French translation of Dr. J. C. Mardrus. 4 vols. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.

There was once a woman who could not conceive, for all her husband's assaulting. So one day she prayed to Allah, saying, "Give me a daughter, even if she be not proof against the smell of flax!" In speaking thus of the smell of flax she meant that she would have a daughter, even if the girl were so delicate and sensitive that the anodyne smell of flax would take hold of her throat and kill her.

Soon the woman conceived and easily bore a daughter, as fair as the rising moon, as pale and delicate as moonlight. When little Sittukhan, for such they called her, grew to be ten years old, the sultan's son passed beneath her window and saw her and loved her, and went back ailing to the palace. Doctor succeeded doctor fruitlessly beside his bed; but, at last, an old woman, who had been sent by the porter's wife, visited him and said, after close scrutiny, "You are in love, or else you have a friend who loves you."

"I am in love," he answered.

"Tell me her name," she begged, "for I may be a bond between you."

"She is the fair Sittukhan," he replied; and she comforted him, saying, "Refresh your eyes and tranquilize your heart, for I will bring you into her presence."

Then she departed and sought out the girl, who was taking the air before her mother's door. After compliment and greeting, she said, "Allah protect so much beauty, my daughter! Girls like you, and with such lovely fingers, should learn to spin flax; for there is no more delightful sight than a spindle in spindle fingers." Then she went away.

At once the girl went to her mother, saying, "Mother, take me to the mistress."

"What mistress?" asked her mother.

"The flax mistress," answered the girl.

"Do not say such a thing!" cried the woman. "Flax is a danger to you. Its smell is fatal to your breast, a touch of it will kill you."

But her daughter reassured her, saying, "I shall not die," and so wept and insisted, that her mother sent her to the flax mistress.

The white girl stayed there for a day, learning to spin; and her fellow pupils marveled at her beauty and the beauty of her fingers. But, when a morsel of flax entered behind one of her nails, she fell swooning to the floor.

They thought her dead and sent to her father and mother, saying, "Allah prolong your days! Come and take up your daughter, for she is dead." The man and his wife tore their garments for the loss of their only joy, and went, beaten by the wind of calamity, to bury her. But the old woman met them, and said, "You are rich folk, and it would be shame on you to lay so fair a girl in dust."

"What shall we do then?" they asked, and she replied, "Build her a pavilion in the midst of the waves of the river and couch her there upon a bed, that you may come to visit her."

So they built a pavilion of marble, on columns rising out of the river, and planted a garden about it with green lawns, and set the girl upon an ivory bed, and came there many times to weep. What happened next?

The old woman went to the king's son, who still lay sick of love, and said to him, "Come with me to see the maiden. She waits you, couched in a pavilion above the waves of the river."

The prince rose up and bade his father's wazir come for a walk with him. The two went forth together and followed the old woman to the pavilion. Then the prince said, "Wait for me outside the door, for I shall not be long."

He entered the pavilion and began to weep by the ivory bed, recalling verses in the praise of so much beauty. He took the girl's hand to kiss it and, as he passed her slim white fingers through his own, noticed the morsel of flax lodged behind one of her nails. He wondered at this and delicately drew it forth.

At once the girl came out of her swoon and sat up upon the ivory bed. She smiled at the prince, and whispered, "Where am I?"

"You are with me," he answered, as he pressed her all against him. He kissed her and lay with her, and they stayed together for forty days and forty nights. Then the prince took leave of his love, saying, "My wazir is waiting outside the door. I will take him back to the palace and then return."

He found the wazir and walked with him across the garden towards the gate, until he was met by white roses growing with jasmine. The sight of these moved him, and he said to his companion, "The roses and the jasmine are white with the pallor of Sittukhan's cheeks! Wait here for three days longer, while I go to look upon the cheeks of Sittukhan."

He entered the pavilion again and stayed three days with Sittukhan, admiring the white roses and the jasmine of her cheeks. Then he rejoined the wazir and walked with him across the garden towards the gate, until the carob, with its long black fruit, rose up to meet him. He was moved by the sight of it, and said, "The carobs are long and black like the brows of Sittukhan. O wazir, wait here for three more days, while I go to view Sittukhan's brows."

He entered the pavilion again and stayed three days with the girl, admiring her perfect brows, long and black like carobs hanging two by two. Then he rejoined the wazir and walked with him towards the gate, until a springing fountain with its solitary jet rose up to meet him. He was moved by this sight and said to the wazir, "The jet of the fountain is as Sittukhan's waist. Wait here for three days longer, while I go to gaze again upon the waist of Sittukhan."

He went up into the pavilion and stayed three days with the girl, admiring her waist, for it was as the slim jet of the fountain. Then he rejoined the wazir and walked with him across the garden towards the gate. But Sittukhan, when she saw her lover come again a third time, had said to herself, "What brings him back?" So now she followed him down the stairs of the pavilion, and hid behind the door which gave on the garden to see what she might see.

The prince happened to turn and catch sight of her face. He returned toward her, pale and distracted, and said sadly, "Sittukhan, Sittukhan, I shall never see you more, never, never again." Then he departed with the wazir, and his mind was made up that he would not return.

Sittukhan wandered in the garden, weeping, lonely and regretting that she was not dead in very truth. As she walked by the water, she saw something sparkle in the grass and, on raising it, found it to be a talismanic ring. She rubbed the engraved carnelian of it, and the ring spoke, saying, "Behold here am I! What do you wish?"

"O ring of Sulaiman," answered Sittukhan, "I require a palace next to the palace of the prince who used to love me, and a beauty greater than my own."

"Shut your eye and open it!" said the ring; and, when the girl had done so, she found herself in a magnificent palace, next to the palace of the prince. She looked in a mirror which was there and marveled at her beauty. Then she leaned at the window until her false love should pass by on his horse.

When the prince saw her, he did not know her; but he loved her and ~~instructed to~~ his mother, saying, "Have you not some very beautiful thing which you can take as a present to the lady who dwells in the new palace? And can you not beg her, at the same time, to marry me?"

"I have two pieces of royal brocade," answered his mother, "I will take them to her and urge your suit with them." Without losing an hour, the queen visited Sittukhan, and said to her, "My daughter, I pray you to accept this present, and to marry my son." The girl called her negress and gave her the pieces of brocade, bidding her cut them up for floor cloths; so the queen became angry and returned to her own dwelling.

When the son learned that the woman of his love had destined the cloth of gold for menial service, he begged his mother to take some richer present, and the queen paid a second visit, carrying a necklace of unflawed emeralds.

"Accept this gift, my daughter, and marry my son," she said; and Sittukhan answered, "O lady, your present is accepted." then she called her slave, saying, "Have the pigeons eaten yet?"

"Not yet, mistress," answered the slave.

"Take them these green trifles!" said Sittukhan.

When she heard this outrageous speech, the queen cried, "You have humbled us, my daughter. Now, at least, tell me plainly whether you wish to marry my son or no."

"If you desire me to marry him," answered Sittukhan, "bid him feign death, wrap him in seven winding-sheets, carry him in sad procession through the city, and let your people bury him in the garden of my palace."

"I will tell him your conditions," said the queen.

"What do you think!" cried the mother to her son, when she had returned to him. "If you wish to marry the girl, you must pretend to be dead, you must be wrapped in seven winding-sheets, you must be led in sad procession through the city, and you must be buried in her garden!"

"Is that all, dear mother?" asked the prince in great delight. "Then tear your clothes and weep, and cry, 'My son is dead!'"

The queen rent her garments and cried in a voice shrill with pain, "Calamity and woe! My son is dead!"

All the folk of the palace ran to that place and, seeing the prince stretched upon the floor with the queen weeping above him, washed the body and wrapped it in seven winding-sheets. Then the old men and the readers of the Koran came together and formed a procession, which went throughout the city, carrying the youth covered with precious shawls. Finally they set down their burden in Sittukhan's garden and went their way.

As soon as the last had departed, the girl, who had once died of a morsel of flax, whose cheeks were jasmine and white roses, whose brows were carobs two by two, whose waist was the slim jet of the fountain, went down to the prince and unwrapped the seven winding-sheets from about him, one by one.

Then "Is it you?" she said. "You are ready to go very far for women; you must be fond of them!" The prince bit his finger in confusion, but Sittukhan reassured him, saying, "It does not matter this time!"

And they dwelt together in love and delight.