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ONCE UPON A TIME A \**SLEEPING BEAUTY*...  
INDO-EUROPEAN PARALLELS TO *SOLE, LUNA E TALIA*  
(GIAMBATTISTA BASILE *PENTAMERONE* 5.5)\*

**Abstract**

Nell'articolo si confrontano alcune caratteristiche attestate nelle versioni più antiche della *Bella Addormentata* con quelle documentate in testi poetici di due lingue indo-europee antiche. Nello specifico, si mostrerà come, in molte versioni della storia, una principessa dormiente e i suoi figli portano nomi che appartengono al campo semantico della 'luce' (Sole e Luna, Aurora e Giorno etc.). Inoltre, la protagonista della storia è 'colei che si sveglia' per antonomasia. Questi tratti tipici trovano corrispondenze perfette con due divinità indo-europee dell'aurora, cioè la greca Euruphaessa/Eos e la dea vedica Uṣas. Infine, sia Uṣas sia Euruphaessa commettono incesto, mentre, in una versione medioevale della *Bella Addormentata*, una principessa di nome 'Sor de Plaser' (Sorella di Piacere) ha un rapporto sessuale non consensuale con 'Frayre de Joy' (Fratello di Gioia). Tali nomi potrebbero costituire un indizio per un motivo di incesto nascosto, che è stato progressivamente rimosso dalla trama del racconto in un modo simile al quale lo stupro della principessa dormiente è stato omesso dalle versioni più recenti della *Bella Addormentata* (Perrault, Grimm, Pitré).

*Parole chiave:* *Bella Addormentata*, Aurora, Onomastica, Religione Indo-europea, Fraseologia

In this paper I compare a few features found in the earliest versions of *Sleeping Beauty* with those attested in the poetic texts of two ancient Indo-European literary traditions. Specifically, I point out that, in several versions of the story, the sleeping princess and her children have names belonging to the semantic field of 'light' (Sun and Moon, Dawn and Day etc.). Furthermore, the protagonist of the story is the princess 'who wakes up' *par excellence*. These

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characteristics perfectly match those of two Indo-European goddesses of Dawn, namely: Gk. Euruphaessa/Eos and Ved. Uṣas. Finally, Uṣas and Euruphaessa are protagonists of incest, while, in a medieval version of *Sleeping Beauty*, a princess named ‘Sister of Pleasure’ has a non-consensual sexual intercourse with ‘Brother of Joy’. Such names might be a clue for a concealed motif of incest, which has been progressively removed from the plot, in the same way as the rape of the sleeping princess has been omitted in the most recent versions of the *Sleeping Beauty* (Perrault, Grimm, Pitré).

*Keywords:* *Sleeping Beauty*, Dawn-goddess, Onomastics, Indo-European Religion, Phraseology

## 1. Introduction

When a comparative literary approach focuses on diachrony—i.e., how stories and characters change in time—, it often turns out that a certain tradition, attested in a given chronological and geographical setting, reflects very ancient themes. Narrative material of this description was used and re-used by single performers on the strength of its traditional nature, and, consequently, the characters’ identities lived on throughout time, though disguised with new names.

In this paper, I endeavor to investigate the diachronic dimension of Talia, the protagonist of “Sun Moon and Talia” (“Sole, Luna e Talia”, *Pentamerone* or *Cunto de li Cunti*, 5.5), a tale by the Neapolitan poet and fairy-tale collector Giambattista Basile (1632–1634). Along with her narrative ancestors and descendants such as, among others, Zelandine (‘Histoire de Troilus et de Zelandine’, *Roman de Perceforest* III 50–60, ca. 1330),<sup>1</sup> Sor de Plaser (‘Sister of Pleasure’, from *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*, ca. 1350), Talia is one of the first *Sleeping Beauties* to be raped and impregnated while asleep.<sup>2</sup>

My work focuses on certain textual elements mainly documented in Giambattista Basile’s tale, with brief reference to some details found in the earliest versions of *Sleeping Beauty*. I will compare these elements

<sup>1</sup> Roussineau, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> For further tales similar to the *Sleeping Beauty* cf. Heiner, 2010.

with certain characteristics of the Greek and Vedic Dawn goddesses, namely, Gk. *Eurupháessa* (Εὐρουφάεσσα), *Ēōs* (Ἠώς, 'Dawn'), and Ved. *Uṣas* ('Dawn'). These divine figures are usually traced back to a common Indo-European (IE) ancestor, i.e., a female deity, described as young and beautiful, and connected with poetic inspiration.<sup>3</sup>

The comparative phraseological analysis will reveal that Talia and her children share some characteristics with the Greek and Vedic Dawn. Moreover, Talia and the Dawn-goddess are 'the ones awake' *par excellence*. Finally, I will argue that one onomastic detail in one of the earliest versions of *Sleeping Beauty* might be a clue for the theme of incest. This motif might ultimately underlie the rape of the sleeping maiden, a constant feature in the first versions of the story.

This paper does not aim to prove that Basile or one of his sources drew directly from one very ancient IE source. Indeed, given that Sanskrit had not yet been discovered by Western scholars, neither Basile nor any of his sources could have been aware of the so-called 'IE thematic inheritance'. On the contrary, I will try to make a case for the antiquity of the IE repertoire of themes and images and for its survival throughout time and space. This narrative stock is as traditional as folktale material, which it can naturally overlap.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, while following the footsteps of folktale-motifs we come to the place where stories look alike,<sup>5</sup> those of cognate linguistic traditions lead us to the place where the same details make a group of cognate and diverse traditions unique. Thus, the goal of the study is to cast light on some

<sup>3</sup> The Vedic Dawn-goddess shares some traits with both Greek Eos and Aphrodite, see Dickmann Boedeker, 1974; Dexter, 1984, 1996; Dunkel, 1988–1990; Kölligan, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> For parallels between Greek myths and folktale-motifs, see Hansen, 2002. On *Sleeping Beauty* and folktale-motifs see ATU 410 'Sleeping Beauty', which comprises 'Sole Luna e Talia' (Giambattista Basile, *Pentamerone* 5.5); 'La Belle au Bois Dormant' (Charles Perrault, *Les Contes de ma mère l'Oye*, 1697); 'Dornröschen' (Grimm, *Märchen* 1812<sup>1</sup>); 'Suli, Perna e Anna' (Giuseppe Pitré, *Fiabe e Novelle* II, 1875). Among folktale-motifs, the following are found in all versions of the story: the princess has a belated birth; her parents fear for her life; they attempt to make her immortal but they fail. The protagonist(s) of the tale is onomastically related to the semantic field of 'light.'

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the structural analysis of Propp 1966.

distinctive details of *Sleeping Beauty*, such as: why does the same character appear as Talia in Basile's tale, but Aurora in Čajkovskij's ballet? Why are her children called Sun and Moon in Basile's tale, but Dawn and Day in Perrault's? Why does Talia do nothing but awake?

## 2.The first *Sleeping Beauties*

Although the identification of Basile's source goes beyond the scope of this paper, a short reference to the medieval versions of the *Sleeping Beauty* will be provided here below.

In *Histoire de Troilus et de Zellandine*, a narrative included in the Arthurian novel *Roman de Perceforest* (III, chapters 50–60), of late Middle Age, princess Zellandine has mysteriously fallen asleep during a party. She lies in a tower, which is completely walled in, exception made for a window on the East side, since her father, king Zelland, worships the Sun. No one is able to visit the princess but her father. Therefore, Troilus, a knight and suitor of Zellandine, asks Venus for help. Thanks to the goddess he manages to reach the sleeping princess: *il ne se peut tenir par le conseil de Venus qu'il n'en prensist a son vouloir et tant que la belle Zellandine en perdy par droit la nom de pucelle*<sup>6</sup> "he followed only Venus' advice, and he acted according to her wishes, and so much so that the beautiful Zellandine could no longer be rightly considered a virgin." (Cox 1990: 131). Before leaving her, Troilus puts his own ring on Zellandine's finger and takes hers with him. After nine months, the sleeping princess gives birth to a child, who, some time after, accidentally awakes her. Zellandine is confused and feels dishonored for what happened. Her aunt, however, tells her to rejoice: Mars, the war god and her own ancestor, must be the father of her baby. Zelland, happy for the awakening of his daughter, organizes a tournament in order to find a spouse for the princess. Troilus takes part to the event and thus meets Zellandine. The princess is able to recognize him thanks to the ring on his finger and falls in love with him. Zelland, however, wishes to give her

<sup>6</sup> *Perceforest's* printed text follows the critical edition by Roussineau, 1993.

daughter to Nereon. Therefore, the princess resolves to escape with Troilus, but she tells her maidens that she is going away with Mars.

In *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* (anonymous tale, second half of XIV cent.),<sup>7</sup> Sor de Plaser, daughter of emperor Gint Senay, suddenly falls asleep without awakening and is walled in in a tower which only her parents can visit. The king of Florianda, Frayre de Joy, wants to see her, and acquires magical powers from Vergil, a magician, in order to cross the bridge, beyond of which Sor de Plaser's tower is located. He finally arrives to the room of Sor, makes love to her and takes her inscribed ring, which says: *Anell suy de Sor de Plaser, / Qui m'aura leys pora aver, / Per amor, ab plaze viven, / can ach de joy pres complimen* "I am the ring of Sor de Plaser, he who has me will have her by love and with true pleasure" (vv. 234–236, trans. Zago 1991b: 79). He puts his own ring on Sor's finger: *Anell de Fryre de Joy suy, / Qui m'aura leys amaray, / No jes a guise de vilan, / Mas com a fill de rey presan* "I am the ring of Frayre de Joy, she who has me, I will love her not like a peasant, but like the son of a worthy king" (vv. 241–244, trans. Zago, 1991b: 79).<sup>8</sup> Frayre then begins a big journey in order to find a remedy, which can awake the princess. Meanwhile, Sor gives birth to a baby-boy. One day, Frayre succeeds to send magical herbs to her through a magic jay, which had been reared by Vergil. The bird awakes the princess and tries to persuade her of Frayre's noble heart. Like Zellandine, Sor feels dishonored and despises her rapist. However, in the end, the jay persuades her on Frayre's honesty and virtue. The communication between the two lovers is accidentally impeded, but in the end the jay succeeds in telling Frayre that Sor has awoken. Frayre and Sor can finally marry and live happily ever after.

Both mentioned versions of the story present some elements in common with Basile's story-line, namely:

<sup>7</sup> "Frayre de Joy has traditionally been considered a Catalan text; however it has also been reedited by Suzanne Thiolier-Méjean as an Occitan *nova*." (Gibson, 2015: 67), cf. Thiolier-Méjean's edition (1996) on this point.

<sup>8</sup> On the exchange of the 'speaking' rings see Gibson, 2015.

- a. The protagonist is apparently dead, but she sleeps without awakening. She lies segregated in an inaccessible place;
- b. A prince or a king searches for her or accidentally finds her;
- c. He rapes her in the sleep and she gives birth to one (or more) child(ren);
- d. Only in later time the princess accidentally awakes and falls in love with the prince;
- e. Princess and prince cannot directly reunite because of difficult circumstances or obstacles (e.g., the prince is away, the princess's father has destined her to another man);
- f. Obstacles are overcome and the two lovers can live happily ever after.

Further medieval narratives might be compared to the ones recounted above, although they present a few differences in their plots. In this context, the following tales will be shortly mentioned for the sake of completeness:

- In the Poetic and Prose Edda (ca. XIII cent.), the hero Sigurd is connected to the awakening of a sleeping maiden, namely: the Valkyrie *Sigrdrífa* (*Sigrdrífumál*), or Brynhild (*Grípisspá*, *Völsunga Saga*), cf. *Völsunga Saga* 21 *Sigurðr kvæð hana helzti lengi sofit hafa. Hon spurði hvat svá var máttugt er beit brynjuna, — ‘Ok brá mínum svefni* “Sigurd said she’d been asleep too long. She asked what was strong enough to bit into the hauberk— And to interrupt my sleep” (Finch, 1965: 34–35). Brynhild teaches the runes to Sigurd. However, some time later, she has Sigurd killed because she accuses him to have taken her virginity (*Grípisspá*, *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*). The motif of the sleeping female protagonist vaguely recalls the *Sleeping Beauty* and is commonly considered a folktale-motif (‘Erweckungssage’), which merged with the heroic achievements of Sigurd.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Among others, see Gildersleeves, 1909; Petsch, 1917; Larsen, 1917; Uecker, 1972; Andersson, 1980. On parallels for Sigurd's fight against the dragon see Fontenrose 1959.

- *Blandin de Cornoalha* is a Catalan poem almost contemporary of *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*,<sup>10</sup> which contains a *Sleeping Beauty* episode: Blandin is informed of the existence of a *dona encantada* (v. 1125), Brianda. The beautiful sleeping maiden lies segregated in an inaccessible castle, guarded by ten valorous knights. He decides to go after the princess, and, thanks to her brother, he succeeds in killing the knights and arriving to Brianda's chamber, where seven maidens attend to her. After awaking her, Brianda falls in love with him. In this version there is no rape the sleeping princess; moreover the obstacles against Blandin and Brianda's love seem to be set *before*, not *after*, the awakening event. Still, this version might preserve an interesting onomastic detail (see below, §3).

There is no concrete proof that Basile knew the medieval versions of the *Sleeping Beauty*. However, *Histoire de Troilus et de Zellandine*, *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*, and *Sun, Moon and Talia* display macroscopic similarities, a fact which might suggest that the three stories rely upon one and the same folktale-motif (Vogt, 1896). A brief summary of Basile's tale is in place here:

Some wise men prophesize that princess Talia is destined to die, killed by a splinter of flax. Her father puts a ban on all spindles in the kingdom. But years later Talia comes upon an old woman who is spinning thread and accidentally touches the spindle. A splinter gets under her fingernail and she drops to the ground, apparently dead. Unable to bear the grief of her death, Talia's father locks her in a house, which he then abandons. Sometime later, a king who is hunting in the nearby woods accidentally gets into the house. He finds Talia lying on a bed and, overcome by her beauty, makes love to her (*portatola de pesole a no lietto ne couze li frutte d'amore* "[he] carried her to a bed, where he gathered the first fruits of love"). He then leaves the girl where he found her and returns to his kingdom. Nine months later, Talia is still asleep when she gives birth to twins, a boy and a girl. In order that they may be fed, the fairies attach the

<sup>10</sup> For a linguistic and narratological comparison between the two accounts see Léglu, 2010, Paradisi, 2016.

newborns to their mother's breast. One day, the baby-boy accidentally suckles the splinter out of Talia's finger, and awakes her. She rejoices of the two beautiful babies and lives with them in the house.

One day the hunter king goes back to Talia's house and sees her with her children. He becomes fond of them and when he returns to his kingdom, he mentions their names to his legitimate wife (*Sole e Luna, che così dette nomme a li figlie, se si corcava chiammava l'uno e l'altro* "Sun and Moon, so he named his children, when he took his rest, he called either one or other of them"). The queen becomes terribly jealous and determined to find out the truth about Talia and the children. As soon as she does, she brings them all to court and plans to get rid of them: she orders the royal cook to kill the children and serve their flesh to the king. The cook, however, hides them and cooks two lambs instead. The queen tells her husband that he has just gorged on his own children, causing his desperation. She then tries to murder Talia by throwing her on a pyre. Following Talia's plea, the queen allows her to take off her fine garments first; while doing so the young woman cries in grief at each piece of clothing that falls to the ground. The king hears Talia's lament and comes to her rescue. He kills his wife, and discovers that his children are alive. The cook is rewarded for having saved Sun and Moon, while Talia and the king get married.

### 3. Talia, Sun and Moon

In Basile's tale, Sun, Moon and Talia are the only characters called by name. This apparently contradicts their roles in the story, since they appear to be particularly passive:<sup>11</sup> In the first part of the tale—from the beginning to Talia's awakening—, Talia sleeps and is awoken by Sun and Moon. In the second part—from the awakening to the end—, Sun, Moon and Talia are victims of the evil queen, and are rescued by the king. In any case, the onomastic data will turn out to be very interesting, and are therefore the main focus in this section.

<sup>11</sup> As is well known, this aspect has been strongly criticized by the feminist revisions of the *Sleeping Beauty*, see, for instance, the analysis of Fernández Rodríguez, 2002.



To begin with, Talia is the Italianized form of the Greek names Thaleia (Θάλεια), Thalie (Θαλίη) or Thalia (Θαλία).<sup>12</sup> All these names belong etymologically together to the verb θάλλω ‘to bloom, sprout, thrive’ which can be traced back to an Indo-European root commonly reconstructed as *\*d<sup>h</sup>alh<sub>1</sub>-* ‘ooze out / sprout’ (LIV<sup>2</sup> s.v. *\*d<sup>h</sup>alh<sub>1</sub>-*) or *\*d<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>2</sub>-* (de Lamberterie, 1990: 661) on the basis of Greek θάλλω and Albanian *dal* (1<sup>st</sup> sg.), *del* (3<sup>rd</sup> sg.) ‘go(es) out’. The Greek nominal derivatives display a ‘Caland-behavior’ which might have developed *ex Graeco ipso*: Among them we count the *s*-stem θάλος ‘child’, the *ro*-derivative θαλερός ‘in flower, flowering’, and a *u*-stem \*θαλύς, reconstructable on the strength of the feminine adjective θάλεια (de Lamberterie, 1990: 661–662). Greek θάλλω applies to nature, in a concrete sense, and metaphorically to states, conditions and occasions. In parallel, the adjective θαλερός ‘in flower’ often describes (a) a person who is young or fresh, e.g., a spouse, a child, a parent, (b) things that are abundant, strong, luxuriant, e.g., fat, hair, lament, a voice in Homer. In Greek literature, the names Thaleia and Thalia belong to certain divine or semi-divine figures associated with beauty, youth, and feast (cf. Hom. δαῖτα θάλεια ‘the rich meal’), namely:

- a Nereid in Homer (*Iliad* 18.38–39) and Hesiod (*Theogony* 245)
- a Muse in Hesiod (*Theogony* 75–79)
- a Charis (‘Grace’) in Hesiod (*Theogony* 906–908) and Pindar (*Olympian Ode* 14. 13–16).<sup>13</sup>

The following etymological congeners of θάλλω are furthermore relevant in this context, since they refer to female deities, namely:

- Charis, called ζωθάλμιος ‘who makes life in flower’ (Pindar *Olympian Ode* 7.11),<sup>14</sup> and
- Dawn, called θαλερώπις ‘who looks in flower’ in an epigram of the *Greek Anthology*, cf.

<sup>12</sup> Θάλεια and Θαλία/Θαλίη display different suffixes, while Θαλίη is Ionic for Θαλία.

<sup>13</sup> A further congener of the names Thalia and Thaleia, the name Θαλλώ, belongs to one of the Horai in Plutarch and Pausanias.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. βιοθάλμιος ‘whose life is thriving’ (ἀνήρ, *HHymn.* 5).

*Anthologia Palatina* vii 204.3–4

οὐδ' ὑπὸ μαρμαρυγῇ **θαλερώπιδος Ἥριγενείης**

ἄκρα παραιθύσσεις θαλπομένων πτερύγων

“No longer in the shine of **Erigeneia** (Dawn, who is ‘born at dawn’), **who looks in flower**, you shake the tips of your sun-warmed wings”

The pair *θαλερώπις Ἥριγενείη*\* ‘the flowering Early-born, i.e., the young (maiden) in flower’ relies upon widespread descriptions of Eos, the Greek Dawn-goddess. At the same time, these attributes match those of her Vedic counterpart, *Uṣas*. Both goddesses, whose names (Gk. *Ἥως*, Ved. *Uṣás*) go back to a PIE root *\*h<sub>2</sub>ues-* ‘gleam, shine’ (cf. Lat. *aurora* < *\*ausōsā*) are commonly imagined as beautiful maidens. Perpetual youth and daily re-generation are therefore major prerogatives of Eos and *Uṣas*, hence their close association with the PIE root *\*ǵenhi-* ‘to generate’. If *Ἥως* is traditionally referred to as *Ἥριγενεία* [*\*h<sub>2</sub>ues-er-i<sup>o</sup>ǵenhi-s-i(e)h<sub>2</sub>*] in Greek poetry (Il. 1.477+), *Uṣás* is perpetually regenerated (Ved. *jani*, IE *\*ǵenhi-*) from the darkness, cf. RV 1.123.9b *śukrá kṛṣṇād aṇanista śvitīcī* “gleaming, bright-faced, she has been born from the dark.”<sup>15</sup>

In connection with the main purpose of the present contribution, I would like to highlight the onomastic coincidence between *Talia* and the Greek Dawn *thalerōpis*: this detail will turn out to be a remarkable match, if we take into account that *Talia*’s children are called Sun and Moon. Indeed, in the IE imaginary, Dawn is the mother of the Sun (Gk. *Hēlios*, Ved. *Sūrya-*, which both continue a proto-form *\*s[e]h<sub>2</sub>u[e]l-(i)io-*),<sup>16</sup> since she precedes him. At the same time, the parentage was extended to the moon, as the sun and the moon are portrayed as twin stars.

<sup>15</sup> A recent overview of the most widespread epithets of the IE Dawn-goddess can be found in West, 2007: 217–227.

<sup>16</sup> Ion. ἡέλιος, non-Ion. ἀέλιος can be reconstructed as *\*seh<sub>2</sub>uél-(i)io-*, whereas Vedic *Sūrya-* may reflect *\*súh<sub>2</sub>l(i)io-* with laryngeal metathesis (*\*h<sub>2</sub>u* > *\*uh<sub>2</sub>*). Furthermore, Latvian *saule* ‘sun, Sun-goddess’, just as its close Baltic congener, Lithuanian *saulė* ‘id.’, derives from a stem *\*séh<sub>2</sub>ul-* (cf. Ved. *svár-*, Av. *hvarə-*, Goth. *sauil* ‘sun’) by means of a suffix *\*(i)ieh<sub>2</sub>* (Petit, 2010: 6). On *\*seh<sub>2</sub>uōl-*, an heteroclite, reconstructable on the basis of Luwian *še-hu-wa-a-a[l]* ‘brazier’, see Starke, 1981: 152–157. Differently, Melchert, 1993, s.v. *ši(h)wāl* interprets the word as ‘stileto’. For a recent etymology of ‘sun’ see Pinault, 2017, who interprets the word for ‘sun’ as a compound ‘satisfying the seeing’.

In the Greek literary sources of the archaic and classical age, ‘Dawn’ is distinct from the mother of the sun and the moon. However, one very ancient literary source, the *31st Homeric Hymn*,<sup>17</sup> hints at a different story. Here, the sun is the son of a character called Εὐρυφάεσσα “the widely shining”, cf.

*HHymn.* 31.1–7

ἥλιον ὕμνεῖν αὐτε Διὸς τέκος ἄρχεο Μοῦσα,  
 Καλλιόπη, φαέθοντα, τὸν Εὐρυφάεσσα βοῶπις  
 γείνατο Γαίης παιδί καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος·  
 γῆμε γὰρ Εὐρυφάεσσαν ἀγκλειτὴν Ὑπερίων,  
 αὐτοκασιγνήτην, ἣ οἱ τέκε κάλλιμα τέκνα,  
 Ἥῳ τε ῥοδόπηχυν ἐνπλόκαμόν τε Σελήνην  
 Ἥελιόν τ’ ἀκάμαντ’ (α) [...]

“Of **Helios** again begin your song, daughter of Zeus, Muse Calliope: the shining one, whom mild-eyed **Euruphaessa bore** to the son of Earth and starry Heaven. For Hyperion married the famed **Euruphaessa**, his own sister, who bore him fine children: rose-armed **Eos** (Dawn), lovely-tressed **Selene** (Moon), and tireless **Helios** (Sun)”

As Enrico Campanile (1987) convincingly demonstrated, Euruphaessa is an *avatāra* – a narrative transfiguration of a certain character across time and space – of the IE Dawn-Goddess.<sup>18</sup> This is corroborated by the linguistic analysis of the compound divine

<sup>17</sup> The date of *Homeric Hymn* 31 is debated. In the past, it has been proposed to shift the age of *HHymn.* 31 and 32 (to the Moon) to the Alexandrian period, because some unique elements are attested in the hymn 32 – in the *Homeric Hymn to the Moon*, Selene is portrayed as ‘winged’ (τανυσίπτερος, v. 1) and there is mention of Pandia, an obscure figure connected to the Antiochid dynasty (West, 2003: 19). In this regard, I would like to shortly stress that such content elements do not really guarantee a later age of composition: For instance, the Moon-goddess has been represented as possessing winged horses on vase-paintings of VI-V century BCE (cf. *LIMC* s.v. Selene). In addition, the occurrence of rare or isolated (iconographic or textual) elements does not speak in favor of a late date of composition. Indeed, isolated traditions, even if they are preserved in texts of later ages, should not be automatically considered as secondary or as original inventions of the *aedoi*.

<sup>18</sup> Sanskrit *avatāra* stands for ‘the one who descended (*tar*) below (*ava*)’ and commonly indicates the ten forms taken by Viṣṇu to ‘descend’ into the universe.

name Εὐρυφάεσσα. The first member of the Greek theonym is the adjective εὐρύς ‘wide, broad’, which parallels Vedic *urú-* ‘id.’ and can be transposed as *\*(h<sub>1</sub>?)urHú-* (cf. also To. A *wärts*, To. B *wartse* ‘broad’).<sup>19</sup> The second member, °φάεσσα ‘shining’, is derived from φαίνω ‘to shine’ from PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘id.’ (cf. Ved. *bhā* ‘shine’); it is best analyzed as a feminine active participle *\*phāssa* < *\*phāssa* < *phāntīa-* < PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>2</sub>-nt-ih<sub>2</sub>-* that changed into °φάεσσα in analogy with the type χαρίεις, χαρίεσσα, χαρίεν ‘graceful’.

This brings us to the Vedic epithet *vibhātī-*, ‘widely shining’, which is traditionally applied to Uṣas in the *Rigveda*, cf.

RV 7.78.3ab

*etā u tyāḥ prāty adṛśran purāstāj*  
*jyōtir yāchantīr uṣāso vibhātīḥ*

“These very **dawns** have been seen opposite in the east, extending their light, **radiating widely**”

The first member of *vibhātī-* is the adverb *vi-* ‘away’; the second, *-bhātī-*, is the feminine active participle to *\*b<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>2</sub>-* ‘to shine’, and thus harks back to the very same form, *\*b<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>2</sub>-nt-ih<sub>2</sub>-*, that is indirectly reflected in the Greek theonym. In support to Campanile’s analysis, I would like to stress how other Vedic passages connect an adverbial form *urvīyā* ‘widely’ (to *urú-* ‘wide’) to the verb *vi-bhā* ‘shine widely’, cf.

RV 1.92.9ab

*vīśvāni devī bhūvanābhicākṣyā*  
*pratīcī cākṣur urvīyā vī bhātī*

“**The goddess**, overseeing all creatures, (like) an eye, facing toward them, **shines forth widely**”

Such a passage documents a connection between an adverbial form to *\*(h<sub>1</sub>?)urHú-* and the root *\*b<sup>h</sup>eh<sub>2</sub>-*, which perfectly matches Εὐρυφάεσσα, cf.

<sup>19</sup> On etymology and collocations see de Lamberterie, 1990: 212–243.

[WIDE] / [WIDELY] IE *(h <sub>1</sub> ?)urHú-	[SHINE] IE *b <sup>h</sup> eh <sub>2</sub> -
Eὐρυ°	°phāssa- → °φάεσσα
urviyā	vī-bhā → vibhātī-

The similarities between Euruphaessa and Uṣas *vibhātī* are more than just formal: like Euruphaessa, Uṣas *vibhātī* is the mother of the Sun in the Indic literary tradition, cf.

RV 7.78.3

*etā u tyāh prāty adṛśran purástāj  
jyótir yāchantīr uṣāso vibhātīh  
ājījanan sūryam yajñām agnīm  
apācīnam tāmo agād ājuṣtam*

“These very **dawns** have been seen opposite in the east, extending their light, **radiating widely**. They have **generated the sun**, the sacrifice, the fire. The disagreeable darkness has gone back behind”

Actually, the entire collocation ‘the widely-shining generated the sun’ constitutes a threefold partial match between Greek and Vedic, as shown in the following table:

the widely-shining [WIDE] + *b <sup>h</sup> eh <sub>2</sub> -	generated *ġenh <sub>1</sub> -	the sun *s(e)h <sub>2</sub> u(e)l <sub>2</sub> io-
Eὐρυφάεσσα nom.sg.	γείνατο 3.sg.aor.1	ἥλιον acc.sg.
<i>vibhātīh</i> nom.pl.adj.	<i>ājījanan</i> 3.pl.aor.redupl.	<i>sūryam</i> acc.sg.

We can conclude that Gk. Eὐρυφάεσσα reflects an original epithet of the IE Dawn-goddess. In Greek, ‘widely shining’ came to be used as a *transferred epithet* and to directly designate the mother of the Sun-god. In like fashion, Talia is the mother of Sun and Moon.

Moreover, these two matches between Talia, Euruphaessa and Uşas are not isolated ‘auroral’ traits. Other versions of *Sleeping Beauty* allow us to highlight further significant coincidences:

In the medieval *Histoire de Troilus et de Zellandine* (*Roman de Perceforest* III 50–60), Zellandine (the daughter of Zelland, lord of Zeeland) is laid to sleep in a high tower. She is completely walled in, except for a window on the east side, where Dawn rises, cf. *et y a fait la fenestre devers orient, car il a tresgrant fiancé au dieu du soleil* “and he (Zelland) made the window face towards the east because he has great confidence in the God of the sun” (Cox, 1990: 125).

Although Sor de Plaser, the protagonist of one late medieval version of the *Sleeping Beauty*, does not display explicit associations with the semantic field of light,<sup>20</sup> the almost contemporary episode of *Blandin de Cornoalha* might retain an interesting onomastic detail. In this tale, the sleeping princess is called *Brianda*, a name which can be understood as reflecting *\*Brianda-* < *\*Brigant-ā-* (feminine of *\*Brigant-*) with loss of intervocalic *\*-g-* and sonorization *-anta* > *-anda* (cf. *Toudopalandaigae*, in *Année Epigraphique* 1915, 8). If this analysis is correct, the name *Brianda* belongs to the same root as the WN *Birgit*, Celtic *Brigantī*, which go back to a proto-form *\*bʰr̥ǵʰntih₂-* ‘great, lofty’, a feminine form of the adjective *\*bʰr̥ǵʰ-ent-*, cf. Ved. *bṛhánt-* : Av. *bərəzant-* ‘hight, lofty, great’.<sup>21</sup> The proto-form *\*bʰr̥ǵʰntih₂-*, continued by Ved. *bṛhatī* is a recurrent epithet of the Vedic Dawn-goddess, e.g. RV 1.113.19b *yajñásya ketúr bṛhatī ví bhāhi* “(scil. you, Dawn) beacon of the sacrifice, lofty—shine forth,” and underlies the Celtic name *Birgit*, since *\*bʰr̥ǵʰntih₂-* came to be used as a transferred epithet of the Dawn goddess.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> On *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* see §5.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Janda, 2006: 16–21.

<sup>22</sup> As pointed out by Campanile (1990), the Irish Saint *Birgit* is likely to be understood as a ‘Christianized’ *avatāra* of the Dawn goddess: she is born at dawn and many of her achievements overlap with attributes (association with milk, red cows and light) or gestures (bringing the milk, stretching the light beacon through her dress) of the Vedic Dawn-goddess (cf. Massetti, 2017).

In *La Belle au bois dormant* (Charles Perrault, 1697) the princess has no name, but her children are called 'Dawn' and 'Day': *il vécut avec la Princesse plus de deux ans entiers et en eut deux enfants, dont le premier qui fut une fille, fut nommée l'Aurore, et le second un fils, qu'on nomma le Jour, parce qu'il paraissait encore plus beau que sa soeur.*

In *Suli, Perna e Anna* (Giuseppe Pitre, 1875) the princess's son is called 'Sun', *Suli*, like in Basile's tale, while her daughter is called *Perna*, a south Italian variant for *Perla* 'pearl, gem.' This detail matches Basile's phraseology, as the storyteller explicitly compares Sun and Moon to two jewels, cf. *La quale, dapo nove mise, scarricaie na cocchia de criature, uno mascolo e l'autra femmena, che vedive dui vranchiglie de gioie* "and she (: the princess), after nine months gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl, **that looked (like) two beautiful gems.**"<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. The awakening

In Greek and Vedic, Dawn awakes and wakes the world, as the following examples will illustrate. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Dawn awakes in her bed:

*Il.* 11.1–2 (= *Od.* 5.1–2)

Ἦώς δ' ἐκ λεχέων παρ' ἀγαυοῦ Τιθωνοῖο  
ᾤρνυθ', ἵν' ἀθανάτοισι φόως φέροι ἠδὲ βροτοῖσι·

"Now **Dawn rose from her bed** from beside lordly Tithonus, to bring light to immortals and to mortal human beings"

Elsewhere, Dawn wakes someone up:

<sup>23</sup> The theme of the morning and evening stars as 'gems' or 'jewels' of the sky is well attested in the Indo-European languages. In the *Rigveda*, the Sun is the "bright ornament of heaven," cf. *divó rukmāḥi* (RV 7.63.4a, cf. 6.51.1a). Skaldic kenningar describe the sun as 'the fair jewel of the high storm-house (: sky),' *fagrims hás hreggranns* (Anon *Leið* 2.7), or the 'light-jewel,' *ljósgims* (Anon *Leið* 35.7). In Greek epics, jewels of different kind are compared to the Sun, cf. *Od.* 18.295–296 ὄρμιον δ' Εὐρυμάχῳ πολυδαίδαλον αὐτίκ' ἔνευκε, ἢ χρύσεον, ἠλέκτροισιν ἐεργμένον, ἥελιον ὥς "and a chain did another quickly bring for Eurumachus, one cunningly wrought of gold, strung with amber beads, bright as the sun."

*Od.* 6.48–49

αὐτίκα δ' Ἡὼς ἦλθεν ἐϋθρονος, ἥ μιν ἔγειρε  
Ναυσικάαν εὐπεπλον· [...]

“At once then came fair-throned **Dawn** and **awakened** Nausicaa of the beautiful robes”

In the *Rigveda*, Uṣas does the same:

*RV* 1.123.2

*pūrvā vísvasmād bhūvanād **abodhi**  
jáyantī vājam brhatī sánuṭrī  
uccā vāy ákhyad yuvatiḥ punarbhūr  
**óṣā** agan prathamā pūrváhūtau*

“Earlier than all creation she **has awoken**, the lofty one, conquering, winning the prize. On high she has gazed forth—the young woman has come into being again. **Dawn** has come here, the first one at the Early Invocation”

*RV* 1.92.9cd

*vísvaṃ **jītvāṃ** caráse **bodháyantī**  
vísvasya vācam avidan manāyóḥ*

“**Awakening every creature** to move she has found the speech of every attentive/devout one”

In other hymns, Uṣas is awoken by the poets:

*RV* 4.52.4

*yāvayád dveṣasaṃ tāvā  
cikitvít sūṇṛtāvāri  
**prāti stómair abhutsmaḥi***

“With awareness of you, in response to you, the one who keeps away hatred, o liberal-spirited one, **we have awakened** with praises”

Indeed, as underlined by Peter Jackson (2006: 127), the goddess of Dawn is often connected with the awakening of the poetic inspiration. Thanks to her priests can perform the first sacrifice every day, cf.



RV 7.75.1d

*āṅgirastamā pathayā ajīgaḥ*

“The (fore)most Aṅgiras (of Aṅgiras), she (Uṣas) **has awakened the paths**”

In RV 7.75.1d, mentioned just above, Uṣas’s accomplishment is described by means of Ved. *jar*, which, just like Gk. ἐγείρω (cf. Ἡώς ... μιν ἔγειρε, *Od.* 6.48), can be traced back to IE *\*h<sub>1</sub>ger-* ‘awake’. Therefore, from the analysis of Greek and Vedic sources, awakening is, not surprisingly, a distinctive prerogative of the Dawn-goddess. Furthermore, if the awakening of the Graeco-Aryan Dawn goddess has a *cosmic* dimension (ὠρνυθ’, ἴν’ ἀθανάτοισι φάωσ φέροι ἡδὲ βροτοῖσι, *Il.* 11.1–2 [= *Od.* 5.1–2]; *vísvaṃ jīvāṃ ... bodháyantī*, RV 1.92.9a), that of the *Sleeping Beauties* came to acquire an ‘extended dimension’, at least in some versions of the tale: the princess’s kingdom falls asleep and awakes again with her, cf.

Charles Perrault *La belle au bois dormant*

*Elle pensa que quand la princesse viendrait à se réveiller, elle serait bien embarrassée toute seule dans ce vieux château: voici ce qu'elle fit. Elle toucha de sa baguette tout ce qui était dans ce château [...] Dès qu'elle les eut touchés, ils s'endormirent tous, pour ne se réveiller qu'en même temps que leur maîtresse, afin d'être tout prêts à la servir quand elle en aurait besoin. [...] Cependant tout le palais s'était réveillé avec la princesse; chacun songeait à faire sa charge.*

I would thus argue that the prerogative of ‘waking up after a long sleep (which resembles death)’ has been retained in the European tale, and that *Sleeping Beauty* is actually the *Awakening Beauty*. In every single version of the story, the awakening of the princess is the turning point of the narrative, or the happy ending. The importance of the awakening of the princess could therefore be explained as an ancient trait of the protagonist.

## 5. The incest

The story of the princess who becomes impregnated while asleep could conceal an original reference to a story about incest. Although

Talia and the king are not related in Basile's version, the protagonists' names in one of the oldest versions of the story might echo a different story. Further ancient versions might conceal other clues.

In *Histoire de Troïlus et de Zellandine*, the unexpected pregnancy of the princess is explained as a consequence of a sexual intercourse with the war-god Mars, a relative of her, cf. *Or est advenu, belle niece, dist la dame, que Mars, le dieu des batailles, duquel lineage nous sommes extraits, vous a plus priveement visité que nulz des autres dieux* – “So it happened, my beautiful niece, – said the lady (: Zellandine's aunt), – that Mars, the god of war, our direct ancestor, visited you more artfully than any other god –” (Cox, 1990: 134). This account might represent a sort of ‘internal rationalization’ of Zellandine's pregnancy within the ancient story-setting. Since the princess is walled in in a tower, no mortal man except her father has access to her room. Consequently, the only possible father of her son is a god. To be sure, a narrative landscape such as the inaccessible tower is a recurrent, traditional motif in heroic endeavors: the more isolated the princess's location is, the more challenging and praiseworthy the hero's *quête* will be. But still, the way the incest-motif and isolation combine is noteworthy. As pointed out by Maurizio Bettini in a recent lecture (2019), isolation characterizes mythological incestuous communities. Take, for instance, Aeolus' island in the tenth book of the *Odyssey*, cf.

*Od.* 10.1–7

Αἰολίην δ' ἐς νῆσον ἀφικόμεθ' ἔνθα δ' ἔναιεν  
 Αἴολος Ἰπποτάδης, φίλος ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι,  
 πλωτὴ ἐνὶ νήσῳ πᾶσαν δετέμιν πέρι τείχος  
 χάλκεον ἄρρηκτον, λισσὴ δ' ἀναδέδρομε πέτρῃ.  
τοῦ καὶ δώδεκα παῖδες ἐνὶ μεγάροισι γεγάασιν,  
ἔξ μὲν θυγατέρες, ἔξ δ' υἱέες ἡβώντες.  
ἐνθ' ὅ γε θυγατέρας πόρην υἷασιν εἶναι ἀκοίτις.

“Then we came to the island of Aeolia, where dwelt Aeolus, son of Hippotas, dear to the immortal gods, **on a floating island, and all around it is a wall of unbreakable bronze, and the cliff runs up sheer. Twelve children of his, too, there are in the halls, six daughters and six sturdy sons, and he gave his daughters to his sons to wife.**”

The correlation between the Odysseiac mythological landscape and the ‘incest-motif’ strikingly matches that between Zellandine’s tower – *Sy regarda la tour, qui estoit haulte a merveilles, et n’y avoit huis ne fenestre qui ne fut remasonnee de bonnes pierres, reserve seulement une fenestre qui estoit au sommet de la tour devers orient* “He (Troilus) looked at the tower, which was extraordinarily high and whose every door and window was solidly cemented and covered with great stones, except for one single window at the top of the tower on the eastern side” (Cox, 1990: 124) – and her alleged incestuous pregnancy – *Mars [...] duquel lineage nous sommes extraits, vous a [...] visité “Mars, [...] our direct ancestor, visited you”* (Cox, 1990: 134).

In *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser*, the sleeping princess and her awakener are called ‘Sister’ and ‘Brother’ of complementary feelings, Joy and Pleasure. The similarity and complementarity of their names is emphasized in the poem as well, cf. vv. 539–540 *Frayre de Joy, Sor de Plaser, / Anc noms no s’avengron tan be* “Brother of Joy, Sister of Pleasure, / never have there been better suited names (for each other)” (Gibson, 2015: 66). This onomastic detail is remarkable in the light of the Greek and Vedic comparanda. According to *Homeric Hymn* 31, Euruphaessa marries her own brother Hyperion, cf.

*HHymn.* 31.4–5

γῆμε γὰρ Εὐρυφάεσσον ἀγακλειτὴν Ὑπερίων,  
αὐτοκασιγνήτην, ἣ οἱ τέκε κάλλιμα τέκνα

“For Hyperion **married** the famed **Euruphaessa, his own sister**, who bore him fine children”

In early Vedic texts, Uṣas is the protagonist of an incestuous story.<sup>24</sup> In the *Rigveda*, Uṣas is generated by Heaven,<sup>25</sup> and is often called

<sup>24</sup> Differently, Zago 1991a has compared *Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser* to the Indian legend of *Surya Bai*. Little ‘Lady Sun’ (Surya Bai) is the daughter of a milkwoman, but she is carried off by two eagles while she is still a little baby. The eagles rear her as their own daughter. One day, when Surya Bai is grown up, a rakṣasa (: demon) follows her in order to eat her. In the attempt of catching her, the demon loses one of his nails. Then, Surya accidentally touches the sharp thorn and falls down, apparently dead. Only after

*daughter of Heaven*.<sup>26</sup> However, more than one rigvedic passage alludes to an incestuous relation between Dyaus and Uṣas called ‘lover/beloved of Heaven’, cf.

RV 1.30.22  
*tvám tyébhīr ā gahi*  
*vājebhīr duhitar divaḥ*  
*asmé rayīm ní dhārāya*

“Come here with these prizes, **o daughter of heaven**. Lay wealth as foundation for us.”

RV 1.46.1ab  
*eṣó uṣā āpūrvayā*  
*vay ūchati priyā divāḥ*

“With none before her, this Dawn breaks, **the beloved of heaven**”

RV 1.71.5cd  
*sṛjād āstā dhṛṣatā didyúm asmai*  
*svāyām devō duhitāri tvīṣīm dhāt*

“The archer boldly loosed a missile at him (when) **the god placed his “spark” in his own daughter**”<sup>27</sup>

In RV 10.61.5–8, which preserves a more extensive narrative of the incest, Dyaus approaches Uṣas, who succeeds in escaping, but some of Dyaus’s seed drops on the sacrificial ground. In later versions of the

some time, a rajah (: king) finds her and removes the thorn from her hand. The maiden awakes and falls in love with her rescuer, who wants to marry her: Surya Bai will be the rajah’s second wife. However, Raneé, the rajah’s first wife, gets jealous and tries to get rid of Surya, by pushing her into the water. Only thanks to the help of her mother, the old milkwoman, Surya finds her way back to her loving husband. Raneé is punished and the couple can finally live happily ever after. A translation of the text is available in Frere – Frere, 1868: 87–102.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *divijā*- ‘generated by the Sky’ in RV 7.75.1a.

<sup>26</sup> Ved. *duhitār- divaḥ* perfectly matches θυγατήρ Διός ‘daughter of the sky’, said of Aphrodite in the epics.

<sup>27</sup> Here, like in later versions, the Sky-God is hurt by Rudra. Cf. also RV 1.71.8.

same myth, Prajāpati, the ‘lord of creatures’, not Dyaus, rapes his daughter,<sup>28</sup> cf.

*Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.262.12–14

*prajāpatir hoṣasaṃ svām duhitaram abhyadhyāyat*

*sāsmāi rohid bhūtvātiṣṭhat*

*tām prṣato bhūtvāskandat*

“**Prajapati longed for his own daughter, Dawn.** She, having become a red doe, **stood** (still?) for him. He, having become a speckled deer, spilled (his seed) on her”

As convincingly demonstrated by S. Jamison (1991: 294), Uṣas was surely the protagonist of a story in which she was raped. However, in a variant of the story, it is the Sun-god, not the Sky-god nor Prajāpati, who commits incest. In one *rigvedic* passage, Dawn is the ‘daughter of the Sun’,<sup>29</sup> who follows her like a suitor would do, cf.

RV 1.117.13c

*yuvó ráthaṃ duhitā sūryasya*

“Your chariot did the **Daughter of the Sun** choose”

RV 1.115.2ab

*sūryo devīm uṣasaṃ rócāmānām*

*māryo ná yóṣām abhay èti paścāt*

“The Sun approaches the gleaming goddess Dawn from behind, **like a dashing (a young man?) youth a maiden**”

Elsewhere, Dawn is the lover of the Sun:

RV 7.75.5ab

*vājīnīvati sūryasya yóṣā*

*citrāmaghā rāyā īse vāsūnām*

<sup>28</sup> Cf. MS III 6.5, IV 2.12, ŚB 1.7.4.1–3, AB 3.33, commented by Jamison, 1991: 288–301.

<sup>29</sup> Eleven times in the *Rigveda*, see Jamison, 1991: 294.

“Possessed of prize mares, **the maiden of the Sun** who brings bright bounties has dominion over wealth, over goods”<sup>30</sup>

As already pointed out, Dawn is related to the Sun in different ways: she is his mother, his sister, or his daughter. It is possible, then, that ‘Brother of Joy’ and ‘Sister of Pleasure’ retain in their names a dim memory of an ancient story in which Dawn was raped by her father or, maybe, her brother. This concealed narrative detail might then have been progressively tabooed, and later directly banned from the tale. Basile’s and other versions actually differ from the Indian story: above all, the Indian tale of Uṣas’s rape makes no reference to her being asleep. However, it is possible that the incest-motif was crossed and merged with the ‘awakening’-characterization.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to demonstrate that some characteristics of the *Sleeping Beauties* may be rooted in very ancient traditions. This allowed me to draw some conclusions about the character that was the focus of the paper. Talia turns out to be an *avatāra* of the Indo-European Dawn-Goddess, in the light of the following significant coincidences:

- a. Talia is etymologically related to the Greek epithet *thalerōpis* ‘the one who looks in flower’, referring to Dawn in one Greek epigram. Therefore, Talia might be a continuation of this figure. In parallel, a Catalan *Sleeping Beauty* (*Blandin de Cornoalha*) is named *Brianda*, which matches Uṣas’s epithet *bṛhatī*. Significantly, other sleeping beauties are called ‘Dawn’ or give birth to a baby called ‘Dawn’ (Perrault).
- b. Talia’s children are called Sun and Moon. Likewise, the Greek *avatāra* of the Dawn-Goddess, Euruphaessa, and Uṣas, in Vedic, give birth to the sun.
- c. Talia’s main ‘achievement’, like all *Sleeping Beauties*, is awakening. In the same way, Dawn is the goddess of awakening in Greek and Vedic poetry.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. also RV 1.123.10, 4.5.13cd.

- d. It is possible that the 'non-consensual' union of Talia and the king conceals a hint at original incest between the Dawn-goddess and her father or brother. The Vedic texts preserve such a story about Uṣas. Although no version of *Sleeping Beauty* mentions the incest, the names 'Brother of Joy' and 'Sister of Pleasure' in one medieval version of the same story might be explained as a tabooed clue for an original tale in which incest did happen.

In the light of such remarkable parallels I conclude that the *Sleeping Beauty* might exhibit the reflex of a of very ancient elements, which are firstly attested in the literary traditions of two ancient Indo-European languages.

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