

THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION:
MOTIF, METAMORPHOSIS AND ADORNMENT IN FAIRY TALES
BY FRENCH WOMEN WRITERS
OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

BY

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Abstract

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For such beautiful and often times short stories, fairy tales have inspired diverse analyses from multiple scholars. The studies are as varied as the tales they discuss. There are historical and sociological viewpoints that study both the local culture and mannerisms displayed by the protagonists and the people whom they meet along their journey. The feminist approach looks at the role of women in these tales and how they interact as a group with each other as well as with the female protagonists in their fictional lives. Those who are intrigued by the psychological aspect of fairy tales look to Jung and Freud to fuel their dissection of tale elements.

A final approach that is particularly intriguing and not as well studied as one would think is the classic textual analysis of a fairy tale, focusing on motifs. The richness of the visual elements and descriptions in the tales enhances the overall story arc and although the tales are meant to entertain the general population, there are certain areas that beg to be studied in depth.

Ultimately the question that needs to be explored is why the author of a fairy tale chooses certain elements to help propel the movement of the story. If one reads enough

tales, it becomes apparent that there are certain recurring motifs that are particularly significant in the author's works. These motifs are not haphazardly chosen; they are deliberately selected by the learned fairy tale writers to enhance the tale's overall impact.

The recurring motifs found within the literary fairy tale tradition deserve further attention. Upon studying the historical development of the literary fairy tale in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, it is clear that the French authors drew much of their ideas from the tale-tellers before them, especially the Italians Straparola and Basile, who were responsible for the first written fairy tales, albeit in their local dialect. These elements and motifs, which were present in the early tales of the Italians, were expanded and enhanced by the French.

Although Charles Perrault is the best-known French fairy tale writer, this dissertation focuses on the tales written by the French women, particularly Mme. d'Aulnoy. These conteuses deserve more than a second glance, as their tales are rich with beautiful prose and great detail. Therefore, the first half of this dissertation will look at the historical development of the tale in France, demonstrating a clear connection between the Italian tale-tellers and their French counterparts. The second part of this study will be a textual analysis of select tales by the conteuses showcasing the unique sensitivity and viewpoint that they brought to their tale-telling.

Dedication and Thanks

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Introduction

This thesis performs a motif-based analysis of a corpus of literary fairy tales written by French women during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries that underscores their participation in distinctively gendered aesthetics. These women writers combined classical erudition with contemporary baroque inclinations, and a detailed examination of the cultural artifacts of the period's *habitus* with the active cultivation of the merveilleux and the imaginary. They thus made original and effective use of fairy tale motifs connected, in particular, to what one made and wore, and in what surroundings one lived. In so doing they drew at once on a trove of traditional mythological and magical imagery, and on the immediacy of the social and political connotations of their time.

Fairy tales have fascinated generations of readers since their inception. The infatuation, lay and academic, with this unique form of literature is evident from both the large quantities of collected tales in popular editions extant in many languages, as well as in the critical mass of scholarly work that has commented on and interpreted the fairy tales. Since they first appeared as such and in written form almost four hundred years ago, fairy tales have elicited a great deal of debate and analysis that perdure in contemporary academia.

While collections of fairy tales became abundant in Europe in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, it is noticeable that the approach taken to collecting and publishing varied greatly from country to country; for instance between two countries such as France and England. This difference is indeed highly reflective of the way the

corpus of fairy tales was constructed and transmitted in France, from the late seventeenth-century work of Charles Perrault onward. It is thus useful to consider this contrast in the formation of a national fairy tale canon in the two countries, leading early on to a strong French investment in both the literary nature of the fairy tale and in male authorship, a focus this dissertation resolutely departs from.

In England for example, collectors trained in folklore, such as Andrew Lang and Joseph Jacobs, produced numerous collections that mixed the folk traditions of the oral tale with those of the written, literary, tale, all coming under one label: “fairy tales”.

When scholar Andrew Lang began his study of folklore, the study of the English folktale had been dominated for a decade by antiquarians, philologists, and comparative mythologists. In the 1880’s and 1890’s he challenged his contemporaries in folklore scholarship to expand folk narrative research to include historical and contemporary legends. Although they failed to follow his proposal, he persevered with his plan, and thus brought forward several important, if little-known, works (Montenyohl, “Andrew Lang's Contributions” 270).

Thus Andrew Lang’s Fairy Books are an extremely comprehensive collection of tales consisting of previously published fairy tales, grouped into a total of twelve volumes over a period of ten years, categorized by colors, (beginning with the *Blue Fairy Book* published in 1889 and ending with the *Lilac Fairy Book* in 1910). Lang included a wide variety of multicultural tales from diverse authors in his collection. For instance the *Blue Fairy Book* contains tales made popular by Europeans such as Charles Perrault (“Beauty and the Beast”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, and “Blue Beard”); d’Aulnoy (“Felicia and the Pot of Pinks”, “The White Cat”, “The Yellow Dwarf”); and the Grimm Brothers (“Hansel

and Gretel”, “Rumpelstiltkin”, and “The Goose Girl”). There are also tales disseminated by non-European works such as the Arabic tales of “Aladdin”, “Ali Baba” and “The Story of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Paribanou”. Lang’s work was extensively read and well received and inspired countless other collections of tales throughout the twentieth-century.

This collection was specifically designed for easy reading by children in that Lang left out the scholarly notes which were found in other contemporary collections (e.g. Joseph Jacobs's *English Fairy Tales* or Hartland's *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales*). With very few exceptions, there is no evidence that Lang himself wrote or rewrote any of the previously published narratives (as Jacobs did for his collections). In fact, the translators working on this collection revised the literary tales (such as Mme. de Villeneuve's “La Belle et la bête”) for length and diction so that they would more closely resemble traditional tales. However, as indicated by citations from the color-coded fairy books, Lang valued the traditional fairy tale elements and realized that his task was to combine them in new ways within established generic and cultural boundaries, not to create new forms or boundaries (Montenyohl, “Andrew Lang’s Training” 180-182).

Of notable interest to this dissertation, because it is based on the study of motifs, (which are the basis for the constitution of distinctive tale types), Lang also helped conceive and work towards the world's first tale-type index. His original plan was later altered, since this project had been "the subject of some criticism, both at the Folk-Lore Congress in Paris in 1889 and by scholars at home..." To arrive at results in a more timely fashion, it was decided that the tales should be "taken up group by group", and after completing the tabulation of each group of tales, the information would be published

separately. The first group selected for the purpose was “Cinderella” (Montenyohl, “Andrew Lang's Contributions” 280).

Lang very definitely did not come to folklore or anthropology via his fairy tale writings; in fact, quite the reverse is true. Lang moved from folklore and anthropology into editing children's collections. He could not have done this without the formidable knowledge of world folklore he had already acquired. While Lang's interest in narratives of the supernatural is now recognized as important to folklorists, it was not respected then (Montenyohl, “Andrew Lang’s Training” 182).

Another collector of fairy tales, Joseph Jacobs, was an Australian literary historian. He first earned recognition for a series of articles on the persecution of Jews in Russia and subsequently published many volumes in the area of Jewish history. He was a writer for the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and a notable folklorist, and he created several noteworthy collections of fairy tales. From 1899-1900 he edited the journal *Folklore*, and from 1890 to 1912 he edited five collections of fairy tales: *English Fairy Tales* (1890), *More English Fairy Tales* (1894), *Celtic Fairy Tales* (1892), *More Celtic Fairy Tales* (1894), and *European Folk and Fairy Tales* (1916), which were published with lavish illustrations. This slew of publications was designed to reclaim Britain’s rich folkloric history. Jacobs wanted English children to have access to fairy tales written in their language, instead of reading French and German tales (Tatar, *Annotated Classic Fairy Tales* 345-46).

Jacob’s collections, distinctly labeled “fairy tales,” were the British answer to Perrault in France and to the Brothers Grimm in Germany. He wanted at once to reveal that the British could claim for themselves an imaginative native lore and he wished to

capture the oral tradition before it became extinct. At the same time, he wanted those collections to be identified with the tradition of the fairy tale. “Who says that English folk have no fairy tales of their own?” Jacobs asks in the preface of *English Fairy Tales*. Like the Grimm Brothers, Jacobs saw his project as taking pride in his “Englishness”, but unique to his work was his effort to bridge class difference. He appealed to readers to send him tales like those in the Grimm’s collection so that England might take the lead in folklore research.

Disturbed by the fact that Perrault had captivated English and Scottish children; Jacobs sought to restore British stories to the national consciousness. He lamented: “The *English Fairy Tales* have become a mélange confus of Perrault and the Grimms.” Jacobs thus developed a written script that preserved the stories and promoted their use as bedtime reading for British children. Not only did he preserve the cultural memory of fairy tales, he also took pride in the fact that he developed a volume of powerful entertainment value. Thus both Jacobs and his contemporary Andrew Lang are responsible for significant contributions to the promotion of British folklore (Tatar, *Annotated Classic Fairy Tales* 346).

In France, however, where the nation-building project became particularly energetic during the reign of Louis XIV, the corpus of fairy tales proper was distinct from the folk tale (the conte populaire) and its collections, and was built primarily through reiterating the presence of the preeminent French fairy tale writer, Charles Perrault. It is thus not built so much on the exclusion of other linguistic traditions—the German publications being the only serious competitors during the heyday of late nineteenth-century publishing of fairy tale collections—but rather, on the marginalization of all other

fairy tale writers, especially, of women fairy tale writers. This is not to say that the women were totally absent. Teresa DiScanno noted that after Perrault, d'Aulnoy's tales were: "les plus imprimés soit en France, soit à l'étranger" (18). D'Aulnoy, along with Beaumont, was included in the *Magasin des Fées ou Contes de Fées de Perrault, de Mme LePrince de Beaumont, de Fenélon et de Madame d'Aulnoy* (1838) which showcased a selection of tales from the aforementioned authors.

Although not nearly as well known, a newcomer to the genre, Sophie Rostopchine, Comtesse de Ségur (1799-1874) also made a valuable contribution. She wrote two fairy tales, "Histoire de Blondine" and "Le bon petit Henri", which were originally published in *La Semaine des Enfants*, a weekly magazine for children published by Louis Hachette. He eventually bought the copyrights to a manuscript that included three of her other tales: "Histoire de la Princesse Rosette", "La Petite Souris grise" and "Ourson". The five fairy tales appeared under the title *Nouveaux Contes de fées* (1857), with twenty illustrations by Gustave Doré. The Comtesse de Ségur is best known as a champion of realism in fairy-tale writing. Her tales contain the major themes of victimization of those who are most vulnerable, examples of vice and virtue, and young people who, while besieged by wicked fairies, are also presented with real-life problems (Brown, "Gustave Doré" 965).

George Sand (1804-1876), although not catalogued in literary history as a writer of fairy tales, included references to folklore and storytelling in her novels such as *François le champi* (1847), *La Petite Fadette* (1849) and *La Mare au diable* (1846) besides penning several volumes of fairy tales and folk beliefs, such as *Contes d'une grand-mère* (1872). Sand's collection of tales have an educational purpose, sharing the

message that anyone can overcome their trials to become a stronger person. Tales from this collection include “Le Nuage rose”, “Les ailes de courage” and “Le chêne parlant”. As is the case in many tales, her protagonists start off with some form of weakness, and by the end of the story they become heroes and heroines.

Sand’s interest in fairy tales is likely due to the influence of the region of her birth, Le Berry. Located in central France, a distinct feature of this area is the blend of local folklore and fairy lore, and Catholicism. From the Middle Ages, ancestral beliefs led the locals to refer to fairies when telling stories to each other. Therefore, Sand’s stories include a combination of the realism of the countryside coupled with fairy lore grounded in local beliefs. Sand often opens her novels with storytellers who narrate the plot of the tale (Jumel 831).

However, regardless of the impact in their time of women writers of fairy tales from Madame d’ Aulnoy to George Sand, as the author of literary fairy tales, Perrault maintained absolute, glaring dominance in the publication world of fairy tales in the 18th and 19th-centuries and even into the 20th. In language and structure, Perrault’s tales resembled bibliothèque bleue publications, and his tales were adopted into the realm of cheap print. In small octavo editions, Perrault’s words and phrases spread to the farthest reaches of France’s borders well into the 19th-century. The process was so effective in creating a common national fairy tale culture that readers were able to recount tales in very much the same language in which Perrault published them. There was a national knowledge of his tales resulting from the multitude of texts in inexpensive publications read by multiple generations (Davidson and Choudhri 66).

Nevertheless, the large group of French women writers of the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth-century who produced literary fairy tales remains understudied. My dissertation is thus entirely dedicated to their writings, and I hope to shed light on the distinctive nature of their art through a close study of textual elements that have also been comparatively neglected in studies on these writers—motifs and symbols. The symbols and motifs present in these tales are not random or haphazard, but have a history, which in the West, is clearly traceable to classical and medieval models, but also incorporates floating elements of folk culture. There are indeed distinctive patterns of recurring motifs throughout these tales, and these, in turn, create extensive webs of symbolism across them, adumbrating their deceptively obvious messages with many layers of complex meaning.

By focusing on a selection of these motifs, we can come to an understanding that the aesthetic of the written fairy tale penned by women has implications far beyond mere entertainment. Indeed, while most studies of women fairy tale writers of the period have focused on their importance with respect to reviewing and questioning the literary canon, or on the way gender is constructed through their narratives¹, there is also a great deal to say about the way their fairy tale art reflects aesthetic concerns that appear to be strongly gendered. I would argue that these French women fairy tale writers used motifs and symbols to create a literary space of their own which set them apart from the male

¹ These include Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France. Gender and Culture Series* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Lewis Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France, 1690-1715: Nostalgic Utopias* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) and most recently Lewis Seifert and Domna Stanton, eds., trans. *Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers*. (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies and Iter Inc. 2011).

authors working in the same genre. One aspect of this difference might be that these women were brought up with a high level of specifically gendered social training. Whether born into a noble family (d'Aulnoy and Murat) or in the upper bourgeoisie (L'Héritier), the women may have been attuned to paying greater attention to the fine details of material culture and the material world, factors that may have elicited more of a descriptive voice in them than among their male counterparts. Regardless of their birth, these highly refined women moved in educated, elegant, circles where social graces and nuances were constantly on display. Yet, the works of the conteuses are of course much deeper than mere reflections of such social skills, as will be discussed in the chapter devoted to their biographies.

THE FAIRY TALE IN SCHOLARSHIP: AN OVERVIEW

For stories that are fairly brief compared to other genres, there is indeed no shortage of groundbreaking studies on the fairy tale proper, and a greater number yet if one adds studies of the interface of the literary fairy tale and the oral folk tale. Many scholars from different perspectives have made impressive, albeit very different, contributions to the field. I will briefly review here those that provide particular insight into the specific corpus and questions I will be studying.

Nancy Canepa has published numerous studies on the development of the tale from its beginnings in Italian literature to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France when the popularity of the tales began its rise. In *Out of the Woods: The Origins of the Literary Fairy Tale in Italy and France* (1997) and *From Court to Forest: Giambattista*

Basile's Lo cunto de li cunti and the Birth of the Literary Fairy Tale (1999), Canepa traced the beginnings of the literary fairy tale as exemplified by Basile and Francesco Straparola to the major French fairy tale writers such as Perrault and d'Aulnoy. I will thus begin with a discussion on the direct influence of the written Italian tales on the literary French fairy tales and the persistence of many of the themes present in the Italian tales within the French tales as well.

Two French writers in particular made significant contributions to fairy tale scholarship. Jacques Barchilon's *Le Conte merveilleux français: de 1690 à 1790, cent ans de féerie et de poésie ignorées de l'histoire littéraire* (1975) highlights many of the well-known writers of the era, as well as both Perrault's and d'Aulnoy's many accomplishments. He also republished d'Aulnoy's tales with a thorough introduction in 1998.² Catherine Velay-Vallantin's *L'Histoire des contes* (1992) establishes the link between folklore and history by examining the history of attitudes towards tales and the cultural and social message that accompanies folk tales. She affirms the importance of studying the different editions of a particular fairy tale, thus closely following its evolution in print, in order to come to a better understanding of the reciprocal effects between its creation, transmission and reception. According to Velay-Vallantin, each version of a tale becomes a reinterpretation of an earlier text whose meaning is adapted to changing cultural traditions: "The tale is not just an expression of the past, but also a reinvention of tradition by tellers, publishers, audiences and writers" (Velay-Vallantin, *L'Histoire des contes* 1).

² See Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, *Contes*, 2 vols, ed. by Jacques Barchilon and Philippe Hourcade. (Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 1998).

In his review of her work, Jack Zipes observed that Velay-Vallantin stresses the significance of approaching both oral and literary tales within their socio-historical context by investigating their origins as they were printed. Velay-Vallantin argues that a tale's cultural significance cannot be understood unless readers grasp the mutual influence of the oral and literary processes that generate meaning in a particular tale (Zipes, "Catherine Velay-Vallantin," 452).

In the area of psychoanalytical applications to the tale, two scholars in particular have been vastly influential. Although now disregarded by many fairy tale scholars³, Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976), analyzed the Freudian structure of the tales, seeing many famous fairy tales as stories of sexual awakening and adventure, hidden behind the innocence of apparent youthful naïveté. Marie-Louise von Franz preferred a Jungian interpretation of the tales, focusing on the archetypal. In *Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tale: Studies in Jungian Psychology by Jungian Analysts* (1997), she suggested that these archetypal characters were easily accessible to all readers as their characteristics were familiar on a global level.

Although he focused on Perrault's works rather than d'Aulnoy's, Alan Dundes, who published and edited dozens of books and hundreds of articles on folklore, remains a valuable resource in studying the women's tales. In his tale specific casebooks such as *Cinderella* (1988) and *Little Red Riding Hood* (1989), this leading folklorist takes various versions of the popular tales, and applies to them a cross-cultural perspective complete with specific motif analysis. Dundes helped establish the study of folklore as a true

³ When Bettelheim wrote his book 35 years ago he was a leading authority on children's mental illness. While his views were respected at the time, they are now widely discredited.

academic discipline, and psychoanalytical and structuralist interpretations dominated his work (Hansen 245-246). Although this dissertation does not center on a psychoanalytic approach, it recognizes its importance as a necessary tool that helps to understand the complicated study of motifs.

Also of great importance, although they do not focus on the French fairy tale alone, are the works of Marina Warner, Maria Tatar and Jack Zipes. Maria Tatar's *Off With Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Fairy Tales* (1992) studies the tale from a sociological point of view in a feminist perspective. Tatar sees the heroines in the tales as serving as role models, and adults not only as hostile characters in fairy tales themselves but also as real people who use frightening stories to discipline their young listeners. Cultural historian Marina Warner also looks at the tale within a social context. In *From the Beast to the Blonde* (1994) Warner studies the feminine hero in many classic tales, and discusses the real fears that women faced when the tales were written, such as those concerning marriage and childbirth.

Perhaps the most prolific scholar to have studied the tale is Jack Zipes. As a renowned folklorist and author of hundreds of books, essays and articles centering on fairy tales, this scholar's massive output of publications is invaluable to the study of this genre. In *Breaking the Magic Spell* (1976), Zipes writes of the evolution of folk tales as fairy tales, their influence on popular beliefs, and the politics behind them. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (1985) discusses the transformation of the tale from oral roots to the literary version as developed by writers of the 18th-century. *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale* (1994) demonstrates the unique metamorphoses that fairy tales have undergone as they passed through different cultures and different eras. Zipes addresses

the impact of fairy tales on both children and adults in *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children and the Culture Industry* (1997) and he also analyzes the trajectory of storytelling and of the literary fairy tale, as it developed over the course of hundreds of years and overlaps with modern filmmaking. As the editor of *When Dreams Come True: Classical Fairy Tales and their Tradition* (1998), Zipes assembled essays discussing everything from the personal desires articulated by fairy tale authors in their work, to the role that fairy tales play in imparting values to children and adults.

In his most recent book, *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006), Zipes ponders the question of why some fairy tales remain in the minds of readers, and why some don't. He shows why fairy tales, above many other genres, "stick with" the reader long after the original reading. In this particular study he highlights why fairy tales are an important literary genre and not just amusing stories for children.

French women fairy tale writers have also elicited some important studies. Two women authors specifically focused on d'Aulnoy's tales. Jane Tucker Mitchell's *A Thematic Analysis of Mme d'Aulnoy's Contes de Fées* (1978) offered a useful starting point for this study. She uses a thematic interpretation of love and metamorphosis to interpret the twenty-five fairy tales of Mme. d'Aulnoy, placing certain elements of the plot into a psychoanalytical framework. In *The Tower and the Well: A Psychological Interpretation of the Fairy Tales of Madame d'Aulnoy* (1984), Amy Vanderlyn DeGraff explains the lasting popularity of d'Aulnoy's tales and analyzes them from a psychoanalytical perspective, following many of Bettelheim's insights.

An essay that appears in Ruth Bottigheimer's *Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion and Paradigm* (1986); Karen Rowe's "To Spin a Yarn: The Female Voice in

Folklore and Fairy Tale”, explores the association between women's spinning, weaving, and story telling. Weaving is an interesting motif that makes numerous appearances throughout the women’s fairy tales, which I will take up later on in this dissertation.

Lewis Seifert, in *Fairy Tales, Sexuality, and Gender in France, 1690-1715: Nostalgic Utopias* (1996), studies the rise of the fairy tale within both the historical and literary time period of the latter half of the seventeenth-century. Seifert reveals in the tales many of the myths and ideologies central to that culture (with sexuality and gender as dominant), and in doing so, identifies the specific perspectives that the women writers brought to the genre. He explains how they offered a new approach to sexuality and gender in fairy tales and also details why adults at the end of the reign of Louis XIV were attracted to this particular genre. Seifert’s *Manning the Margins: Masculinity and Writing in Seventeenth-Century France* (2009), also deals with fairy tale writing. Seifert examines the ideals of polite masculine conduct, the figure of the salon man, representations of male same-sex desire, and the case of a male cross-dresser. He also shows how elite men defined themselves in relation to women and other men of the time.

Elizabeth Wanning Harries studies the challenges the women tale writers faced and how their stories were a reflection of the social structure in which they lived. In *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale* (2001), she argues that women were seen as tale-*tellers* in the image of Mother Goose, and not necessarily as tale-*writers*. Particularly important for this dissertation is her explanation of the common threads used by the conteuses, who, she asserts, turned their salon experiences into published and respected literature.

Scholars have also considered the French women writers outside of the fairy tale genre and in relation to literature. In *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (1991), Joan DeJean argues that the women were the originators of the modern novel. She suggests that the conteuses' writing was seen as conveying a politically and socially subversive vision.

The most recent addition to conteuse scholarship is Lewis Seifert and Domna Stanton's *Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers* (2011). The entire preface to the book of tales both reinforces the understanding of why the women, as a collective group, had such a dominant presence in the fairy tale genre, and submits new understandings of the phenomenon. Seifert and Stanton discuss, among other things, the escapist desire of scandalous women to place themselves in a world of fantasy, and the self-awareness as women writers that the conteuses display in their tales, which, unlike wonder tales of the folklore tradition, place love at the front and center of almost every tale (7, 29). This most recent study of the conteuses is invaluable to furthering the knowledge of who exactly these women were, as well as providing new insights for the world of fairy tale scholarship

Besides full volumes on French women tale-writers, many valuable articles by respected scholars also focus on them, in particular in the journal *Marvels and Tales*, a publication devoted to fairy tales and folklore. Anne Duggan's "Nature and Culture in the Fairy Tales of Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy" (2001) compares women in several of d'Aulnoy's tales and also gives her perspective on women's relationship to the (often) "savage" nature portrayed within her fairy tale world. "The Violence of the Lambs" (2005), by Elizabeth Wanning Harries addresses the violence prevalent in many tales, in

particular “La Chatte blanche” by d’Aulnoy, where the hero must decapitate his beloved cat for a greater good. A recent article by Charlotte Trinquet, “On the Literary Origins of Folkloric Fairy Tales: A Comparison between Madame d’Aulnoy’s ‘Finette Cendron’ and Frank Bourisaw’s ‘Belle Finette’” (2007), examines the circumstances of the creation of both tales, and explores the question of transmission and dissemination of literary fairy tales in France.

I will rely extensively on these and other scholarly works to study the motivic elements found within the women’s tales, and to demonstrate how their work set them apart as a group, making them unique contributors to the genre and different from male writers of the time. In the dissertation I intend to establish and detail the motivic elements that populate the tales of the conteuses, but before beginning that portion of the study, I propose a brief look at the life and work of the conteurs who were contemporaries of the French women. Among the numerous male conteurs of the period, several stand out as particularly reflective of a continuous contrast with their female counterparts, and are briefly discussed below.

PERRAULT

Charles Perrault (1628-1703) was born in Paris into one of the more distinguished bourgeois families of the time. His father was a lawyer and a member of parliament, and his four brothers also had careers in areas such as law and architecture. In 1663 Perrault was appointed secretary to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, controller general of finances, perhaps the most influential minister in Louis XIV’s government. For the next twenty years,

Perrault was able to accomplish a great deal in the arts and sciences due to Colbert's power and influence (Barchilon and Flinders 27).

After publishing some minor poems, Perrault began taking a greater interest in literature. In 1671 Perrault was elected to the French Academy and was also placed in charge of royal buildings. After the death of Colbert in 1683, Perrault found himself dismissed from government service but was able to support his family on the pension he received. In 1687, he helped bring about the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes. He believed that France and Christianity could only progress if they incorporated pagan beliefs and folklore into the arts and developed a culture of enlightenment. Jean Racine and the literary critic Nicolas Boileau took the opposite viewpoint from Perrault and argued that France needed to imitate the great empires of Greece and Rome and thus maintain stringent classical rules in the arts. This literary debate lasted until 1697 when Louis XIV decided to end it in favor of Racine and Boileau. However, this decision did not stop Perrault from trying to incorporate his ideas into his poetry and prose (*Zipis, When Dreams Came True* 35-36).

Perrault had always frequented the literary salons of Mme. d'Aulnoy and his niece Mme. L'Héritier. In 1696 he embarked on the ambitious project of writing moralistic tales that would appeal mostly to adults and demonstrate a modern approach to literature. His particular prose version of "La belle au bois dormant" appeared in the journal *Mercure galant* in 1696 and in 1697 he published an entire collection of tales entitled *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités: Contes de ma mère l'Oye*. These tales were based on both oral and literary motifs which had become quite popular in France, but Perrault put his own spin on the tales, addressing social and

political issues as well as upper class manners and mores (Zipes, *When Dreams Came True* 36).

On Perrault's frontispiece three children, (under a placard bearing the subtitle, "Contes de Ma Mère l'Oye"), listen to an old servant spinning by the fire; a representation of the motherly, lower-class storyteller of Mother Goose. In 1650, French critic Jean Loret made a written reference to a "Mother Goose Story" (une conte de la Mère Oye), in his monthly periodical *La Muze Historique*, which suggests that his readers were already familiar with the Mother Goose persona (Tsurumi 28-35).

All the features commonly associated with French classicism are present in Perrault's stories: precision, economy of words and multifaceted and powerful suggestiveness. Nearly everything he wrote towards the end of his prolific life is a model of concision and simplicity. The tales are rarely weighed down by too many details or descriptions. Anything not necessary to the action or movement of the story is eliminated. He expressed this in an interesting statement: "One must compose as a painter and finish as a sculptor, that is to say, when one writes, first jot down as any ideas on paper and then finish up by removing as much as possible" (Barchilon and Flinders, *Charles Perrault* 106, 108).

Perrault's classically structured stories led critics to equate them with authentic folktales, while Mme d'Aulnoy and her friends advertised their lengthy, descriptive tales of princes and princesses as antithetical to those of the masses. Protagonists lacking royal pedigrees are found in tales by Perrault, while d'Aulnoy positioned her regal characters in a luxurious universe forged from folkloric, literary, operatic and other elements (Hannon and Duggan 381).

The stand on sexuality and gender promoted by Perrault's tales is but one of several competing visions. As published in its original form in 1696, "Cendrillon" demonstrates the harsh and plain politics of sexuality and marriage. Only if young people live up to the most traditional codes for femininity and masculinity, can they hope to achieve "happily ever after" (Joan E. DeJean, *Marquise-Marquis* ix).

In looking at Perrault's treatment of "Cendrillon" versus d'Aulnoy's equivalent "Finette Cendron", the reader immediately sees a difference in the heroines. Perrault's version depicts Cinderella as cheerful and good-natured, despite the abuse thrust upon her by her less than compassionate stepsisters. The sentimentalized vision of a Cinderella who is practically blind to the cruelty heaped upon her makes her a somewhat passive heroine who is willing to put up with any affront (Cashdan 92). She is rescued from her unhappy existence (unhappy at least by most people's standards), by the prince who searches for her, and not the other way around. Cendrillon waits for her prince and does not take action to seek him out.

The heroine of d'Aulnoy's "Finette Cendron" is the complete opposite of Cendrillon. The story of "Finette Cendron" bears witness to a feminization of the basic plot. The clever Finette is an active character, both in thinking and in acting, and takes charge of her situation when decisions need to be made. She does not stand by helplessly, nor does she seek out a hero for assistance.

DE MAILLY

Louis Chevalier de Mailly (1657-1724) was a military officer and godson of Louis XIV. He was one of the few male authors who contributed fairy tale writing in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. His most important contributions to the genre were *Les illustres fées, contes galans dédiés aux dames* (1698) and *Le voyage et les aventures des trois princes de Sarendip* (1719). It is not clear whether or not he contributed to a later collection of assorted tales, *Nouveau recueil de contes de fées* (1730). If he did indeed help author this collection, Mailly did not receive credit for his contribution. He did not limit himself to the fairy tale genre; he also published many other books, including works on hunting and natural history.

Les illustres fées is a collection of eleven tales which come from many sources. Some of the tales in the work conform to folktale types, but it is likely that Mailly came across them in written form, or perhaps in the salons. He displays a significant knowledge of the literary (and perhaps folkloric) sources of seventeenth-century French fairy tales. Interestingly, these tales are “dédiés aux dames” which is perhaps his way of acknowledging that he is stepping into a genre that was at that time dominated by women writers. In fact, that is so much the case that his collection was mistakenly attributed to Mme. d’Aulnoy when it was first published. Like the conteuses, Mailly was clearly familiar with Straparola’s *Le piacevole notte*, which was widely available in France. Three of his tales: “Fortunio”, “Blanche-Belle” and “Le Prince Guerini”, are based on Straparola’s work (Harries, “Jean, Chevalier de Mailly” 603).

In the feminine world of the conteuses at the end of the seventeenth century, Maily is the incarnation of a conteur, although his stories are quite a bit shorter than those of the conteuses (Storer 166-169). Contrarily to his contemporaries who placed emphasis on fairies, Maily focused on magicians in his tales. Whereas the conteuses' tales tend to be more gynocentric, Maily's tales are more androcentric (Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender* 122).

Magic frequently intervenes on behalf of romantic adventures. His stories also feature a wide range of the elements commonly found in fairy tales of the period, including chivalric adventures, enchanted islands, and metamorphosis – with Maily making frequent and deft use of the latter. In both “Le Prince Roger” and “Le Roi magicien”, a main character changes form to pursue love interests. Metamorphosis of a less physical kind occurs in “Le Prince Guerini” when the hero, an uncouth but gentle savage, matures into the ultimate hero-prince. Most of Maily's tales treat fairy tale scenarios with humor, without being parodic (Hannon, “Feminine Voice” 13-23).

LE NOBLE

Eustache Le Noble (1643-1711) began his public life as a member of the provincial noblesse de robe. He experienced a tumultuous early life that included banishment, prison, and love affairs, as well as a prolific writing career. Using his talent for writing to garner favor with the king, he also wrote political tracts which, along with his debts and adulterous affairs, cost him his parliamentary position and thus, his

guarantee of financial security.⁴ From the 1690's on, Le Noble led an unstable life on the edge of Parisian society. He was plagued by creditors, put in jail several times, and banished twice from Paris. Throughout this most difficult period, he still published pamphlets and novels, and maintained a precarious existence until his death in 1711. A prolific writer, his works were published at least three times after his death and comprise nearly 20 in-12 volumes (Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 832).

Despite the fact that most of his biographies state that le Noble became an author merely out of financial necessity and that his critical success was mediocre at best, Le Noble was a popular writer, as demonstrated by his publication record (Cherbuliez, "The Outlaw's Itinerary" 476). He inserted two fairy tales, "L'Apprenti magicien" and "L'Oiseau de vérité" into a collection of stories, *Le Gage touché* (1700). Compared with d'Aulnoy's tales, Le Noble's are considerably more concise in terms of length and style. What is certain is that both of Le Noble's tales are much like Perrault's attempts to combine the concision of oral storytelling with classical French literary style (Zipes, *Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 833).

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CONTEUSES ET CONTEURS

My analysis of tales written by women will bring to light a female aesthetic of the conte, distinct from the style and concerns found in the tales of male writers of the same period, for it includes, among other specific traits, elaborate detail and the incorporation of decorative description. I thus propose to take an in-depth look at several women tale-

⁴ See Philippe Hourcade's exhaustive study, *Entre Pic et Rétif: Eustache Le Noble (1643-1711) Aux Amateurs de Livres*. (Diffusion Klincksieck: Paris, 1990).

writers who strongly differentiated themselves from their male counterparts, such as Charles Perrault, the Chevalier de Mailly, and Eustache le Noble. Whether those differences were formulated deliberately or articulated subconsciously, the French women writers left an imprint on the world of fairy tales that places them in a completely different realm from the men.

For instance, like those of fellow conteuses, d'Aulnoy's tales show a significant difference, particularly in length, from Perrault's tales. D'Aulnoy's tales are approximately twenty-five pages in modern print equivalent. Some of her stories are as long as forty-four pages, with the shortest being twelve pages. Her romantic plots focus on noble lovers fighting against misfortunes created by fairies who are arrayed against them. Her tales are full of magical transformations, reversals of fortune, and elaborate descriptions of clothing, meals, and luxurious palaces. D'Aulnoy displays a richly baroque imagination, full of hyperbole and playful humor. Given the numerous reprints of her tales, d'Aulnoy not surprisingly influenced the work of eighteenth-century writers of fairy tales, and translations of her work in English and German suggest that d'Aulnoy affected those literary traditions as well. It has also been pointed out that the greater length of her stories allows for psychological portrayal and analysis (Barchilon, "Adaptations of Folktales" 355-356).

Aside from their greater length, in many of the conteuses' tales, particularly those of d'Aulnoy, the introductions of characters come with a detailed (sometimes lengthy, sometimes brief) description of the individual. This normally includes both the character's physical appearance as well as clothing. If we consider three of d'Aulnoy's tales, we can also note a significant difference in the level of description of the arrival of

some of the male protagonists.

In “Gracieuse et Percinet”, a brief but visual description of Percinet is given the first time that Gracieuse sees him before her: “En cet état elle ne songeait plus à retourner au palais, quand elle vit venir un page vêtu de satin vert, qui avait des plumes blanches et la plus belle tête du monde.”

In *Fortunée*, there is a lengthier description of the prince who had just been transformed from a pot full of flowers into a handsome young man: “Elle fut interrompue en cet endroit par l'arrivée d'un jeune adolescent plus beau que le jour ; il était habillé d'une longue veste mêlée d'or et de soie verte, rattachée par de grandes boutonnières d'émeraudes, de rubis et de diamants ; il avait une couronne d'œillets, ses cheveux couvraient ses épaules.”

Finally, in “La Princesse Printanière”, the arrival of the soon-to-be wicked Fanfarinet is described in minute detail: “Fanfarinet avait un habit tout en broderie, des perles, des bottes d'or, des plumes incarnates, des rubans partout, et tant de diamants (car le roi Merlin en avait des chambres pleines) que le soleil brillait moins que lui.”

In contrast, if we look Le Noble’s “L’Oiseau de vérité”, the description of the arrival of the king is much simpler than d’Aulnoy’s versions: “...elles aperçurent le roi des Tarteletters, qui se divertissait à tuer des pies. Ce Prince était si bien fait et si bonne mine, qu’elles en furent charmées.”

There is much to explore in these rich, detailed descriptions provided by the conteuses in their stories. The last chapters of this dissertation will look at examples in depth, and will also analyze the social and cultural underpinnings of the many articles of clothing and jewels that are worn by the characters who inhabit the tales. The insertion

of such passages is one factor that makes the style of the women's tales unique.

In her study on the seventeenth-century salon women, Anne Duggan adopts a clear stance on some of the differences between d'Aulnoy and the most well known conteur, Charles Perrault. She notes that:

D'Aulnoy takes a much more progressive attitude toward women. Rather than depict domestic labor as an acceptable vehicle for female penitence and containment, as does Perrault, d'Aulnoy paints it as an instrument of torture and oppression. Through her tales she contests not only the limits placed upon women's intellectual pursuits, but she also challenges the idea that men "own" knowledge and have the power to grant it or not to women, an idea that presupposes women's inherent lack of intelligence. With her independently ruling princesses, d'Aulnoy demonstrates that women indeed can be capable and reasonable rulers who participate effectively in maintaining the stability of the public sphere. (*Salonnières* 215-216)

The idea of the "independently ruling princesses" is prevalent throughout d'Aulnoy's tales, as well as those of the other women. From d'Aulnoy's clever Finette Cendron, to Murat's resourceful Etoilette, to Beaumont's gentle but strong-willed Belle, the women's heroines show a tenacity and pro-activeness not seen in Perrault's tales.

Aside from her own thoughts on the differences between the conteurs and conteuses, Duggan also adduces the commentary made by Sophie Raynard in her book: *La seconde préciosité: Floraison des conteuses de 1690 a 1756* to her discussion of the

differences between conteurs and conteuses:

Raynard points out that women use the marvelous, and in particular metamorphosis, more than Perrault. While metamorphosis has multiple functions in the works of women writers, Reynard argues that Perrault uses it primarily in an ironic way that is subject to the logic of the narration. Raynard suggests that these different uses of the marvelous correspond to Perrault's more realistic approach to the genre, on the one hand, and to women writers' desire to create ideal universes in which women enjoy an improved status and there is freedom in love, on the other. ("La seconde préciosité" 145-147)

Indeed, Raynard argues that Perrault's happy endings circle around material success, whereas the conteuses hesitate between idealism and cynicism about (in particular), happiness in marriage. Raynard then compares the diverging values held by Perrault and the female writers. Perrault's seems to value social success, whereas d'Aulnoy and her female contemporaries often question traditional values and social norms, particularly as they apply to their sex. Another main difference between Perrault and the conteuses is that although the theme of love is not a central focus in the works of Perrault, it is an important and often central theme in female-authored tales (Duggan, "La seconde préciosité" 146).

Other scholars have affirmed the importance of gender in differentiating between male and female storytelling. In "Bluebeard's Daughters: Pretexts for Pre-Texts," Jane Marcus observes that storytelling and reading, "remain unquestioned as the marks of

being human” (21). Also, because individuals are differently gendered, she concludes that storytelling and reading are gendered activities. Further, in her article, “Paradise and Storytelling: Interconnecting Gender, Motif, and Narrative Structure”, Ingrid Daemmrich suggests that men's stories veer toward "blood narratives of adventure and quest," while women write "milk narratives" that trace the connections of women's experiences from mothers to daughters (213). Although this is a rather broad statement that may not always be valid, and unwittingly reproduces well-received gendered stereotypes, I find it is an interesting one because it contributes to the argument that women may have chosen to utilize a certain selection of descriptors in composing tales, which would have become characteristic of their art as writers of tales.

WHAT ARE MOTIFS?

Generally comparatively neglected and underestimated, the conteuses have not benefited yet from a thoroughly detailed analysis of their art. Thus, they have yet to be the entire focus of a single study that discusses their work from a motivic point of view. Focusing on the organization and recurrence of certain fairy tale motifs in their tales indeed makes it possible to decipher literary influences, writing strategies, and aesthetic concerns that might have been particular to them.

I use the terms theme and motif in the following manner. I understand a theme to be a snatch of narrative, the combination of several motifs into a pre-ordained pattern. In fairy tales and folklore, motifs are recurring patterns of imagery or narrative (plot elements, etc.) that form the building blocks of the stories. Katherine Briggs defines

motifs as “the strands that make up a tale” (6). Ingrid Daemmrich notes that: “the motif transforms a static vision into a vibrant narrative unit that actively engages the storyteller’s intent” (214). A particular cluster of motifs that hangs together through several individual tales and across various cultures is called a “tale type,” which consist of story variants built on motifs.

Fairy tales in general are bound together by what Northrop Frye labeled *motivic archetypes*. In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye defines an archetype as a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one’s literary experience as a whole. Another way of thinking about archetypes is to imagine that in some way it is possible to plot the important aspects of a story onto a graph. If enough points from several stories were plotted, a pattern would start to appear, thereby creating an archetype. Some stories will diverge from the archetype more than others. However, the fact that a pattern exists can be useful for understanding and comparing this type of literature.

In their classification, fairy and folk tale motifs vary from the general, such as magical helpers, to the specific, such as “Persecuted Heroine – Tale Type 510A (Mme d’Aulnoy’s *Finette Cendron* falls under this tale type) or “Unnatural Love” – Tale Type 510B (Mme Murat’s *Peau d’ours* is in this category). Indeed, anyone wishing to identify and work with motifs must still consult Finnish scholar Antti Aarne’s *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (first published in 1910). This comprehensive work was translated and enlarged by the American folklorist Stith Thompson in 1928, and revised again by him in 1961 with the new title *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*. Together, these two works form the basis for comparative folktale

analysis, even though they have been subjected to recent criticism. The principal value of the index lies in the creation of a single classification system by which different variants are grouped together according to a common reference number. These two indexes reveal different tale types, while isolating their motifs and locating cultural variants (Georges 22-28). Although primarily dealing with European tales, the index does cover tales from many parts of the world. However, this also constitutes one of its major flaws: it universalizes folk tale types and motifs, and uses criteria for classifying narratives outside of the Western world that are not applicable to other cultures.

Of the approximately sixty motif indices that have appeared after 1960, half are based on either the Aarne-Thompson system or the Motif-Index (Thompson 1955-58) system. As many scholars have observed, the central concepts of the indices remain fairly consistent even when the areas covered are different. The reason for this is that the predominance of the European heritage in the Aarne-Thompson index had a profound influence on the structure of all subsequent indices. Approximately thirty of the sixty indices issued after 1980 discuss European folktales, primarily fairy tales, fables, and comic tales. There is not much mentioned about folktales from other continents (Uther 304).

There has also been a fair amount of criticism of international classification systems. Some of the dominant criticisms have been the imprecision in the definition of motif and type and the one-sided orientation toward Europe. Although Stith Thompson recognized that his system was primarily oriented to Europe, later researchers have adopted it uncritically, forcing some texts into the scheme, leaving out others, and creating a portrait that misrepresents the actual situation of folk tale traditions. This has

led scholars to the false conclusion that the majority of the world's folktales are thematically related to European tales (Uther 305).

In some specific instances however, this methodology can be useful. The *Motif Index of Medieval Catalan Folktales* (1993) for example, is an index that fills a gap in Thompson's Motif-Index and creates a tool for research into the development of short prose fiction in medieval Hispanic literature. It looks at tales written in Catalan, and uses the Aarne-Thompson technique to organize them. It is a comprehensive research tool for scholars who are particularly interested in the development of short prose fiction in medieval Spain.

Using numbers 1 through 2,499, the Aarne-Thompson index defines traditional folktale plots and assigns each type a number. Tales are thus frequently referred to as AT types (Ashliman 34). Any culture's version of a story would be listed under this tale type. In this way, scholars citing any version could use the specific tale type number when referencing a version of the tale.

The Aarne-Thompson system divides folktale types according to several main categories, for example animal tales, and "ordinary tales". These main categories are further broken down into smaller and more precise subcategories. The first category, animals, is broken down as follows:

Animal tales

<i>Wild Animals</i>	<i>(1-299)</i>
The Clever Fox or other animal	(1-69)
Other Wild Animals	(70-99)
Wild Animals and Domestic Animals	(100-149)

Wild Animals and Humans	(150-199)
Domestic Animals	(200-219)
Other Animals and Objects	(220-299)

(For a complete breakdown of the Aarne-Thompson index, see Appendix B).

Another variation of the Aarne-Thompson index can be found in the work by Marie-Louise Tenèze and Paul Delarue: *Le conte populaire français: Catalogue raisonné des versions de France et des pays de langue française d'outre mer* (4 volumes, 1957-2000). The four volumes cover the following topics: supernatural adversaries; supernatural helpers, objects and forces; tales featuring animal characters; and religious tales and French versions of romantic tales. The fourth volume of the Delarue-Tenèze collection is of particular interest, as religious works are not covered in the Aarne-Thompson index. Although I will not be referencing the Delarue-Tenèze work in this dissertation, it remains a valuable addition to motif study.

With respect to the use of symbols to analyze literary fairy tales, it is useful to begin with a definition such as offered by Carl Jung, for whom a symbol is defined as:

...a term, name or picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown, hidden from us. Thus a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has wider unconscious aspect. (3)

In fairy tales, the use of certain symbols expressed within a very concrete form is what makes the different motifs stand out from the less crucial elements of the story. It is often assumed that symbols stand for intangible elements. For instance, a dove or an olive branch stands for peace. The dove and olive branch can be seen, while peace cannot. This is not to say that symbols are universal – they clearly can mean different things to different people and different cultures. Symbols remain, however, a powerful driving force in what makes fairy tales seem compelling to readers. In his book on fairy tales, Julian David noted for instance that:

A fairy tale, like a dream, should be considered like a succession of images, like stones on a necklace, or images in a movie... the images are symbols, not signs. They do not have a fixed meaning, but that sort of meaning that is as bottomless as nature. ... A good story has the quality of the mandala: it expresses the wholeness of the psyche. (25)

The symbolic codes which are found within fairy tales are easily deciphered given that they are usually based on familiar allusions. Sigmund Freud noted that folklore in general takes advantage of symbols that have universal validity (*Complete Psychological Works* 353). As a general rule, kings and queens represent parents, and the prince or princess signifies the self. Deep, dark, forests represent the obscure hidden depths of the soul. Water represents birth. These are the types of symbols which are fairly transparent and easily fall to interpretive pressures (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 80). However, those that are

culturally bound, especially within the complex texture of early modern views of the world and nature, are less evident and call for careful intertextual reading.

Fairy tale motifs are sometimes easily dismissed as clichés – a spindle that makes a girl fall asleep, a talking animal that provides assistance, a mirror that allows the viewer to see beyond their own reflection. But the fact is that motifs are so powerful that the simple presence of a slipper in a narrative is enough to make a reader associate that piece of literature with “Cinderella”, even if that work existed long before the first Cinderella story was ever written (Bottigheimer, *Fairy Godfather* 6).

I see symbols as reinforcing the motifs which are the heart of a tale. Motifs are recurring literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text’s major themes. They go hand in hand, and serve to emphasize the motif to the reader. According to Jung, symbols connect with the psyche’s storehouse of collective images and act as transmitters of unconscious energy (21-22). Joseph Campbell notes that: “Symbols are only the vehicles of communication; they must not be mistaken for the final term, the tenor, of their reference” (*The Hero* 236). Symbolic anthropologist Victor Turner highlighted the symbolic meanings that derived from social contexts and rituals. He said that a symbol was: “a blaze or landmark, something that connects the unknown with the known”. What mattered to Turner was not the symbols themselves, but the roles that the symbols played in specific social situations (48).

The use of symbols and motifs combine to create a magical world inhabited by both realistic and fantastical creatures. One of those distinctive marks on the conteuses’ tales is the abundant use of the *merveilleux*, or the marvelous, in this corpus.

LE MERVEILLEUX

When looking at the le merveilleux as represented in French fairy tales, Jack Zipes notes that:

The creation of fairy-tale realms represented a general French tendency to elevate language and folk material as exemplary, and the functions within the tales are meant to induce wonder in the readers so that they will strive to admire and imitate the protagonists or learn from their mistakes. Those fairy-tale realms become magnificent in the tales, and those fortunate destinies that are depicted celebrate the wonders of the French or the possibilities that the French have to become wondrous. ("The Changing Function" 16)

Interest in the merveilleux was vividly present in the Court at Versailles, as demonstrated by the fantastic fêtes held at the palace (in particular *Les Plaisirs de l'isle enchantée* with its fireworks, fountains, ballets and plays) (Brown, *Critical History* 70).

At first glance, the contes de fées would seem to have little if anything to do with the Querelle du Merveilleux, which was only one phase of the more encompassing Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes (Lorimer, 179). The original topic of conversation was epic poetry, one of the most prestigious literary forms in existence, with the opposing sides in the argument attempting to highlight what was at stake in the fairy tale's marvelous. Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711), the leader of the Anciens, fought a bitter verbal battle against Perrault, carrying the banner of the Modernes. Bernard le

Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757) joined forces with Perrault in opposing the Anciens and asserting that the school of thought of the Modernes was the future of French literature (Kearns 170).

The Querelle du Merveilleux (consisting of several manifestoes and not just one intense discussion) opposed two main points of view concerning the use of the merveilleux in epic poetry. Use of the Christian marvelous (le merveilleux chrétien) dominated one side of the argument. The supporters of this side sought to revive and promote the use of supernatural characters and events from biblical sources (including God, Satan, angels, demons and saints) while at the same time, condemning the use of Greek and Roman mythological figures as clashing with traditional Christian belief. Some of the most vocal advocates for this position were themselves authors of epic poems that glorified either biblical figures or other individuals from French history, including Perrault (*Saint Paulin, évêque de Bole*, 1686). Perrault, among other writers, argued that the moderns were superior because “they used the marvelous in believable and morally uplifting ways” (Boileau-Despréaux 171). It would not be an exaggeration to say that he conceived of the literary tales as a literary model in support of the “modernist” cause (Neemann, “Fairy Tales” 217).

Boileau, one of the proponents of the so-called pagan marvelous (le merveilleux païen) disagreed with the supporters of le merveilleux chrétien because they tolerated both the mythological and Christian traditions (Seifert, *Fairy Tales* 29-30). It seemed irreverent to him to intermingle religion and fiction, whereas mythology retained the weight of literary tradition (Wright 141).

In his book focusing on fairy tales of the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, Lewis Seifert made the following observations about the phenomenon of the merveilleux as related to fairy tales:

Central to this quarrel were two very different considerations of what constituted a credible merveilleux. Whereas the theoreticians of the Christian marvelous posited religious beliefs as the necessary condition for vraisemblance (plausibility), those who defended the pagan marvelous saw in the use of mythological figures the esthetic beauty that lent essential coherence to the text. Advocates of the Christian merveilleux (particularly Perrault) argued that the plausibility of the marvelous was relative to the culture in which it was produced...Fairy tales make deliberate use of the marvelous and are, therefore, deliberately implausible. This self-conscious and playful use of both the supernatural setting and the moralizing pretext distances any real belief in fairy magic, but also contributes to the readability of the text. (*Fairy Tales* 32)

In several respects, the marvelous employed by the contes de fées resembles that proposed by theoreticians of the merveilleux chrétien. Like the Christian epics, the early modern fairy tale recognizes a culturally specific type of marvelous that arises from indigenous French traditions. The contes de fées consciously avoid any explicit appropriation of Christian marvelous elements (such as saints, demons and angels). In this respect they observe the strict separation of secular and religious material common in seventeenth-century literature (Seifert, *Fairy Tales* 233). In her article on fairy tales,

Dorothy Thelander observes that actual baptism of children into the Church does not exist, prayer only exists as a way to bide time until earthly forces can intervene, and characters either live happily ever after (with no mention of heaven) or come to some horrible fate (being turned into a statue, falling into a pit of snakes) – without the mention of hell. She emphatically concludes that, “In the tales as they were published, the Catholic Church as an institution is almost entirely absent” (476).

Both fairy tale and Christian epic forms of the marvelous depict literal (rather than allegorical) supernatural characters and events. And in both cases, this emphatic use of the merveilleux strains and often transgresses the generally accepted bounds of vraisemblance. Even the most ardent supporters of Christian epic poetry were wary about excessive use of the supernatural on the grounds that it led to falsifying biblical and Christian history.

In the final analysis, the use of the marvelous in the contes de fées differs from the marvelous found in both the mythological and the Christian epic. The mythological marvelous can claim to be plausible on moral and aesthetic grounds because its supernatural characters are either widely used conventions, or abstract allegories.

In spite of the great wealth of scholarship on the fairy tale, work based solely on the motifs present in the women’s tales is still needed. The possibilities offered by a motif-based comparison in the interpretation of the oeuvre of women fairy tale writers have not been explored in any of the works discussed above. The standard reference work on the motifs of fairy tales remains Stith Thompson’s *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, which does not analyze, but rather catalogues and categorizes folk tales, fairy tales and legends in terms of motifs, and tends to shortchange the importance of women.

The tales demonstrate several key manifestations of *habitus* and social codes particular to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries. Studying the contesuses' writing allow us to glimpse the worldview held by upper-class women of the time, who, albeit individuals each writing with a unique style, shared viewpoints about which motifs were central to making their stories meaningful. The study of their choices and rearranging of motifs will allow me to move beyond the historical and sociological dimensions of their tale production to reflect on their particular uses of the symbolic, and to propose an interpretation of why such attention is given in particular to the decorative element in the art of description.

WOMEN AS WRITERS OF FAIRY TALES

As early as the second century A.D., Apuleius, author of *The Golden Ass*, had designated his story of "Cupid and Psyche" (told by a drunken and half-demented old woman) as belonging to the genre of "old wives tales". Francesco Straparola claimed to have heard the stories that constituted his *Piacevoli Notti* of 1550 "from the lips of... lady storytellers" and he embedded those stories in a narrative frame featuring a circle of female narrators (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 36). Giambattista Basile's seventeenth-century *Pentamerone* also has women storytellers – quick-tongued, gossipy old hags who tell "...those tales that old women tell to amuse children..." (Basile 9). Perrault's Mother Goose stories were labeled by their author as old wives' tales "told by governesses and grandmothers to little children" (Perrault, "Préface," *Contes en vers* 50).

Thus an impression has been created that women dropped out of the history of fairy tales once they became a literary form, existing only in the background in the form of an anonymous old peasant called Mother Goose. Women are often seen as the tellers of tales: those anonymous, lower-class nurses and grandmothers who taught and entertained children by telling them stories. In fact, there is absolutely no proof that women were the originators and/or primary tellers of tales. Tales were told at all levels of society, during the Middle Ages and during the Enlightenment, as they are today, and both sexes contributed to and continue to contribute to the telling tradition. However, because women have long been viewed as tellers of tales, it has been difficult for some readers and some scholars alike to see them as writers of fairy tales (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time*, 55).

Yet, the literary fairy tales of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France represent one of the rare instances of a literary movement dominated by women writers. In fact, Lewis Seifert estimates that of the 114 tales published during the first vogue of fairy tales (1690-1715), 74 tales were published by the conteuses, while Charles Perrault and other conteurs published 38 of them. (The remaining two tales were published anonymously) (“Les Fées modernes” 129-145) In her research on the French literary tale, Elizabeth Harries surmises that aristocratic women, not Charles Perrault, “began the vogue of writing fairy tales down at the end of the seventeenth century” (“Fairy Tales about Fairy Tales” 153).

Charles Perrault, while perhaps best known for fairy tales, contributed to many more literary genres than to just this one. Siding with the moderns in the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, Perrault was open to new ideas, yet still supported the political

and religious conservatism of the ruling elite of France. The panorama of French society that Perrault provides in his work, *Les Hommes Illustres*, offers a detailed snapshot of contemporary attitudes regarding numerous subjects (Culpin 32). Perrault's tales, among the best known of all time, have become a permanent fixture in modern children's culture in the West and have been studied extensively by numerous scholars.⁵ However, most of the other tale-writers of Perrault's era were women, and although they were often of aristocratic extraction and fully integrated into the high society of late seventeenth-century France, these women wrote their tales on the margins of the literary establishment (Canepa, *Out of the Woods* 20). Although Perrault made a lasting contribution to the fairy tale genre, it was the aristocratic women gathering in salons during the seventeenth-and eighteenth-century who created conditions for the rise of the fairy tale. They were the ones who set the groundwork for tales to be considered appropriate for adult readers (Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth* 18).

The author who has the distinction of having published the first French literary fairy tale is therefore not Perrault, but rather Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baronne d'Aulnoy. Seven years before the appearance of Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du Temps passé* (1697), Madame d'Aulnoy published the tale, "L'Ile de la félicité" within her novel *Histoire d'Hypolite, comte de Douglas* (1690). This fairy tale is now considered to be the first seventeenth-century literary fairy tale written in France, the earliest in a wave of tales published throughout the 1690's. (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time* 24). While her actual collection of fairy tales, *Les Contes de fées* (1697) was published the same year as Perrault's; Mme. d'Aulnoy was nevertheless the first author to publish a

⁵ For a more comprehensive biography of Perrault, see also Barchilon's *Charles Perrault*.

literary fairy tale in France. In fact, when she termed her works *contes de fées*, she coined the term that is now generally used for the genre (Zipes, *Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 858). Therefore when Charles Perrault first turned to writing fairy tales, he was joining an already established literary fairy tale movement began almost a decade before him. Madame d'Aulnoy didn't imitate Perrault - she pre-dated him.

While Mme. d'Aulnoy was the most prolific of the *conteuses*, she is only one of a group of nonconformist (and somewhat scandalous) upper-class women who published fairy tales during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries. Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont and Charlotte-Rose Caumont de la Force also contributed substantially to the corpus of the French fairy tale. These women of the late 1600's and early 1700's also attempted to reproduce the conversational ambience of the salons that had formed them as writers.

The *conteuses'* tales grew in part out of the competitive dialogues that were an integral part of the salons, a phenomenon that will be further discussed in the next chapter focusing on the French women. The tales were probably a diversion, one of the many collaborative *divertissements* that formed part of salon culture (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time* 60). Their tales, rather than existing in the supposedly timeless space of folk culture, were consciously invented as a complex and ironic comment on the historical moment in which they were produced (Harries, "Fairy Tales about Fairy Tales" 154). Harold Neemann noted that the predominance of women writing in the *conte merveilleux* genre plays an important role as a response to the criticism of women's participation in both the literary and cultural domains. In addition, literary fairy tales serve as a mirror of

social and cultural ideals as they pertain to mondain society. In this way they reassert the values and ideology of a mondain culture increasingly under attack from conservative religious forces (173).

I will thus be utilizing twenty tales by Mesdames d'Aulnoy, Murat, L'Héritier, de la Force and Beaumont, and will analyze the recurring motifs utilized in them with the aim of bringing out the striking similarities between the women's tales as well as some differences.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

I see this dissertation as a contribution to the field of fairy tale interpretation that will combine gender theory and sociological readings of the tale with a motif system that has been disregarded for some time. My study, while acknowledging psychological and sociological influences, will primarily rely on textual analysis.

The first chapter will focus on the historical background of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French women writers and the circumstances that led to the publication of their tales, including a discussion of the historical moment when the literary fairy tale became a type of literature deemed worthy of publication.

The second chapter discusses the Italian influence on the literary French fairy tale. The earliest literary fairy tales we know of come from sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italy. Giovan Francesco Straparola's *Le piacevoli notte* (published in 1550-53) and Giambattista Basile's *Il Pentamerone* (published posthumously in 1634-36) laid the foundation for the development of the literary fairy tale in Europe during the seventeenth-

and eighteenth-centuries. These were innovative works that had a great impact on the French writers of the 1690's and 1700's.

The following three chapters form the center of the study, and compare tales by Mesdames d'Aulnoy, Murat, L'Héritier, Beaumont and de la Force. These chapters concentrate on an analysis of the narrative economy of motifs and what they tell us about the aesthetic choices and worldview of the writers.

Chapter three focuses on the classical notion of metamorphosis, and discusses how the conteuses worked with and rearranged the classical form and its motifs. It also discusses the use of mythological names within the tales.

The fourth and fifth chapters concern women and gender more specifically, and each is centered on the analysis of an aspect of material culture as it is reflected in tale imagery and motifs: "Texts and Textiles" considers the place of weaving, spinning and other textile arts in the tales, along with clothing, jewelry and all body adornment and their function in relation to notions of luxury, waste, and exchange. "Living" works with Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* by reading the way interiors (of chambers, homes, palaces, and magical structures) fuse the notion of the merveilleux with detailed attention to decorative arts and domestic environments. My analysis will take into account the view held by many scholars that certain objects are universally recognized, while providing the corrective that their meaning is nevertheless culturally bound. Perhaps the motifs that provide the richest insight into the minds of the French women writers are the decorative elements. This includes both bodily elements (clothing, jewelry, makeup, hair), as well those that reflect a personal worldview but are outside the body (a home's interior décor). This discussion should also include, besides elements that make individuals beautiful,

allusions to those elements which make life beautiful – namely the consumption of art and culture, through such media as opera, theater, singing and dancing. While decorative elements are present in the works of the men as well, they play a more noticeable and dominant role in the tales of the women. Some are elaborate descriptions that spell out every detail of what a person is wearing or how they look, others are very brief, but regardless of the length of the passage, the fact that they exist in detailed form makes them worthy of discussion and further study.

The conclusion provides a summary of the main argument of the preceding chapters and suggests a synthetic interpretation of the prevalence of motifs and their patterns in the work of the conteuses, answering the question of what makes them specific to the work of women writers.

Chapter 1: A Profile of the French women fairy tale writers

The fairy tale allowed the conteuses to promote both individual and collective interests. As was the trend for the fashionable elites of the time, these women put forth their writing as the result of a leisurely, aristocratic pastime, and not as the commercial effort of the more bourgeois authors. The fact that there was a leisurely practice in writing the tales only reinforced the fact that the fairy tale genre had a somewhat lowly status at the time. The conteuses however, did not seek the lofty heights of the male-dominated genre of epic poetry; rather they used the new genre of fairy tales to make a name for themselves as writers. They succeeded in this goal, as many of their works were best-sellers at the time of their original publication. Marginalized by critics and loved by readers, the conteuses overturned the idea that men were the only legitimate authors and authorities (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 11).

The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French women who wrote tales certainly did not identify with nurses or peasants. As if to combat the stereotypical image of the woman storyteller as Mother Goose, the frontispieces used for d'Aulnoy's tales represent her as a sibyl⁶, as an aristocratic storyteller, or as a Greek goddess, but not as a spinning peasant woman. And the French women writers were anything but naïve. Had they identified themselves primarily as tellers of tales, in fact, it would likely have been much more difficult for them to be seen as *writers* of tales (Harries, "Fairy Tales about Fairy Tales" 159, 161).

⁶ Sibyls were Greek or Roman prophetesses associated in antiquity with holy places, often caves. They were known as mysterious truth-tellers, possessed magical powers, and were conduits for divine pronouncements. Mary B. McKinley, "From Cave to Choir: The Journey of the Sibyls," *Pre-Histories and Afterlives: Studies in Critical Method for Terence Cave*, ed. Terence Cave (London: Legenda, 2009) 45-60.

In the frontispieces of early editions (1698 and 1711) of d'Aulnoy's *Contes nouveaux*, the readers see a woman dressed in the flowing robes and turban usually associated with a sibyl. Wearing garments worn by the sibyl demonstrate the woman's intellectual aspirations (Borowitz 42). She is shown writing the title of one of d'Aulnoy's tales, "Gracieuse et Percinet", in a large book, thus demonstrating her literacy.⁷ Although she has children as her audience, they are dressed in a similar manner to her, and therefore belong to the same class as the storyteller. The woman is not seen with the traditional female symbol of the spindle, instead she has a large book that is meant to underscore her relation to learning and knowledge. Although there is no clear indication that she is reading to the two children standing next to her (her mouth is closed), the glasses signify that if she were to tell a story, she would *read* it (Verdier, "Figures de la conteuse" 486). Instead of a simple candle, there are decorative sconces. Instead of a domestic cat or dog, there is an exotic monkey (Harries, "Fairy Tales about Fairy Tales" 52).

Sybils had a place in literature well before the conteuses used them as self-representations. In Christine de Pisan's poem "Le Livre du Chemin de Long Estude" (1402), the work takes the form of a dream vision, where the Cumaean Sybil takes the author on a tour of the real world before taking her to the other world (Tzanaki 111). In Pisan's *Epistre d'Othéa*, the inscribed addressee, Hector, and the intended audience of future rulers and leaders of France, are all men in need of guidance. Christine encourages

⁷ This intertextuality reminds the reader that d'Aulnoy's work is self-referential. Indeed, Harries and Hannon both refer to the women's tales as "self-referential" meaning that they "make self-conscious commentaries on themselves" (Harries *Twice Upon* 32) and refer to the contemporary salon's own situation of enunciation" (Hannon 189).

the reader to see in Othéa an extension of herself. Othéa instructs Hector not to discount her teaching since even the great Augustus was enlightened by a sybil (Le Blanc 74).

Although published after her death, a 1725 edition of *Contes nouveaux* has a frontispiece that shows an upper-class woman addressing a group of adults. She is physically larger than any of the other figures, and seated on a throne-like chair, she commands respect and attention. Her hand and pointer finger are lifted into the air in the pose of a traditional storyteller, and the setting of the scene, with its Greek columns and elegant room, showcases a refined storyteller and an equally refined audience (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 16).

In contrast, the frontispiece found in Perrault's book is humbler than the palatial setting of d'Aulnoy, and it demonstrates a visible difference in class between the storyteller and her listeners. Whereas the storyteller in d'Aulnoy's edition can easily be substituted for d'Aulnoy herself, the woman pictures in Perrault's nook could most certainly not be seen as a replacement for him (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 19). Perrault uses a frontispiece in his 1697 edition of *Les Contes de ma mère l'oye* where the central female figure, dressed in simple attire, is simultaneously spinning wool and "spinning a yarn." She guides the fiber between her two fingers and at the same time raises both her hands in a gesture that begs her audience to listen to her. Her dress, along with the distaff in her hands, emphasizes her gender, social position, and place in the literary world. All these symbolic markers combined signal the traditional version of the oral storytelling situation. The woman continues to spin while telling her story; therefore she is being depicted as both a trustworthy domestic and a tale-teller. The depiction perpetuates the myth about the appropriate role for women in the

transmission of fairy tales: as aging, patient, nurturing conduits of oral culture or spinners of tales (Harries, "Fairy Tales about Fairy Tales," 47, 51). About this frontispiece, Catherine Velay-Vallantin observed that it suggests the fictitious reading situation that Perrault and his printer wanted to portray; a simulation of oral tale-telling ("Tales as a Mirror" 130).

Perrault invoked the important role women have always played in the transmission of tales by ascribing authorship of his *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* to the fantastical Ma Mère l'oye. Her name features prominently in the frontispiece of his collection. The name Ma Mère l'oye hangs carved on a plaque on the door behind the figures and would appear to describe the scene. Both the posture of the woman (with distaff) and the reference to a fabulous animal source refer to a long tradition of tale creation and telling (Jones 55-74).

Whether women are depicted as intellectual (in d'Aulnoy's frontispieces), or in the more traditional role (as in the frontispieces at the beginning of Perrault's collection), it is crucial to understand how seventeenth-century women went about first telling, then writing, and finally publishing fairy tales. They disguised and transformed the material they borrowed from folktales with many literary and cultural references. Their *contes de fées* show great sophistication that flies in the face of the stereotypical idea that fairy tales are simplistic (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 19).

If one follows the trail of their development, the *contes de fées* emerged from parlor games held both at court and in salons during the mid seventeenth century in France. Salons were powerful in the seventeenth century precisely because they had already existed since the sixteenth-century. For instance, Claude-Catherine de Clermont,

duchesse de Retz, hosted a soirée in her home in 1591. There was great breadth and depth of conversation which included everything from the “calamité de ce temps” to individuals’ personal affairs, with everyone speaking freely (Julie Campbell, 73).

Madeline Lazard noted that: “...le salon littéraire de la maréchale de Retz est celui qui, dans la capitale, acquit le plus vif éclat” (295).

Madeline Neveu and Catherine Fradonet, also referred to as “les dames de Roches”, were well known figures beginning around 1570. From 1570-1587, their intellectual activity grew as did the reputation of their salon. Lazard further noted that: “C’est au sein d’un cercle amical, dans un atmosphère confiante d’échanges intellectuels que ces savants bourgeoises vont éprouver le désir d’écrire et de publier, et même de se faire connaître dans les milieux parisiens” (298).

By the mid 1600’s, a trend of telling and listening to magical tales became in vogue for the intellectuals who attended the salons of Paris. Around this time, prominent women began to gather in their own living rooms (salons) in order to discuss issues of the day: arts and letters, politics as well as social matters which concerned the women of their class. The popular word salon was not the original terminology used to describe this phenomenon. Prior to the nineteenth-century the term ruelle was used. In the 1620’s, the Marquise de Rambouillet opened her home to intellectuals and friends. She welcomed her guests into her bedroom (where she sat in bed, ill after giving birth) and allowed them to sit in the surrounding area, called a ruelle. As a result, gatherings such as the Marquise de Rambouillet’s came to be known as ruelles (Beasley, “Altering the Fabric” 64-83).

Lewis Seifert and Domna Stanton discuss the development of the tales in their recent book *Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth Century French Women*

Writers. They note that in her correspondence, Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, marquise de Sévigné (1626-1696), alludes to fairy tales told at the court when she describes entertainment for women there (*mitonnées*) by writing long and intricate narratives derived from simple folktale-like plots. Seifert and Stanton further say that:

Although there is little direct evidence, oral storytelling doubtless occurred in Parisian saloons as well, since the salons' documented activities included games that bore striking resemblance to elements of fairy tales, such as the "game of metamorphoses" described by La Force. Under the auspices of prominent women, the salon had served as a springboard for many literary genres, most notably the novel, which was championed by women writers." (*Enchanted Eloquence* 16)

Women governed the seventeenth-century salons, and the female participants dominated the conversations. For centuries women had met informally for conversation and companionship, but in the seventeenth century this practice became an integral and recognized institution of French culture. As the result of the salons being conducted by both noble and bourgeois women, there was an unprecedented mingling of classes during these gatherings (Beasley 67). In a culture otherwise dominated by men, women (or *salonnières*), were often the center of attention in the salons, serving as hostesses and directing the subjects of discussions. Most female authors found a natural place in salon culture. There they acted as teachers of manners, etiquette and conversation, which were the topics that played the main role in salon gatherings (Akkerman and Stuurman 17).

Elite French women had the reputation of being particularly gifted when it came to spontaneous oral eloquence (Hesse 10). This central activity of the salons – conversation – was both directly and indirectly linked to writing (Harth 180). In order to fully appreciate the development of the literary tale, it is necessary to understand the salon culture that was such a critical part of seventeenth-century Paris, because that is where both the writers and the audience they wrote for were entrenched.

Salons came into existence during a time when women were not entitled to pursue higher education, and not automatically provided with this education at home. However, many upper-echelon women were educated, and in a world where aristocratic households served an important political function, the status of the women who ruled them, and consequently the status of the education of those women, were elevated. From the seventeenth century on, convent boarding schools, created as a result of the Counter-Reformation's interest in education and the multiplication of female religious orders, were the dominant force in female instruction. Between 1610 and 1660, a total of forty-one religious orders founded convent boarding schools in Paris, and by the end of the seventeenth century there were about 500 teaching convents in France (Rapley 301).

Those who sought to further their intellectual interests were forced to do so in solitude and without the benefit of a traditional university education. The one place where women could gather and sharpen their intelligence was the salon. Although these women were often the quintessential hostesses for their guests, what was more important was that the *salons* were truly the only place where they could carry on intellectual conversations and gather with other bright women (and men) of similar distinction. It was

a way to showcase their intellect and considerable talents. In a way, they pursued their own version of higher education (Bodek 185).

In his study on the development of the French salons, Steven Kale noted that salon life was a well-regulated practice that was a central part of life in high society. The French elites were engulfed in the world of politics, literature, culture and art, all of which were the immediate focus of discussions that occurred at the salons. Kale goes on to state that:

In the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, salons encouraged socializing between the sexes, brought nobles and bourgeois together, and afforded opportunities for intellectual speculation...they helped transform and homogenize the mores of the upper classes and provided a setting for feminine literary expression. (2)

It is within this world, where there was such a desire among women for an educated and intelligent lifestyle that the literary fairy tale came into existence. The women who wrote at the height of fairy tale popularity were influenced by the competitive, scintillating dialogues that were an integral part of the salons. Most of the conteuses were likely members of prominent salons, and thus would have known each other in this environment (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 6). There is some evidence that several conteuses - specifically d'Aulnoy, de la Force, Murat and

L'Héritier – attended the same salons.⁸ Mary Elizabeth Storer observed that, “Déjà en 1677, les dames de la Cour s’amusaient à des contes de fées qui duraient une heure” (Storer 12).

Thus encouraged by the success of the salons, women began to write in a way that they never had engaged in before. By framing their tales with traces of salon conversation, they represented them as part of *their* oral/aural culture, and established themselves as not only literate women but as learned ones as well. The salonnières never attempted to imitate an illiterate or uneducated voice (unlike Perrault). The women also did not pretend that the language used in their tales had anything to do with the language of the folk, nor did they suggest that the voices they reproduced were based on the peasant oral tradition. These women did write stories based on traditional material, but their sources were usually written, (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time* 60, 71) (such as Straparola and Basile, as will be discussed in the next chapter).

The “conventionalization” of the salon tale meant that the genre had become part of the French cultural heritage and was open to serious cultivation. More importantly, it meant that the literary fairy tale could now convey standard notions of propriety and morality in France. What might have been slyly subversive in the salon fairy tale was often reworked to suit the acceptable taste and values of the upper classes by the middle of the eighteenth-century (Zipes, *When Dreams Came True* 47).

Those who frequented the salons seemed ready to embrace and accept this developing contribution to French literature, but it was apparent that not everyone in the

⁸ See Renate Bader, *Dames de letters: Autorinnen des preziösen, hocharistocratischen und “modernen” Salons (1649-1698): Mlle de Scudéry, Mlle de Montpensier, Mme d’aulnoy, Romantische Abhandlungen* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1986), 229.

literary world felt the same way. The transition to the literary fairy tale met with resistance, and the result was a difficult labor before the tale was fully accepted as a literary genre. Although fairy tales were very much in vogue during the heyday of salon culture, modern scholars of seventeenth-century France would only reluctantly admit them as serious literature suitable for adult audiences (Mitchell 12). The tales elicited commentary by the Abbé de Bellegarde, who was alarmed at the public's passion for what he labeled as "balivernes" and by the Abbé de Villiers who cautioned his contemporaries to stay away from such "mauvaise marchandise" (Delaporte 68, 72).

The literary world was perhaps not prepared for the publication of fairy tales. Denis Kambouchner had the following to say about the idea of *repuerescentia*:

Érasme l'indique ici assez clairement: Repuerescere, ce n'est nullement retomber en enfance, ni succomber à une quelconque forme de puérité ; c'est, au contraire, accomplir la plus haute culture, culture qui ne se définit nullement par l'érudition pure, mais plutôt par un complexe de qualités et dispositions où l'on repérera une dualité caractéristique : il s'agit, d'une part, des qualités classiques du parfait orateur : maîtrise de la matière expressive et des significations elles-mêmes, sens de l'à-propos, capacité d'accommoder et de varier la forme, pertinence, jugement et inventivité ; mais aussi, d'autre part, chez le chrétien Érasme, un certain esprit de simplicité. (5)

Repuerescere – or the idea of reviving the spirit of the child within, provided an interesting contrast in an era that was not always receptive to tales of magic and fantasy.

As previously discussed in the introduction, literary fairy tales assumed a very strategic function in the production of meaning in the context of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. That there was such great attention invested in the composition of fairy tales testifies that this was a genre carefully constructed according to the modernist conception of literature. Those who identified themselves with the *anciens* were not willing to take such “puerile” tales seriously and rather than acknowledge the new genre, chose to ignore it (Koch 222).

The marginal position of fairy tales accounted for the many liberties that many authors, particularly women, took in exploiting the various possibilities of the genre. This opened the door for the fairy tale writers to play on traditional writing practices and to break with traditional literary norms. The new genre provided a place which allowed experimentation, thus attesting to its modernity (Koch 223).

In spite of the challenges that they faced in attempting to bring about acceptance of this new genre, the French fairy tale-tellers forged ahead with their writing, and they did so with the desire to have their voices heard. The French women writers reacted to social and political events with great sensitivity, and the wide discontent towards Louis XIV’s reign as well as his court was mirrored in many of the tales. Telling tales provided a certain diversion for these women, as well as presenting them with a way to express discontentment with the social issues in their lives (Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 82). They used this genre to debate contemporary issues through the use of allegories.

In the last decade of the 1700’s, (which is also the same time that the most intense period of tale-writing was taking place), Louis XIV’s regime was entering a critical phase in which all social classes were experiencing lower standards of living. Jack Zipes has

argued that the conteuses in particular did not view their work as an escapist genre, but rather used their tales as vehicles for “anti-monarchical polemic and ethical critique, while at the same time offering fantastic, utopian models for a transformed world in which justice, equality, and love would reign” (Canepa, *Out of the Woods* 12). The tales were also a reflection from a female point of view of the pressures and concerns facing a woman during the late 1600’s and early 1700’s. It is impossible to separate gender from social, political and cultural questions. Of particular note in the tales thus was the presence of patriarchal domination as well as pre-arranged marriages and the pressure of childbirth.

The form and style of the first fairy tales were deeply rooted in the literary culture of the period, and the content of the tales was also grounded in contemporary social and political concerns. In addition to fairy godmothers, elves and giants, the tales featured aristocratic characters who ruled over imaginary kingdoms and dwelled in palaces just as lavish as Versailles. In this way, the women could create a world their readers would recognize, as well as an enchanted world that was the opposite of real life. The tales permitted writers to manipulate social norms—the monarchy, relations between men and women, and family structures—without risk of censorship (E. Welch 501). It allowed them to mount a critical attack on many prejudices and practices of their day; which from their point of view confined and defamed women, and coarsened the minds and manners of all members of society. The culture of the salon in the second half of the seventeenth century fostered the art of conversation as one of the foundational skills of civilization (Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde* 49).

In *Fabulous Identities: Women's Fairy Tales in Seventeenth-Century France*, Patricia Hannon acknowledges the collective identity the French women forged through writing fairy tales but she argues that they used it to fashion individual personae that paralleled the independently-minded heroines of their tales (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 215).

To a certain extent, the French writers of fairy tales, men and women, “modernized” the tale by turning it into a literary form with utopian visions stemming from their desire for better social conditions than what existed in France at the time (Zipes, *Beauties* 34). They revised their tales to develop their own unique style, “that was not only supposed to be natural and witty, but inventive, astonishing and modern” (Zipes, *Beauties* 42). In her book *The Disobedient Writer*, Nancy Walker made the interesting observation that:

Literary history, particularly the history of fiction, is frequently constructed by successive writers turning to their own purposes the patterns and materials created by other writers. And yet it is also true that women's relationship to such an inheritance had normally been fundamentally and dramatically different from that of men. (4)

With fairy tales considered a modern genre, the predominance of women among the ranks of published fairy tale authors was a sign of the larger role of female writers in modern literary life as a whole (E. Welch 499). Seifert observed; “The conteuses used the fairy tale form to create a counter ideology in which women assert their own abilities and

desires to participate in cultural, and especially, literary production.” (Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender* 96).

In keeping with the modern edge presented in the tales, the women writers sought to promote this strong, newfound image of themselves, through the character portrayal in their stories. Alison Lurie, for example, sees the tales as reflecting a commendable level of gender equality, along with power tilted in favor of older women:

These stories suggest a society in which women are as competent and active as men, at every age and in every class. For every clever youngest son there is a youngest daughter equally resourceful. Real help for the hero or heroine comes most frequently from a fairy godmother or wise woman, and real trouble from a witch or wicked stepmother. (42)

Before proceeding with the textual analysis of the fairy tales, this study will take a look at the biographies of the many women who authored fairy tales in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. Although not every woman’s work will be discussed in this study, they should all be noted here, because they all contributed to the rich history of the fairy tale genre and form a collective body of writing and intellectual investment in the genre.

D'AULNOY

Les critiques les plus avisés d'aujourd'hui donnent à Mme d'Aulnoy sa juste place, la considérant comme le plus célèbre de tous les auteurs de contes après Perrault, avec les qualités et les défauts de son sexe – une abondante et riche imagination, un style aisé et naturel, quelquefois négligé, un luxe de détails pittoresques qui traînent trop en longueur, un esprit salonnier, une élégance qui annonce le xviii siècle... (Storer 41)

Despite the fact that these words are almost a century old, they still provide an apt description of a remarkable woman, and summarize some of the many qualities of both Mme d'Aulnoy and her work.

Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baronne d'Aulnoy, (1650 – 1705) was the most prolific and the most gifted of the conteuses. Married to a man three times her age, and who was mostly unpleasant, Mme. d'Aulnoy did not have an ideal union. It is thought that she was abducted from the convent where she was being educated to live with this man she had never even seen. The Baron d'Aulnoy, (who had either lost all his money or never had what he purported to have in the first place), was faced with ever-increasing debts, and was eventually accused of the crime of lèse majesté⁹ by his wife, his mother-in-law, and/or friends. The Baron had been overheard swearing in public against the taxes that had been imposed. Thanks to his many connections, his lawyers

⁹ This crime is best explained as an offense against the dignity of a reigning monarch or sovereign, or against the state.

were able to exonerate him from the charges, because the punishment for conviction of this crime would have been execution. M. d'Aulnoy was able to convince the court of his innocence, and in turn brought charges in retaliation against his wife and her mother. Although there is no concrete proof that Mme. d'Aulnoy participated in the conspiracy against her husband, her mother was implicated in the scandalous affair and ran off to Spain for fear of being arrested (Knapp, *French Fairy Tales* 108).

Following the trial, a warrant was issued for Mme. d'Aulnoy's arrest. She escaped from her would-be captors, and from 1672-1685 she lived an unclear, shadowy life that likely included time spent in Holland, Spain and England. Memoirs and novelistic fiction writing about these places are attributed to her and provide evidence of her presence in those countries. In 1685 she was allowed to return to France, and it was during this time that she began to receive in her house on the rue St. Benoît, where her salon became one of the leading social gatherings of Paris. It was during this time and in this location that she began to contribute significantly to literary life (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 285).

Juliette Cherbuliez made the interesting observation that d'Aulnoy's biography exemplifies a curious trend in her generation linking leisure writing to scandalous behavior. The volume of her production seems to match the magnitude of scandals associated with her. Her life also exemplifies another commonality among French writers of leisure literature during the crisis: scandal leads to travel. Writing engenders scandal, scandal leads to escape, and escape leads to more writing (*Place of Exile* 198).

D'Aulnoy began publishing only after her return to Paris. It seems clear that her return from exile, and perhaps economic and social difficulties, occasioned her writing

career. Writing in her case did not cause scandal; rather it emerged from her scandals as a means to social rehabilitation and reacceptance. She puts forth a confessional gesture early in the preface to *Le Retour d'une âme à Dieu* (1692). In a rather repentant manner she alludes to a previous “engagement criminel” without actually naming the crime. This confessional gesture seems to confirm a causal relationship between scandal, writing and redemption (Cherbuliez, *Place of Exile* 199).

D'Aulnoy inaugurated the vogue of fairy tale-writing in France with *L'île de la félicité* in 1690 and in fact coined the term *conte de fée*. However, d'Aulnoy did not only publish fairy tales; her talent was spread across a lifetime of writing that included historical novels, memoirs and novellas. Among her publications we find the *Relation du voyage d'Espagne* (1691), and the *Mémoires de la Cour d'Angleterre* (1695).

Unfortunately the historical works associated with d'Aulnoy have been attacked both on the basis of authenticity and authorship. For example, the French scholar (and chief biographer of d'Aulnoy) Raymond Foulché-Debosc hinted that she had never even set foot in Spain, and instead used textual sources for the entirety of the work. D'Aulnoy most likely visited Spain between 1679 and 1681, ten years before writing the memoirs. Regardless of the manner in which they were written, the Spanish travel narratives were popular in both France and England. English translators and critics over the last several hundred years have praised d'Aulnoy for her keen sense of observation, her wit and her wisdom (Winn and Kuisenga 400).

D'Aulnoy's subsequent career as a writer of fairy tales displayed the versatility that she possessed. Although she published throughout her lifetime, it is for her fairy tales that she received the most attention. She pre-dated Perrault (and actually outsold

Perrault's tales throughout the eighteenth-century) (Beasley 75) and was famed throughout Paris for the stories she told in her *salon* beginning in 1685, the same tales that she began to write down and publish in 1690. Perrault, who moved in the same social circles, would have been familiar with these tales. She helped lay the groundwork for the fairy tale as a proper genre intended first for educated adult audiences and only later for children, with the goal of enlightening as well as entertaining (Beasley 75). In fact, d'Aulnoy's tales and the other women's tales were even less designed for children than Perrault's.

Two of the main themes presented in Mme D'Aulnoy's contes de fées are love and metamorphosis. Each of her twenty-five tales exemplifies some form of love such as amorous love, material and filial love, passionate and unnatural love, and love in friendships. Each tale also represents some kind of transformation, ranging from a simple disguise to invisibility or a temporary change into another type of creature or plant. The two themes unite to carry the message that love transforms (Mitchell 125). If we try to classify Mme D'Aulnoy's treatment of love, it becomes more obvious that she presents a different facet of it in almost every tale (Mitchell 98).

If no other aspect of Mme. d'Aulnoy's contes were studied than the portrayal of contemporary manners, they would still provide scholars with volumes of information. D'Aulnoy gives a vivid and accurate depiction of her era, and her accounts include entertainments, dances, manner of dress, as well as the values and moral attitudes of her epoch (Mitchell 124). The contes de fées mirror late seventeenth-century society and culture, not only the elite pastimes with which the author would have been familiar, but

also architecture, decorative arts, attitudes of the privileged classes toward the lower classes, and the ideals of mondain culture (Robert 327-430).

Many of the tales written by d'Aulnoy not only reflect daily life during the time of the Sun King, but also the mentality of the social group to which the author belonged. Tales were adapted from tellers of the past, and d'Aulnoy and the other women writers took free license with them. Mme. D'Aulnoy created a setting in her tales that placed women in greater control of their destinies than did fairy tales by men, and it is obvious that the narrative strategies of her tales, like those she learned in the salon, were meant to expose practices and behavior among the people of her class, particularly those who degraded independent women. Without making her noble heroines submissive, d'Aulnoy clearly depicts them as being more reasonable, kind, and sincere than their lowly and sadistic adversaries (Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth* 26).

Marcelle Welch makes the interesting observation that:

The originality of the tales conceived by Mme. d'Aulnoy resides in the fundamental principle that the young woman must learn about the world by first coming to know herself better. Consequently she must affirm her identity as woman independently of the undertakings of the prince charming ("Le Devenir de la jeune fille." (53)

Allison Stedman has this observation to make about d'Aulnoy and her contribution to the genre:

By showing her contemporaries that fairy tales were not merely amusing stories isolated from the reality in which they were created, d'Aulnoy rallied her salon peers to aid her in the development of a powerful new literary enterprise that would have the potential to engage and even to transform the sociopolitical climate of late-seventeenth-century France. By associating her fairy tale with the baroque and historical novels of the seventeenth-century salon tradition on the level of both structure and plot, d'Aulnoy promoted the fairy tale as the latest literary innovation through which a new generation of mondain authors could foreground issues important to them as intellectuals and articulate a need for social change. (34)

Mme. d'Aulnoy believed that she would be remembered for her works based in reality – her *Mémoires* and her travelogues, but it turned out to be the opposite as she is she is best known today for her lighter works of fantasy. D'Aulnoy initiated changes in the literary fairy tale as an institution with far-reaching effects. She represented a woman's point of view regarding such topics as fidelity, courtship, honor, arranged marriages and love. Parental domination, political tyranny and forced marriage are other themes taken up in practically every one of her tales (Duggan, *Salonnières, furies, and fairies* 201).

DE LA FORCE

Noted historian and one who devoted her life to the cultivation of literature, Charlotte-Rose Caumont de la Force, (1650–1724), was born to a high-ranking noble family, and although she was raised as a Protestant, (her family was known for defending the Protestant cause during the Wars of Religion), she converted to Catholicism in 1686. This conversion provided her with access to aristocratic circles and allowed her to nourish certain relationships that would later prove important for her writing career: She was lady-in-waiting for the Dauphine, intimately acquainted with Mademoiselle Elizabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orléans, and she even received a pension from Louis XIV (M. Welch, "L'Éros feminine" 217-223).

In 1687 de la Force married Charles de Briou, the son of a highly placed official, the Président Briou, without the latter's consent, and as a result, the marriage was immediately broken off by his family. An annulment occurred a mere ten days after her union. As a member of the court she caused a great stir after she wrote several libertine poems. As a result of gossip and being the center of some fairly public scandals, (including adultery and the marriage annulment) she was dismissed from the court of Louis XIV, and exiled to a convent. During the time of her confinement in 1697, de la Force wrote her volume of fairy tales entitled *Les Contes des contes* and this collection, along with her other novels, had a great deal of success in Europe in the eighteenth-century (Zipes, "Cross Cultural Connections" 830). Aside from her collection of fairy tales, de la Force also produced several compositions, including her poetic epistle to Mme. de Maintenon and her novels *Château en Espagne* and *Roman de Gustave Vasa*.

She also wrote *Histoire de Marguerite de Valois* and *Histoire secrète de Bourgogne*, and *L'Histoire secrète de Navarre* (Le Petit 216).

Stories written by de la Force broke social and sexual taboos by refuting strictly defined gender roles and portraying sensuality as an integral part of a woman's nature. Although many of her passages are limited to visual and verbal exchanges, she confers value to and shows respect for a woman's sexual experiences (Neeman, "De la Force" 553).

De la Force's eight fairy tales spanned a wide range of narrative sub-genres, including the mythological, the pastoral, the chivalric, and the folkloric. De la Force, along with Murat, composed her tales for an adult salon public (Beasley 75). Among her contemporaries, perhaps only d'Aulnoy (with whom she was friends, along with Murat) wrote a greater variety of fairy tales. One of her most popular tales was "Persinette", (undoubtedly connected to its precursor "Petrosinella" by Basile), an early literary version of the well-known tale "Rapunzel" later written by the Grimm Brothers. It is the story of a young woman who becomes pregnant without really understanding how this event takes place, and follows with Persinette's secret marriage to the prince (which was not approved by the Church.). Although de la Force initially punishes the protagonists, she seems to empathize with the heroine, and comforts the two main characters in a happy ending at the conclusion of the tale.

Compared to those of other women tale-writers of her era, de la Force's tales are shorter, and although she was not as prolific as some of her contemporaries, her fairy tales make a significant contribution to the French fairy tale vogue (Vellenga 59-72). Written with an aristocratic audience in mind, her tales were filled with motifs taken

largely from the courtly romance tradition. Her favorite plots involved crossed lovers, infidelity, and the power of love (Zipes, *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 832).

In 1701, de la Force composed *Les Jeux d'Esprit*, subtitled *La Promenade de la Princesse de Conti à Eu*. In the book, the main characters decide to create a historical novel together. This was considered to be a self-conscious exploration of the process of collaborating on the creation of a novel. The round-robin type of narrative construction in this work mirrors a salon game (Harth 186). In *Tender Geographies*, Joan DeJean states that de la Force's fictional novel about the *making* of fiction is "the only contemporary account of salon writing." DeJean goes on to say that in blending one author's voice into the next, de la Force reproduces an important aspect of salon writing; the devaluing of individual creativity. Instead, personal creativity is made subservient to collective literary will, the collaborative process that celebrates the shared life that existed in the salon (*Tender Geographies* 74).

BERNARD

Little is known about the Catherine Bernard's (1662-1712) life. She was born in Rouen and raised as a Protestant. At some point after she moved to Paris, she began to earn a living by her writing. It appears that she frequented L'Héritier's salons while in Paris. She never married, and remained under the wing of wealthy patronesses who apparently influenced Bernard to adopt a devout way of life. By the turn of the century her name disappeared from public view, and she is believed to have died shortly after (Ekstein 60). Bernard and L'Héritier were almost the only ones who, during years of

severe state censorship and autocratic controls, managed to live a quiet and private life. Neither of them married, and both women attached themselves to aristocratic female patrons who supported them in their writing (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 281).

Although the record of her personal life is slim, much more is known about Bernard's literary career, one characterized by both diversity and success. Bernard made her way to Paris in 1680 and won the Académie Française prize for poetry three separate times, and she published her first novel, *Frédéric de Sicile* that same year. She also wrote plays that had great success at the Comédie Française, and were among the longest-running plays of the end of the seventeenth century, which was a time period when tragedies were a very prestigious literary form heavily dominated by male writers (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 48). Bernard wrote three novellas, *Eléonor d'Yvrée* (1687), *Le Comte d'Amboise* (1689), and *Inès de Cordoue* (1696), as well as a short story, *Histoire de la rupture d'Abénamar et de Fatime* (1696); all four come under the general title, *Les Malheurs de l'amour*. *Inès de Cordoue* contains two fairy tales; “Le Prince Rosier” and “Riquet à la Houppe”, putting Bernard at the forefront of the fairy tale movement (Ekstein 60). Prior to her successful publication run, she converted to Catholicism in 1685, a necessary step to be a part of the literary élite (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 19).

Inès de Cordoue is set in the court of King Phillip II of Spain, where the story centers on women who frequent the salons of the French-born queen. The two tales found in this novella are the result of two salon women competing to see who can create the best fairy tale. In fact, scholars have used this novel as evidence that the salon was a crucial source for the creation of fairy tales, and that educated women, rather than

uneducated, peasant women, were ultimately responsible for the creation of these tales (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time* 64).

Bernard's version of "Riquet à la Houppe" appeared around the same time as Perrault's version. Although both deal with the same central plot point (a beautiful but stupid princess who receives the gift of intelligence from an ugly gnome in return for her hand in marriage to the same gnome), when one looks at the differences between the two renditions, one may find that Perrault's is much more charming, concluding with the comfortable, happy ending, whereas Bernard's version is much darker, with a rather pessimistic slant on women's view of marriage. Whereas Perrault's version ends with a trite moral ("We find that what we love is wondrous fair."), Bernard's version ends with a stark warning: ("In the end, lovers turn into husbands anyway.") (Harries, "Catherine Bernard" 117).

L'HERITIER

Marie-Jeanne de Villandon L'Héritier (1664-1734) grew up as a member of a very scholarly and literary family; therefore it was not that surprising that she dedicated herself to writing. What separated her from many of the other women writers of her time was that she did not become involved in any scandals nor was she exiled to a convent. She never married nor had children, and during her life she associated herself with many erudite and influential women of her time. L'Héritier followed the example of her mentor, the writer and *salonnière* Madeleine de Scudéry, by refusing all offers of marriage. Although she did not have the security of a husband, she did not suffer from

financial worries thanks to Scudéry's patronage and the income from her writing. Eventually L'Héritier inherited de Scudéry's famous salon upon her mentor's death, and ran it with equal success as she nurtured her own rising literary reputation.

L'Héritier was very close to Perrault, who was considered her uncle, as their mothers were either sisters or cousins. Though her family was impoverished, L'Héritier moved in high and learned circles in Paris, and counted both d'Aulnoy and Murat as her friends. She was an outspoken partisan of the fairy tale form, at the very time that it was being scorned by the Académie as a vulgar genre and typical example of women's foolishness. As L'Héritier was writing fairy tales before Perrault, possibly as early as 1692, it is likely that they exchanged ideas on the subject, and that the figure of Perrault's Mother Goose does not only conceal his handiwork and thinking but hers as well (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 171).

L'Héritier's first major work, *Oeuvres méslées*, was published in 1695 and contained two of her well-known tales: "L'Adroite princesse" and "Les Enchantements de l'éloquence". Oddly, "L'Adroite princesse" generally included Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* as early as 1721, and was often mistakenly attributed to him, which is difficult to understand since the two writers' tales differ highly in both style and treatment. Karen Rowe noted that in the 1729 English version of Perrault's tales, which included "L'Adroite princesse", translator Robert Samber stated that the tale appeals to "persons of polite and refined tastes, of rare and elevated qualities of soul," who "have, in all ages, taken singular delight in such productions of the mind" (39). The only similarity between Perrault and L'Héritier is that they both incorporate a moral teaching in their tale, with L'Héritier placing proverbs at the beginning of "L'Adroite Princesse", and

Perrault placing a *moralité* in prose at the end of his tales (Tilley 188). After the publication of the *Oeuvres méslées* came *Bigarrures ingénieuses* in 1696, which included reprints of earlier tales as well as a new tale called “Ricdin-Ricdon”.

With the fairy tale, Perrault and L’Héritier were creating a modern literary genre simultaneously, as they worked together and borrowed from each other, so much so that there was always confusion about who deserved the credit for what. She was the ideal accomplice and collaborator for Perrault (DeJean, *Marquise-Marquis de Banneville* xii).

Although she identifies her sources as her governess and her nurse, it is clear that L’Héritier’s immediate sources were literary authors such as Straparola, Basile (and there are signs that she was familiar with their collections first hand) and the romances of chivalry, as was the case for d’Aulnoy and Murat (Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde* 172). Despite what she says in the preface to “L’Adroite princesse”, L’Héritier’s style could never be read as the voice of the people, as she writes in a flowery and learned prose influenced by her frequentation of the aristocratic salons of Paris (Warner, “Mother Goose Tales” 3). Although she declares firmly that she wants to write neither prose nor verse, but instead: “un récit sans façon et comme on parle,” she embroiders the tale to the point where it is difficult to see where she intended to be faithful to the oral tradition. One thing was clear however, L’Héritier was squarely on the side of the moderns as opposed to the ancients during the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes (Seifert, *Enchanted Eloquence* 61).

Lewis Seifert and Domna Stanton note that L’Héritier encloses her tales within in a frame story, or occasionally dedicates them to female acquaintances via parenthetical commentary. Either way, she places her tales within the kind of urbane conversation

associated with the salons. Her stories and dialogue have the easy flow of conversational narration. The succinctness found in tales by d'Aulnoy and La Force is not present in L'Héritier's stories. Seifert and Stanton continue on to say:

The tales revel in digressions and descriptions that contravene the characterization and setting of the best-known fairy tales. With this aesthetic, L'Héritier creates a narrative voice that foregrounds her skills as a storyteller and a writer. Her digressions and descriptions also make possible numerous topical references and, frequently, social critique. (*Enchanted Eloquence* 63)

Aside from her work with fairy tales, L'Héritier also contributed other notable works of literature. One such work represented the period's most important fictional representation of transvestism. *Marmaison, ou l'innocente tromperie* is the story of a young woman who essentially "becomes" her dead twin brother in every way – courtier, soldier and even lover. Published as part of *Oeuvres meslées* in 1696, it allowed L'Héritier to explore the relation between sexuality and gender. In her preface to the story she declared herself a partisan of women and their stories, reminiscing:

A hundred times and more, my governesses, instead of animal fables, would draw for me the moral features of this surprising story... Why yes, one hears, such tales are far more striking than the exploits of a monkey and a wolf. I took extreme pleasure in them, as does every child. (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 19)

L'Héritier wrapped her tales in fantasy and unreality, which undoubtedly helped them entertain her audiences, but her stories also revealed a new perception of love, marriage, and women's skills, thus advocating a means of escaping imposed and traditional limits and prescribed destiny (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 24).

MURAT

Henriette Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat (1670-1716) was one of a group of late seventeenth-century women writers that Joan DeJean described as:

...so graphic in their condemnation of the abuses of women both past and present, that literary history reserved for them a fate unique in the French tradition: they were labeled ...brazen adventuresses, women whose personal lives were so absolutely scandalous that this alone was sufficient enough to deny them a place in literary history. (DeJean, *Tender Geographies* 128)

Thanks to her high-profile lifestyle, there is a great deal of biographical information about the Comtesse de Murat. Born in Brittany, (a region whose history and culture greatly influenced the author during her life), she caused a stir when she arrived in Paris showing a preference for Breton peasant costume. Murat was sent to court in Paris at the age of 16 to marry the Comte de Murat, and shortly after the collapse of her disastrous marriage, she became known as a woman of little virtue.

Due to her adventurous nature and non-conformism, she was often in trouble with Louis XIV. She was embroiled in multiple scandals during her time as a member of the king's court. Murat found herself the subject of accounts in Parisian police records alleging unruly behavior and love affairs with both men and women. In fact, her behavior was so noteworthy at the time, that the police report (titled "Disorders of Madame de Murat"), filed by René Argenson, the Parisian lieutenant general of police, stated the following:

...concerning Madame de Murat; it is not easy to express in detail all the disorders of her conduct, without wounding the rules of decency, and the public is pained to see a lady of this birth in such shameful and such flaunted dissoluteness...The crimes that are imputed to Madame de Murat are not of a kind that can be easily proven by means of information, since it has to do with domestic impieties and a monstrous attachment to persons of her sex. (Merrick and Sibalis 53)

Murat wrote fiction based on her own origins, and challenged both her peers and superiors. In 1694, she published her first work, *Histoire de la courtisane Rhodope*, which clearly targeted the king's pious mistress, Madame de Maintenon, and her former husband, the poet Scarron. This work was considered insulting towards the liaison of Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon. In 1698 Murat was summoned as *une femme déréglée* by the police, and ordered out of Paris and into provincial exile to the tiny city of Loches. She continued to raise eyebrows during her exile, by wearing a red riding

hood to church and announcing with pride that she lived for pleasure. Rumors of blasphemy and homosexuality followed her. Officially denounced by the king, Murat remained in Loches until his death in 1715, when her exile was revoked one year before her death (Tucker, “Murat” 647). Stuck in such a small town after knowing the splendors of Paris, Murat sought to recreate the metropolitan atmosphere of the city. She organized gatherings at her house where she told fairy tales with some of her closest friends, such as fellow tale-teller de la Force (M. Welch, “Manipulation du discours féerique” 22). The positions developed in conversations held in the salons were not naturally or exclusively political – they were socially subversive, and were part of an open campaign about equality and intelligence in conversation (Warner *Wonder Tales* 8).

Mme. de Murat composed her *Contes de fées* in 1698 while exiled in Loches. This collection comprises several important tales such as “Le Parfait Amour”, “Anguilette”, and “Jeune et Belle”. That same year *Les Nouveaux Contes des fées* appeared, which contained “Le Palais de la Vengeance”. Her final collection of tales in 1699, *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques*, included “Le Roy Porc” and “L'isle de la Magnificence”. In 1710, Murat also wrote a novel entitled: *Les Lutins du château de Kernosy*.

Murat often combined traditional French fairy lore with Graeco-Roman mythology. She also borrowed plots and themes from Straparola, such as “Le Roi Porc”, which was undoubtedly influenced by the Italian tale of the same name, “Il re porco”. Her tale entitled “Le Sauvage” closely follows the plot of Straparola's story about Constantine, the daughter of the king of Egypt who disguises herself as a man.

The volumes of tales written by Murat while she lived in exile in the country conveyed her bitterness about love and her biting view of society. In one tale, “Le Palais de la vengeance”, Murat turns typical fairy tale conventions upside down by warning that even the unions born of love can turn sour. She explores another tragic end to passionate love: boredom. In this story, the evil enchanter Pagan abducted the lovers and imprisoned them together in a pleasant crystal palace where they needed or wanted for nothing, but after a while Pagan reveals to them the unfortunate secret that happiness itself can become a bore. In her tales Murat emphasized the connection between the fairies and the fates, for fairies constantly foresee and even try to control the destinies of the tales' protagonists.

Murat contributed more to the literary world than just her collection of fairy tales. Her *Voyage de Campagne* (1699) is a collection of stories told by a group of acquaintances on a holiday on the country. Although this particular work is not considered a fairy tale, it is reminiscent of the type of salon conversation and literary creativity that influenced the birth of the early French fairy tales (Tucker, “Mme de Murat” 647).

VILLENEUVE

Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Gallon de Villeneuve (1695-1755) was born in Paris to an aristocratic family. After her husband squandered away her dowry by gambling and died shortly after, she was forced to earn a living by starting a literary career. She published a series of fairy tales in 1740 called *La jeune américaine, ou Les contes marins*

(told by an old woman during a long sea voyage), as well as another collection called *Les belles solitaires* in 1745. Her greatest accomplishment is considered to be her novel *La jardinière de Vincennes* in 1753.

The original novel version of “La belle et la bête” was published as part of *La jeune américaine*. Although the story was reasonably successful when it first appeared, it was radically transformed 16 years later, when Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont substantially edited and pared down Villeneuve’s version to produce the short children's story that is much better known today. Madame de Villeneuve's text is practically unknown, and not surprisingly so. Her version is a long, cumbersome story of 341 pages, filling two volumes of her *Contes marins*. “La belle et la bête” is an odd mixture of extravagant descriptions and fairy tale conventions.

Villeneuve’s tale employs fairy tale motifs in a familiar manner, but her addition of dream sequences was an innovative touch that later writers of fairy tales such as Novalis¹⁰ and E.T.A. Hoffmann¹¹ were able to develop more fully. It is in the palace itself and in Belle's dreams that the visual dominates and enchants. Belle spends more time in her elegant quarters—which feature quantities of brilliant gems, rooms full of dazzling mirrors, beguiling lifelike portraits, and spectacular entertainment—or contemplating the handsome suitor in her dreams than she does interacting with the repulsive Beast. There are several dream sequences (thus foreshadowing psychoanalysis), including one with the fairy admonishing Belle telling her that everything is not how it

¹⁰ Pseudonym for Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772-1801). An author and philosopher of early German Romanticism.

¹¹ Pen name for Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann (1776-1822). A German Romantic author of fantasy and horror.

seems, and also one which shows Belle being told by the Prince in his true form to look beyond appearances and rescue him (Barchilon, "Confessions" 216). She, of course, does not understand his message and must fall in love with the Beast before she comprehends his full message. Therefore, the repeated admonition to Belle not to be deceived by appearances seems to bear as much on her nighttime visions and on the palace's sumptuous decor as on the palace's ugly owner. Indeed, Belle is confused by the lesson that the good Lady of her dreams wants to impress upon her.

In her article on "La Belle et la bête", Virginia Swain looks at Belle's dreams and notes that:

Although the dreams transmit the lessons Belle must learn, they also obscure their own importance by raising the problem of illusion. If dreams are just figments of the imagination, then what is Belle to make of the warning not to believe appearances, which is the constant message of the dreams themselves? The problem of perception, and especially of determining the appropriate value of images, runs through her sleeping and waking hours and bewilders Belle, just as the novel's curious mixture of fantasy and realism troubles Villeneuve's readers. Belle's uncertainty about how to read the signs around her seems tied to our questions about how to read the novel. (Swain 199)

The main narrative of Belle and Beast's enchanted courtship is followed by a lengthy history of the Beast's original transformation and Belle's genealogy, which takes away from the marvelous aspect of the tale. Contemporary critics find Villeneuve's

version to be rather redundant, due to its overlapping stories and substantial length (Barchilon, "Beauty and the Beast" 81-82).

The main narrative that describes the characters' enchanted courtship and marriage is followed by the history of the Beast's original metamorphosis and a lengthy description of Belle's genealogy, taking away from the sense of the marvelous. "La belle et la bête" is a tale of true love just as much as it is a story about class differences in marriage. Although her tale employs numerous traditional fairy tale motifs (but in a conventional manner), Villeneuve must be credited as the first writer to develop the plot of "La belle et la bête" as it is known today (Swain 198).

LUBERT

Marie-Madeleine de Lubert (1710-1779) not only wrote fairy tales but novels, novellas and poetry as well. As a young girl she moved to Paris with her family, and as she grew older, she rejected marriage in order to devote herself to writing. She apparently had a friendly relationship with Voltaire, as there is correspondence between the two where the philosopher calls Lubert his "muse and grace" in 1732. In Mme. de Graffigny's letters, there is also frequent mention of the great affection the salonnière had for the young woman (Tucker, *Pregnant Fictions* 135).

Lubert composed more than a dozen long and intricate fairy tales from 1743 to 1755. Among them, "Princesse Camion" (1743) is a remarkable example of a sadomasochistic tale that is intriguing because of the different tortures and transformations that the author kept devising to dramatize the suffering of her

protagonists. Scholars such as Maryse Duggan have made special note of the overt sexuality present in many of her tales: “Ces contes offrent un répertoire de comportements sexuels assez singulier qui détonne de l’ensemble de la production du genre” (61).

In her review on Lubert’s collection of tales, Kathryn Hoffman noted that Lubert took a great deal of inspiration from earlier fairy tales by writers such as Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, Marie-Jeanne L’Héritier, and Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de la Force, but put her own touch onto her stories by weaving the plots and themes into new fantasies that drew from the rich realms of marvel present in eighteenth-century European culture (Hoffmann, “Mademoiselle de Lubert” 278-280).

BEAUMONT

Although the details of Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont’s (1711-1780) life are scarce, the legacy she left behind is not. Beaumont grew up with the privilege of an excellent education while in Rouen at a convent school. After her marriage to a rather inconstant husband in 1741, the union was annulled in 1743, thus forcing her to earn her own living. She resided in England from 1745-1763, where she found work as a governess for several well-off aristocratic families (Pohl and Tooley 168). Beaumont ultimately rejected the traditional life of love and marriage, seeking “final liberation...in and though the single life” (Offen 37).

She eventually ceased being a member of the idle nobility and became a working-woman in a household commanded and owned by another. Industrious and very high-

minded, she issued a stream of pedagogical writings, often translating her own French into English for aristocratic young women under the age of 18. While in London, she published a series of pedagogical works and journals for adolescents and young ladies, and even composed several well-received epistolary novels (Clancy 195-208). Her most well-known work was *Le Magasin des enfants*, published in 1757, and written for children of the bourgeoisie, (especially girls), from the age of five and up. Many of the stories are openly didactic, and it was easy to see the concerned tone of a well-meaning teacher who was raising her pupils to face their future obediently and with decorum.

Morals and correct social behavior were presented by means of entertaining stories and dialogues. It was in this collection that her major fairy tales were made public. Among the tales were “Le Prince Désir”, (a tale that gives a lesson on flattery and narcissism) “Le Prince Chéri” and “Aurore et Aimée”. It is extremely important to note that published in this volume was “La Belle et la bête” - a tale that speaks of domesticity and self-sacrifice for women (Zipes, *When Dreams Came True* 47).

Although most likely based on Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve’s longer narrative of 1740, Beaumont’s effort is perhaps the most famous of all the versions. That the desire for wealth motivates parents to turn their daughters over to a beast pointed to the possibility that these tales mirrored social practices of an earlier age. Many an arranged marriage must have seemed like marriage to a beast, and the telling of stories like “La Belle et la bête” may have furnished women with a socially acceptable channel for providing therapeutic advice, comfort and consolation. Yet what many of these tales seem to endorse in one way or another is a reinforcement of patriarchal norms, the

subordination of female desire to male desire, and a glorification of filial duty and self-sacrifice (Tatar *Classic Fairy Tales* 27).

By the time she died in 1780, Beaumont had written more than seventy books, a remarkable achievement for any individual, but considering her sex and the time period in which she lived, it seems even more noteworthy.

She emphasized the proper upbringing of young girls (like Belle), and in all her tales she continually stressed industriousness, self-sacrifice, modesty and diligence, as the qualities young ladies must possess to attain happiness. It was through reading and dialogue that girls could socialize themselves to advance their status in society, and Mme. De Beaumont's faith in the power of the right reading material was to have a substantial effect on how fairy tales for children were to be composed and shaped in the latter part of the eighteenth-century and up through the nineteenth-century (Zipes, "Cross Cultural Connections" 864).

Becoming respected and accomplished authors did not come easily to d'Aulnoy and her contemporaries. Besides fighting stereotypes and preconceived notions of what role women traditionally played in the telling of tales, they also had to overcome personal difficulties and less than perfect lives in order to publish their tales. Armed with knowledge of the personal and historical circumstances surrounding the French women writers and the history of the publication of their tales, it is now time to delve into the heart of this study, a look at the Italian writers who influenced them, and motifs that form the heart of their tales.

Chapter 2: Italian Fairy Tales and Their Influence on French Women Writers

Early modern France borrowed a great deal from other European cultural traditions; in particular, it garnered its fairy tales from the Italian literary tradition, most notably through the writings of Giovanni Francesco Straparola (*Le piacevoli notti*, 1550) and Giambattista Basile (*Lo Cunto de li Cunti or Il Pentamerone*, 1634-36). Considered the first published literary fairy tales, these works influenced generations of tale-writers long after their original publication. There is no doubt that their impact on the genre is far-reaching and supremely influential.

Although the themes and types of tales tend to follow certain recognizable patterns, cultural nuances are unmistakable and are geared towards the particular audience of a given corpus of stories. The classic story of Cinderella, for example, has been told internationally with the original version coming from 9th century China (Dundes, *Cinderella 2*). While the basic skeleton may remain the same, over the ages, the details of the tale are altered and recomposed so that they provide a rich cultural texture to readers (or listeners) in a different culture, faraway from that in which the tale originated. Literary tales underwent changes (elimination of certain scenes or events in the story) at the discretion of the conteur or conteuse, thus keeping only the structure intact. Those tales that were identified as “literary” were also altered by the writers and compilers of tales, sometimes by their own choice, sometimes under general cultural influence, or even direct pressure to make certain changes.

French fairy tale writers, while putting personal touches to their work, were deeply influenced by the folk and fairy tales that preceded their efforts. The work of

medievalists in particular on the origins and transmission of tales¹² suggests that oral folktales had been passed down through generations and had survived for hundreds of years by the time the French women writers began producing tales, and when the literary fairy tale was still, overall, a rarity. Before the influx of French tales published in the late seventeenth-and early eighteenth-century, there were few other examples of written, published, fairy tales for the French to turn to for comparison. Medieval literature for instance, while certainly not equivalent to a body of literary fairy tales, was an important marker in the chronological history of what was to become the printed written tale, but the degree to which it was available to and read by early-modern French tale-writers remains to be ascertained.

Rather, it behooves us to look closer in time, and at a geographically proximate corpus: the written Italian early modern tale, in order to better understand the history of the French literary fairy tale and the migration of specific motifs and motif clusters in the works of the early modern conteuses. The Italian tale indeed constitutes a chain of transmission that begins no later than in the mid-sixteenth-century and concludes with the French writers of the 1690's. Together, they form a historical frame in which the parameters of the early modern literary fairy tale were set, and within that frame there was an institutionalization of what we now call fairy tale character, motifs and plots (Zipes, "Cross-Cultural Connections" 854).

¹² See Jacques Berlioz, Claude Bremond, and Catherine Velay-Vallantin, ed., Formes médiévales du conte merveilleux (Editions Stock: Paris, 1989).

YEARS PRIOR TO STRAPAROLA AND BASILE

In his 1998 article on “Myth and Text in the Middle Ages,” Philippe Walter notes that medieval authors were known not for writing original works, but for embellishing material and making it more era-appropriate for their readers. In the same article, Walter adds: “It is indeed well-known that in medieval times, the work of literature did not consist in inventing *ex nihilo* a beautiful, “original” story but rather in embellishing or adapting a narrative that was more or less known to its intended audience” (P. Walter 66). This statement is equally adaptable to the way many of the European literary fairy tales ultimately came about, with authors also using earlier oral or written material to form the basis of their tales.

Certain specific tales did appear early on in literary history. Frequently considered the first appearance of a major literary fairy tale, “Cupid and Psyche”, written in Latin and included in Apuleius’ book, *The Golden Ass*, appeared during the second century AD. However, the question remains of what country can lay claim to the first *collection* of literary fairy tales as such. Although French and German tales are probably the most well known among casual Western readers, the general consensus among scholars is that Italian tales garnered from the oral tradition were recorded as literary publications well before those of any other Western country (Canepa, *Out of the Woods* 10). Jack Zipes specifically noted that Italy was ripe for this type of literary development due to its position as a center of commerce and trade, and because of an increased literacy and a high level of cultural activity during the sixteenth-century (*When Dreams Came True* 10). Many Italian cities had a pivotal role in international commerce by facilitating

contacts, mercantile and cultural, with other geographical areas, especially the Middle East, which had rich and highly developed narrative traditions (Canepa, *From Court to Forest* 16). With time, Italian tale-tellers of the sixteenth-and seventeenth-centuries became an integral part of the creation of the fairy-tale tradition in France, just as the French tale writers influenced the German, Czech, and British traditions of the eighteenth-and nineteenth-centuries (Trinquet, “Literary Origins” 46).

The literary fairy tale thus first appeared in sixteenth-century Italy, although as a narrative form, the tale itself was, of course, anything but new. Oral tales had left traces in works ranging from Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* to medieval romances to Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. Zipes has thus summarized the uses to which oral tales were put in the period immediately preceding the re-creation of the fairy tale as a literary genre:

Folk tales were told by non-literate peasants among themselves at the hearth, in spinning rooms, or in the fields. They were told by priests in the vernacular as part of their sermons to reach out to the peasantry. Literate merchants and travelers transmitted them to people of all classes in inns and taverns. They were told to children of the upper-class by nurses and governesses. They were remembered and passed on in different forms and versions by all members of society and told to suit particular occasions – *as* talk. (*Beauties* 1-2)

Going even further back in literary history, and predating even the *Decameron* in publication, *Il Novellino*, or *Cento novelle antiche*, is considered the original and most successful Italian example of prose literature. (In the sixteenth-century, Giovanni Della

Casa referred to this collection of tales as the *Novellino* because he considered it the younger brother of the *Decameron*.) It contains the most ancient prose produced in the Italian language. Written in the late thirteenth century in Florence and published in 1525, it contains one hundred tales roughly organized by theme, location or protagonist. The author is unknown, although it is felt that this work was written by several authors, all natives of Tuscany in the thirteenth century. Although a large number of stories are set in the court or in the presence of knights and barons, those dedicated to merchants and doctors, and representative of the middle class, are just as prevalent. The extent to which the different social classes are equally represented suggests that the succession of the stories is based on the unities of the various social groups (Segre, "Sull'ordine delle novelle nel *Novellino*," 129-39).

Incorporating narrative autonomy and direct speech proved to greatly influence Boccaccio, and cemented literary work as a crucial step in the development of the modern narrative (Brand and Pertile 35). Many scholars have jumped to the conclusion that the stories in *Il Novellino* are narrated for the sake of pure entertainment. In her recent article on *Il Novellino*, Franziska Meier notes that one can only speculate about the reasons which led to the need to reconsider the ways in which stories were told:

One reason may have been that towards the end of the 13th century, the perception of language and the consciousness of the actual potentials hidden within language shifted...Telling stories about courtesy to a mercantile audience in Florence meets the burgeoning desire of the communal elite to enrich their financial wealth and improve their social and cultural standing. By presenting a courteous code of

behavior that is focused on doing things with words, the *Novellino* is sensitive to the possibilities, if not of the chances, inherent in verbal acting. Thus, in the first Italian prose writing we can detect a shift from the simple intention of advocating a social code towards a more generalized reflection on the use of language and its implications. (4).

Closely following *Il Novellino*, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) produced the *Decameron*, written between 1350-1353. As a young man, he enrolled in the University of Naples as a student of canon law, and at the time, Naples was a truly cosmopolitan center with sailors, merchants and diplomats visiting from all corners of the earth. Naples was also a court city, full of affluent nobility who favored pageantry and parades (Musa and Bondanella xxii).

This frame narrative consists of one hundred tales, told over a period of ten days. The characters in the work have fled from Florence and the bubonic plague that had overtaken the city, and in order to pass the time, tell each other tales while hiding in the safety of a villa far away from Florence. In the *Decameron*, Boccaccio does not linger on local color or poetic description of geography; he also does not spend much time on the psychological analysis of his characters. Rather, he lets them talk and act and reveals their personalities through their actions:

In the preface in his recent book on the *Decameron*, Richard Kuhns noted that: Boccaccio's *Decameron* serves as a model for storytelling because his art realized the ways stories came to be heard; his book contains a theory of storytelling

within the stories themselves, showing the reader that a philosophy of the genre can be thought out in the process of telling. (xxii)

Kuhns goes on to state that storytelling itself is not only entertainment but an act of thinking through human conflicts and contradictions; storytelling is part of human culture, and it exists wherever human communities are situated. He further asserts that “When we hear *Decameron* stories we stand in their creative space, a place where cultural reality presents us with the gift of imaginative fiction” (Kuhns 7, 143). The *Decameron* is thus truly an artistic piece, which preserves Boccaccio’s era not by means of dull factual information, but rather fluid and interesting storytelling.¹³

Although Boccaccio himself did not write down oral fairy tales, Zipes points out the importance of his *Decameron* in establishing the model of a frame narrative where characters orally relate tales to each other, a model that influenced writers from the early Italian tale-writers to the later French writers such as d’Aulnoy (A. Duggan, *Salonnières* 296).

Franco Sacchetti (1335-1400) wrote tales as well, for the most part on subjects taken from Florentine history. He wrote sonnets, canzoni, madrigals, and other poems; his best-known works are however his *Novelle* (short stories). The *Trecentonovelle*, Sacchetti's masterpiece of *novella* writing, was planned as early as 1385, but the stories were written and gathered together between 1392 and 1397. There were originally 300 in number, but today only 258 remain in a sixteenth-century transcription, the rest having

¹³ For further reading see Aldo Scaglione "Storytelling, the Novella, and the Decameron." *The Western Pennsylvania Symposium on World Literatures, Selected Proceedings: 1974-1991, A Retrospective*. Eds. Carla E. Lucente and Albert C. Labriola, (Greensburg, PA: Eadmer, 1992) 1-24.

been lost. His book gives a life-like picture of Florentine society at the end of the 14th century (McGrady 6).

The subjects are almost always improper; but it is evident that Sacchetti collected all these anecdotes in order to draw from them his own conclusions and moral reflections, which are to be found at the end of every story.

The title makes the inevitable comparison with the 100 stories of the *Decameron* with which it does not aim to compete on a stylistic level, but which it assumes can be supplemented and updated in terms of narrative material. The stories were not fitted into a framework like the one found in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, but with the author present as the narrator, or occasionally as a character, the work is provided with a narrative unity. The humorous character stands out; and the speaking style is more simple and colloquial than Boccaccio's. Memory is what links the stories together and practical lessons are revealed thanks to a sturdy moral approach. The end result provides the reader with a lively depiction of Florence as it was at the end of the 14th century (Werner and Faldi 342).

Although not an Italian writer, it is important to insert here Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549) and her *Heptaméron*, published in 1558. Ostensibly modeled on the *Decameron*, the *Heptaméron* departs significantly from its predecessor by including lively discussions at the conclusion of each story. As soon as the storyteller has finished telling his or her tale with the appropriate moral, then the debate commences (Thysell 39). In her work on the *Heptaméron*, Pollie Bromilow highlighted the following quote from Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani: "La nouvelle, en effet, prétend représenter le monde vécu." Bromilow adds that Mathieu-Castellani's insistence on the world as it is lived

rather than the world as it is represented in ancient history stands out as one of the distinguishing features of female exemplarity in the *Heptaméron*.¹⁴

The *Heptaméron* belongs to the tradition of prose fiction where the narrative frame and its interlaced tales demonstrate a quid pro quo between the storytellers and those who listen to them. Later on, this would be the way that fairy tales were told in salons – members of the group took turns, often adding to and elaborating the tales that others had told (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time* 64).

Indeed, this seems to be the case for Mme. d'Aulnoy for instance. In her book on d'Aulnoy's tales, Anne Defrance quotes Raymonde Robert as saying:

Un groupe de personnes distinguées dont les noms et les caractères sont esquissés se trouvent rassemblées sous le prétexte le plus fréquent d'un séjour à la campagne; pour meubler leurs loisirs, elles s'occupent à raconter des histoires; parmi celles-ci se trouvent les contes de fées. (Robert, Le Conte de Fées littéraire 331)

Defrance adds that these elements are present in the writing of d'Aulnoy, with her fairy tales as contemporary versions of the stories of the *Heptaméron* or *Le piacevoli notti* (*Contes de Fées* 35).

Giovanni Sercambi (1348–1424) was an Italian novella writer and historian. He was a prominent man in Lucca, and had many acquaintances throughout northern Italy.

¹⁴ Pollie Bromilow, *Models of Women in Sixteenth-Century French Literature: Female Exemplarity in the Histoires Tragiques (1559) and the Heptaméron (1559)* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007) 59. For further discussion on tale-framing in the *Heptaméron*, see: Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, *La Conversation Conteuse: Les Nouvelles De Marguerite De Navarre* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992)

In 1399 he served as ambassador from Lucca to Florence. After the start of the fifteenth-century, Sercambi took part in numerous public activities, serving as ambassador to the Visconti family of Milan, and as a counselor under the governor of Lucca. At the time of his death in 1424, he was both a popular public servant and a rather wealthy man. As a result of his renown in public circles, his name may have been known even to foreign visitors traveling to Tuscany and Lombardy (Young 414).

It is not entirely certain when Sercambi composed *Il Novelliere*. It is believed to have been written during 1374 when plagues ravaged Lucca. In somewhat of an imitation of Boccaccio, *Il Novelliere* tells of a party of people who were supposed to flee from a plague and to go travelling about in different Italian cities, stopping here and there telling stories. Many of his *Novelle* borrow from popular genres such as fabliaux, anecdotes, oral poetry, and fairy tales (Ruthenberg 71). It seems almost certain that Sercambi was influenced by both oral and literary sources, making him familiar with a rich cultural tradition that exists in both forms.¹⁵ Due to his social position in Lucca, Sercambi was involved in both the political and cultural arena, and while he was firmly situated in the urban bourgeoisie, his *Novelle* provides a rich source for information relating to late medieval folk traditions in Tuscany (Di Scipio, "Literary Models" 120).

In his essay on Giovanni Sercambi, Giuseppe Di Scipio noted that:

The *Novelliere* displays an earthy characterization of people and places and a tendency towards the popular rather than the refined. Sercambi is in fact writing

¹⁵ See also Giuseppe Di Scipio's discussion of the folk tradition in relation to the literary tradition in his articles: "Giovanni Sercambi's novelle: Sources and Popular Traditions," *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy Tale Studies* 2:1 (1988 May): 25-36; and "Giovanni Sercambi's Tale XXXVIII: De Superbia et Pauco Bene," *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy Tale Studies* 2.2 (1988 Dec.): 128-134.

for the city bourgeoisies – the low and middle ones – of which he himself was an integral part as an apothecary, book merchant and politician reflecting the political passion of Trecento, Italy. His audience is mirrored in the text itself, through the types of travelers engaged in this tour of Italy. This *brigata* of travelers which functions as a mercantile company has as a leader: “*uno eccellentissimo omo e gran ricco nomato Alulzi.*” When he addresses the group he reveals that it is made of people from every walk of life. (“Literary Models 122)

For all of these authors, using the language of their audiences was of the utmost importance. Boccaccio wrote in Tuscan, Straparola made use of northern dialects, and Basile wrote in Neapolitan. In addition to the use of specific dialects or local languages, clarity and directness of both language and style were highly regarded in particular by Boccaccio and Straparola. Sacchetti for instance affirmed that his tales were easy to understand (*agevoli a intendere*). Similar concerns can be perceived in the French *Heptaméron*: its *porte-parole* had such concern for the authenticity of the stories and the fact that they should be told in a plain style easy to understand that she states that the beauty of rhetoric (*la beauté de la rhétorique*) should not be used lest it spoil the accuracy of the story (*la vérité de l’histoire*) (Gibaldi and Clements 24).

STRAPAROLA

As early as 1911, in his *History of Prose Fiction*, J.C. Dunlop noted that “Straparola is not one of the most esteemed novelists, but none of them are more curious

for illustrating the genealogy of fiction.” (Dunlop 207). Straparola indeed merits a significant place in literary history, because although earlier writers incorporated tales into their publications, he was the first European writer to publish a collection entirely devoted to fairy tales. Therefore, what today seems to be a rather commonplace occurrence, finding books on the shelf of a library or store that entirely consists of fairy tales written by a single author, was at the time a totally original and unique concept. While it would not be prudent to state that the published tale would never have occurred without Straparola (and Basile), it would however be safe to say that their tremendous influence guided the literary fairy tale towards the genre that is familiar to readers in the modern era, in part because its insertion in a collection, rather than standing alone, is a characteristic of the fairy tale genre.

Straparola is also an interesting figure because there is very little documented information about his life. His fame ultimately relies upon one work: *Le piacevoli notti* or *The Facetious Nights*, published in the early 1550's. The dates of his birth and death are unclear, and the timeline of his life has been built around the publication dates of his works. No one knows how he may have made his living or who he might really have been.

It is thought that Straparola was born about 1480 in Caravaggio, (but with no existing records documenting this fact), and his surname, which translates as “loquacious one”, may have been a pseudonym, therefore further making it difficult to gather information about his life (Waters 869). He is believed to have spent most of his life in Venice, and as Venice was a thriving and wealthy port city during his time, it is no surprise that he heard stories that belonged to cultures from all over Europe and beyond.

(Zipes, “Cross-Cultural Connections” 852). Straparola has the distinction of originating the literary fairy tale in his *Le piacevoli notti*, a framed tale similar to Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In fact, it was more than likely due to the positive reception of the *Decameron* that Straparola moved ahead with his collection of stories. Published between 1550 and 1553, Straparola's work recounts how a bishop retreats away from his political opponents to a small island, where he and his entourage entertain themselves by telling stories. His references to other literary works and understanding of literary forms, as well as his knowledge of Latin and other dialects, indicate that he was well versed in the humanities (Zipes, “Cross-Cultural Connections” 853)

Straparola could not escape from his detractors however, for there were some who accused him of plagiarizing his tales, so much so that in subsequent editions, Straparola added an introduction admitting that the stories were not his own, but rather a faithful transcript of what he heard from the ten damsels who actually make up part of his story, with his own adjustments added as he wrote (Waters 870).

Le piacevoli notti was popular among Italians for several reasons. In using polite and proper Italian in the framed narrative of the story, Straparola provided a neat balance to the plainer language that was a natural fit for the obscene riddles and magical happenings depicted within the tales themselves. The censors of the time made Straparola delete elements that were critical of the Church, although they did allow him to retain some of the cruder pieces that made the book so popular with his readers. Straparola was the first truly gifted author to write a collection of fairy tales in the vernacular and at the same time he cultivated an audience for this kind of narrative which made it acceptable

reading material among the educated classes in Italy and shortly after in France, Germany, and England (Canepa, *Out of the Woods* 177).

BASILE

Straparola was not the only writer whose works came into contact with the French literary elite. In contrast to Straparola, we know a great deal about Giambattista Basile. Born in a small village near Naples, he came from a middle class family and in 1603 left Naples and traveled north, eventually settling in Venice. Although he published other works, his fame today is due to his astounding collection of fifty fairy tales written in the Neapolitan dialect, *Lo cunto de li cunti*, (1634-36) also known as the *Pentamerone*, published posthumously (by his sister), which “can lay claim to being the foundation stone of the modern literary fairy tale” (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 148). Basile’s collection of tales received the nickname *Pentamerone* due to its structural resemblance to Boccaccio’s famous work (Magnanini, “Foins and Fakes” 168). It includes among its stories some of the earliest European literary versions of many well-known fairy tales, including “Sleeping Beauty” (a prototype of which can actually be found in the French medieval romance *Perceforest*) and *Rapunzel* (Zago 69). Despite its original title, the collection was probably intended for courtly audiences rather than for children. Basile’s tales are more sophisticated than later fairy tales, and also reflect more adult concerns – and areas, in this sense, they are more similar to the work of Boccaccio than to the stories of Perrault for example. In addition to influencing the French, even Basile's work may also owe something to Straparola. There is no clear proof that Basile knew Straparola’s

tales, but it is more than likely that he was acquainted with them in some form, especially since he spent three years in Venice, which was where Straparola's tales were published.

However important Straparola might have been for Basile's conception of fairy tales, he could not compete with Basile's creative imagination. Unlike the narratives by Boccaccio and Straparola, Basile's stories were entirely fairy tales and were told by lower-class figures. Basile commented on the social issues of the time, and was discouraged by the corruption in the courts that he served. He had a great affection for the country folk he enjoyed writing about (Zipes, "Cross-Cultural Connections" 856). Perhaps fittingly for the more adult audience, his tales less often match "happily ever after" ideals.

The *Pentamerone* consists of fifty tales within a frame story (actually forty-nine – the fiftieth is the frame tale itself), in which a magic doll causes the queen to develop a craving for stories, which can only be satiated by bringing together the ten best storytellers of the area to tell stories for five days. According to Marina Warner, the storytellers "are each and every one an old hag, hunchbacked, cross-eyed, dribbling, and limping, comic crones, conforming to the type of gossip, old wife, witch, and bawd" (*Beast to the Blonde* 149).

Unlike many sixteenth-century authors who closely followed the Boccaccio model, Basile created a baroque text demonstrating linguistic experimentation and playful rebellion against the constraints of the waning novella tradition. The catalyst for storytelling is not, as in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, a desire to forget the devastation wrought by the plague, but rather a black slave named Lucia who through trickery has usurped Princess Zoza's rightful place as Prince Tadeo's bride. In her recent dissertation

on Basile, Carmela Scala notes that an exceptional innovation of *Lo cunto* is the presence of the Moorish slave, as one of the main protagonists of the collection. She sees Lucia as an intricate figure who exists between the two worlds of reality and fairy-tale. From a historical point of view, she represents the many slaves who lived in Naples during Basile's time; and in the fairy tale world she replaces the enemy represented by the evil mother-in-law or step-mother (Scala 34).

One of Basile's contributions to the development of fairy tales was indeed the use of lower-class narrators, particularly women, which is consistent with the common, but rather mistaken conception of where these tales come from. Because old crones are frequently considered to be the ultimate fairy-tale narrators, their presence in *Lo cunto* might not seem very remarkable. For Basile's readers, however, the ten hags represented a parody of the young and eloquent Florentines found in the pages of the *Decameron* (Magnanini, "Foils and Fakes" 169).

WRITING STYLES

The material for Basile's fairy tales was not original, nor was his attention to popular and folk traditions. In her introduction to a recent translation of *Lo Cunto*, Nancy Canepa makes the bold statement that "The *Tale of Tales* is one of the first expressions of a nascent genre in which Basile's brilliant but nearly solitary example would have its greatest influence outside of Italy" (13). While the narrative structure (the plots) of Basile's tales usually remains fairly faithful to conventional folkloric motifs, his descriptions of characters and their environments, in particular, are wildly embellished.

(Canepa, *From Court to Forest* 14). Full of flowery metaphors, hyperboles, synonyms and metamorphoses, Basile's *Lo Cunto* exudes the pleasures of storytelling (Haller 253). Thus, in "L'orza" (an early relative of "Peau d'âne" by Perrault and "Peau d'ours" by Murat), Basile describes the king's emotions immediately after his wife has instructed him to marry again after her imminent death:

Ch'io voglia sapere chiù de mogliere, nanze me schiaffa gotta, nanze sia fatto comm'a starace¹⁶. Bene mio, scordatello, non credere a suonne ch'io pozza mettere ammore ad outra femmena! Tu fuste la ncignatura de l'affezione mia, tut e ne portarraie le stracce de le boglie meie.

(Sooner than take another wife, may the gout lay hold of me; may I have my head cut off like a mackerel! My dearest love, drive such a thought from your mind; do not believe in dreams, or that I could love any other woman; you were the first new coat of my love, and you shall carry away with you the last rags of my affection.)

Basile's style is noticeable immediately. Even relatively simple events elicit unusual terms to describe them, for example, the woods where Petrosinella is sequestered were "dove non trasevano mai li cavalle de lo Sole pe n'essere affedate a li pascole de chell'ombre mettennola drinto a na torre che fece mascere ped arte" (never entered by the horses of the Sun, for they had no grazing rights in those shadowy pastures), and the dawn that greets a new day is described as: "'nante che lo Sole 'mezzasse *li cavall suoie*

¹⁶ A *starace* is a type of fish, which is eaten with its head cut off.

a saltare pe lo chirchio de lo Zodiaco...”, (The next morning, before the Sun taught his steeds to leap through the hoop of the Zodiac...).

Some of the art forms of the latter half of the sixteenth and seventeenth century are characterized as “baroque”. The use of this term may indicate something exaggerated, perhaps even bizarre, and distorted. In literature, however, baroque is a rich and complex aesthetic category which implies a frenetic search for new means of expression at the risk of distorting language in its syntax and imagery (Bondanella 32). Baroque literature was unprecedented in the richness of its subject matter as well as with its stylistic experimentation. Paolo Cherchi notes that

Baroque writing brought to a critical point some fundamental tenets of Renaissance epistemology: truth is not just the equation of man with nature or of the mind with things, but of the mind with the mind itself. The result was one of liberation and frustration at the same time, because it brought about a divorce between life and literature. (301)

Canepa observes that the Baroque was synonymous with artistic and moral aberration and that *Lo Cunto de li cunti* was considered the most significant expression of the Italian Baroque (“Introduction” 16). By its nature, baroque literature was cosmopolitan and a spontaneous expression of a state of mind and attitude towards the world which worked its way through seventeenth-century Europe. In general, the baroque imagination was unique in that it created an illusory reality more opulent and splendid than could be found in the ordinary world (Skrine viii).

Fairy tales have always been concerned with the topics of sex roles and social class. The Italian writers were keen observers of the civilization process of their times and it broke down due to family conflict and wars. The genre of the tale offered them a mode of writing where they could voice their concerns on the deformation of the civilizing process. Of Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti*, Michele Rak notes that: "The work of the Baroque links in the tradition of the European story that stems from the medieval vigils around the hearth to the fairy tales of the French salon of the seventeenth century" ("Il Sisemta" 13). Because conditions in Italy were not yet prepared for the institutionalization of the fairy tale, the works of Straparola and Basile could only take hold at the end of the seventeenth century in France (Zipes, *Art of Subversion* 22).

A simple definition of metaphor is "a figurative expression, in which a word or phrase is shifted from its normal use to a context where it evokes new meanings" (Preminger 760). Specifically, such a use of the baroque metaphor, as observed by Frank Warnke, produces the end result of "not so much the imitation of the phenomenal world, as the imaginative modification of it" (Warnke 19). Additionally, Giuseppe Conte states that, "From the novelty of the ingenious coupling, (in which the metaphor resolves itself) is born marvel, and it is this marvelous effect on the reader that is the most coveted aspect of metaphor" (Conte 95). In the case of Basile, he distinguishes himself through the use of creative, baroque metaphor, by inserting them into the traditional styling of the fairy tale, giving the structure a more playful appearance (Canepa, *From Court to Forest* 19).

It is by this baroque styling that the conteuses were heavily influenced. The aristocratic d'Aulnoy's baroque writing amplifies the stirrings of personal autonomy and the social imperatives of court and salon (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 162). In

d'Aulnoy's tale, "Finette Cendron" for instance, the heroine discovers: "...une maison si belle, si belle que je ne saurai jamais assez le dire. Les murs en sont d'émeraude et de rubis, le toit de diamants, elle est toute couverte de sonnettes d'or." This typically baroque literary description can be found in tales from Basile and subsequently in many of the literary fairy tales from the late seventeenth century (Trinquet, "On the Literary Origins of Folkloric Fairy Tales" 41). Given her skill as a writer of historical romance, it is not surprising that she borrowed from the tradition of the novel and novella to write her stories, whose length and baroque detail set them apart from the more succinct tales of Perrault (A. Duggan, "Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy" 81).

Later in the story, when Finette is about to eliminate the ogress, the heroine uses the giant's vanity against her so as to trick her to her death. While proposing to make the giant beautiful so that she can find another husband nicer than the one she just lost, d'Aulnoy's Finette begins combing the ogress's hair but then substitutes an axe for the comb and beheads her. The sequence is a propitiatory rite often used in Basile's tales, as, for instance, in "Le Tre Fate". It usually involves a fairy's head, and the success of the hairdressing determines the amount of help the fairy will give to the seeker (Trinquet, *La petite histoire* 135).

Basile drew on an abundance of literary and historical sources to create his frequently hilarious tales. He deliberately chose to write his fairy tales in Neapolitan, and not Italian, and as a result, every tale is colored with such a wealth of local flavor that it becomes a treasure trove of information about social and cultural practices of his time (Canepa, *From Court to Forest* 69). His command of Neapolitan was exceptional, and he

was accomplished in both the vernacular and an elevated form of dialect (Magnanini, *Fairy Tale Science* 18).

Neapolitan prose first appeared during the Renaissance, but it made its strongest appearance in the genre of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fairy tale, with Basile's *Lo Cunto* as the most original prose masterpiece published in the canon. As linguist Hermann Haller stated:

What language better than Neapolitan could bring to life all of Basile's literary and popular imaginations, imitate the street life observed in the bustling city, and provoke the immediacy of laughter? Basile could rely on a language that had prestige... The Neapolitan dialect lent itself for Baroque expressionism and the play with words, and for innovating a tradition removed from what must have been perceived as the highly artificial "*lingua Toscana*." (55-56)

By using Neapolitan to recreate his tales, Basile imitated the act of oral tale-telling, and at the same time showed his allegiance to the oral culture that fed and enriched these tales. It was a self-conscious choice to use this dialect, for "the use of a language is the use of a culture" (Rak, *Lo Cunto de li cunti* 22), and "this use of the dialect was an ideal vehicle of expression for the poetics of the marvelous" (Canepa, "Entertainment for the Little Ones" 44). Interestingly enough, those who wrote using a dialect had a greater freedom to criticize the social institutions of their era than the authors who already had a permanent place in the literary establishment, and for whom a poor reputation could also be much more damaging (Canepa, *From Court to Forest* 69).

This is quite in opposition to the French writers, who wrote only in the strictest French in spite of the fact that they used their writing to engage in their subtle yet critical satire of the monarchy.

Straparola and Basile actually set examples for the French tale-writers by focusing their energy on discussing cultural conflicts in their stories. Their ideological perspectives and narrative strategies varied in light of the social and political problems depicted in their tales. This encouraged the conteuses to realize that their tales could similarly serve the same purpose. Their stories could be adapted and used to voice their opinions on civilité at the end of the seventeenth century when Louis XIV's reign was in crisis. The French saw the vast potential of the tale and were able to use the form of the fairy tale to their advantage – to comment on the French civilizing process from their critical point of view (Zipes, *Subversion* 27).

Although dialect literature had existed for several centuries, only now could a published work rival the “Italian” tradition in terms of artistic complexity, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Basile (Canepa, “Entertainment for the Little Ones” 43). Ironically, the *Pentamerone* did not immediately find a wide audience, primarily *because* it was written in the Neapolitan dialect rather than the more literary and prestigious language of northern Italy. A comparison of the publication histories of Basile and Straparola shows that, whereas *Le piacevoli notti* enjoyed approximately twenty reprintings in Italy in the fifty years following the first edition, the *Pentamerone* had only six complete reprintings during the seventeenth century after its posthumous publication in Naples in 1634–1636 (Penzer 171). The first modern, integral and annotated translation of Basile's masterpiece was issued in Italy only in 1925 by Benedetto Croce,

who held Basile in the highest esteem and considered *Lo cunto* a masterpiece that illuminated the Baroque period (Scala 11).

Those who have studied Basile believe that one possible reason for the lack of success of *Lo Cunto* is its quarrelsome attitude towards court society. In reading *Lo Cunto* as a harsh critique of society when Basile lived, this most likely negatively affected the way that individuals reacted to the work, at least in the seventeenth century. It is a combination of the Baroque style and exceptional use of the Neapolitan language that makes *Lo Cunto* such a unique masterpiece (Scala 12).

THE PRESENCE OF STRAPAROLA AND BASILE IN FRANCE

Straparola and Basile's efforts paved the road for other developments of the fairy tale in following years. Although the French writers wrote tales which today are viewed by the general public as the "European Classics" of the genre, they had illustrious forefathers in Straparola and Basile, who founded the literary model for this reborn genre, even if it was a model that would, over the centuries, be more admired than imitated (Canepa, *From Court to Forest* 22). It is with this in mind that we now look at the next step in fairy tale development, namely how Straparola's and Basile's works made their way into other parts of Europe, eventually landing in the hands of the French writers of the first wave of fairy tales beginning in 1690.

The significance of Straparola and Basile's tales in the development of the literary fairy tale in Europe is borne out by the fact that their tales circulated throughout Europe and had a considerable influence among educated writers. Indeed, at least thirty-two of

the thirty-eight fairy tales appearing in the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century had already been published in Italy by Straparola or Basile in the sixteenth-century and the early part of the seventeenth century (Trinquet, “Literary Origins” 45).

Historical evidence leans towards actual printed material as the precise transmission route of fairy tales from their documented beginnings in northern Italy to their appearance in France, where Straparola’s stories were far more widely read than has been acknowledged (Bottigheimer, “France’s First Fairy Tales” 20).

The trail that the Italian tales took to travel from Italy to France is a complex one. There is a network of printers and clients that allowed these tales to be published in France and thus available to the French fairy tale writers. Antonio Bulifon, a Frenchman transplanted to Naples, operated a printing shop and bookstore where he produced a wide variety of genres: history, lyric poetry, legal translations, etc, in both French and Italian. He specialized in publishing texts related to Naples and Neapolitan culture and one of the first works he printed was Basile’s *Lo cunto de li cunti*. Bulifon continued his printing business for over thirty years during which time he became a respectable figure in the world of printing. This privileged position occupied by Bulifon’s press and bookstore ensured that Basile’s work would travel abroad (Magnanini, “Postulated Routes” 81).

Bulifon transformed his bookshop into a hub where information flowed freely in and out of the city. Customers traveling to Naples regularly stopped in his store. Once satisfied travelers returned home, they continued to order from Bulifon’s shop. One such customer was Jean Mabillon, a Benedictine monk who had the official mission of purchasing books and manuscripts for the French royal library. In his travels to Naples, he was escorted through the city by Bulifon, who sold Mabillon the majority of books

that he acquired in the city. Although there is no official list of books that were purchased by Mabillon, it is highly likely that one or more copies of Basile's fairy tales traveled to France in one of the many crates shipped to Paris by Mabillon (Magnanini "Postulated Routes" 87).

Suzanne Magnanini concludes her fascinating article with the possible paths that Basile's tales could have taken to reach the French fairy tale writers. She does clearly state there are further possibilities, but that the theories she develops are the most highly likely.

First she states that *Lo cunto de li cunti* made its way to the king's library and that one could have had access to it in the Académie Française. Secondly, Mabillon's own connections in Paris could have delivered Basile's fairy tales to writers. Finally, Magnanini postulates that Bulifon himself could have sold copies of *Lo cunto de li cunti* in France. In 1687 he undertook his own journey – but to sell rather than to do research, and while in Paris he could have easily used Mabillon as a contact with whom he could do business (Magnanini, "Postulated Routes" 88).

The likelihood is that Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti* was most definitely present in Paris. Therefore, who had direct access to Basile's *Cunto*? Ruth Bottigheimer has the following answer:

...the conclusion that writers like Perrault and thus the conteuses had a copy of it encourages an exploration of undocumented literary relationships...the use of registry and publishing dates provides a starting point, but motifs and plot elements buried in Basile's work have the potential to confirm a given Parisian

author's direct acquaintance with and use of Basile's text, or of a knowledge of Basilan material mediated through the introduction of Basilian tale elements into French. ("A new history" 69)

Bottigheimer adds that if the pieces of indirect evidence are not convincing enough to solidify either the presence of Basile's book or the knowledge of its content in 1690's Paris, there is, in contrast, the evidence provided by the selection of the title by Mlle de la Force for her collection of tales *Les Contes des contes*, which is almost an exact translation of Basile's title. De la Force also reworked a Basilian tale, "Petrosinella", to produce her version of the Rapunzel prototype – "Persinette". Textual examinations directed towards understanding who among the conteuses had direct access to Basile's *Lo Cunto de li cunti* also illuminate working literary relationships between writers of the era and at the same time assist in mapping functional book-borrowing and book-sharing friendships in late 1690's Paris (Bottigheimer, "New History" 69).

There is also some evidence as to the path Straparola's works took to reach France. Although the details of Straparola's life are fairly sketchy, it is clear that his *Piacevoli notti* was enormously successful: it was reprinted 25 times from 1553 to 1613 and translated into French in 1560 and 1580 (Zipes, "Cross Cultural Connection" 853). Straparola's stories outnumbered the quantity of printings of every other story collection in France between 1560 and 1615, a conclusion based on the number of reprintings of story collections translated into or composed in French in the sixteenth-and seventeenth-centuries, as tabulated from the holdings in France's depository library, the Bibliothèque Nationale (Bottigheimer, "Reply." 280-281).

In translating Straparola's work into French, Jean Louveau was extremely faithful to the original Italian. Little is known about Louveau. He was considered an active translator in the 1550's and 60's, translating Apuleius and assorted Italian authors (Gaisser 279). Louveau's translation, *Les Facétieuses Nuits* was reprinted once in 1572 and twice in 1573. Pierre Larivey (1541-1619),¹⁷ a dramatist and translator known for his use of lively dialogue and wicked humor in his adaptations of Italian comedies,¹⁸ took hold of *Le piacevoli notti* and published his translation in 1576, and the success of that version resulted in republication three times during the following year. The success of his translation then led Larivey to rework Louveau's effort, and to publish a new version of the tale in 1580. Larivey not only translated Straparola's work, but took some liberties with the translation and even tampered with the original Italian, particularly within some of the comic riddles told in the tales. The steady rate of publication meant that there was an abundance of copies available for the public to enjoy, and also helps to demonstrate how *Les Facétieuses Nuits* would have found their way into the hands of d'Aulnoy and the other French women in one form or another (De Filippis 138).

The French translation of Straparola's *Le piacevoli notti* thus marked one of the first appearances in France of the most popular kinds of fairy tales. Although earlier, large tale collections containing *some* fairy tale elements did exist before Straparola's, (Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is considered an example¹⁹), it was only when *Les*

¹⁷ French writer Ch -M. des Granges considered Larivey to be the most remarkable comic writer of sixteenth-century France in his work: *Histoire de la Littérature Française*. Paris: Librairie Hatier, 1920, 266.

¹⁸ See Yvonne Bellenger, dir. *P. de Larivey 1541-1619, Champenois, chanoine, traducteur, auteur de comédies et astrologue* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1993).

¹⁹ See Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2000)

Facétieuses Nuits was published in France that written fairy tales started to become part of the French tradition (Bottigheimer, “France’s First Fairy Tales” 25).

In her extensive study on Straparola, Ruth Bottigheimer puts forth the following concern:

Positing a tale by Straparola as a direct source for a tale by d’Aulnoy, for example, deepens our awareness of d’Aulnoy’s editing concerns. It enables a researcher to identify and characterize d’Aulnoy’s additions and deletions, to analyze what she herself contributed to a tale’s construction. In reworking a tale like Straparola’s *Livoret*, for instance, she was far more intrusive than Perrault was when he adapted Straparola’s *Constantin fortuné*. Comparative studies based on Straparolean precursors have the potential to illuminate the writings of the conteuses and the conteurs in ways that have not yet been explored. (“France’s First Fairy Tales” 26)

In 1911, Dunlop observed that, “Straparola’s work seems to have been a perfect storehouse for future Italian novelists, and the French authors of fairy and Oriental tales” (207). More recently, Bottigheimer has stated that both content and lexical analysis show that L’Héritier and Perrault searched through Straparola’s and Basile’s texts looking for plots, and then added and combined motifs and images they found in yet other Straparolean and Basilean tales. She additionally noted that a careful reading of Perrault’s “Peau d’Ane” reveals close similarities to Straparola’s “Tebaldo” and Basile’s “L’orsa” (Bottigheimer, “Reply” 280). Throughout her years of extensive research,

Bottigheimer remains adamant in her belief that both Italian writers unquestionably influenced the French fairy tale writers:

But if those (aristocratic) women told *fairy* tales, they could only have used tales from Straparola, because before L'Héritier and Perrault began dipping into Basile, Straparola's were the only fairy tales available. (Other widely available brief narratives then included chivalric romances, moral tales (i.e., "Griselidis"), saints' lives, and Bible stories.) If bourgeois and aristocratic women had a folk source for fairy tales, then where is the evidence? ("Reply" 280-281)

Bottigheimer may be unwavering in her belief in the path to the French works, but she is not the only scholar who has come to this conclusion. In reviewing Jean Mainil's book on Mme. D'Aulnoy, Anne Duggan made the following observation: "It is clear that d'Aulnoy was inspired by the works of Italian writers like Basile and Straparola, whose female protagonists are much more enterprising than the passive heroines of Perrault, and whose works arguably were constitutive of the seventeenth-century French fairy corpus" (Mainil 168). Subsequently, in her article which discusses L'Héritier's objective of modernizing fairy tales by making them more appealing and concrete to her contemporaries, Sophie Reynard noted that L'Héritier "incorporated ideal characteristics such as pure love and noble heroes, which were notably absent from the Basilean stories she borrowed" (94). While d'Aulnoy and others may have copied Basile and Straparola, sometimes almost word for word, the Italians' tales came through oral transmission themselves. This means, first, that the oral tradition did wind its way, albeit indirectly,

into the literary French women's tales, and secondly, that, unless one wants to deny that there was an oral tradition in the seventeenth century, there was likely going to be a reinforcement of the oral element by the existence of oral tales of the same type circulating in France as the conteuses were writing, and that the women likely did not ignore these tales. Although this line of thought is highly possible, it still remains a mere hypothesis, while the indirect folk tradition at work in the fairy tales is likely Italian, not French, and while these traditions have similarities, one cannot assume that they are identical.

Looking at the table of contents of *Les Facétieuses Nuits*, one can easily recognize familiar words in the titles of the conteuses' tales themselves. In fact, an even closer look will solidify the compelling argument that the French writers were directly influenced by the Italian tale-tellers. One could argue that there is a difference between being influenced by and "pilfering" from another writer. Mme. d'Aulnoy's shuffling of motifs is a trait that suggests that she did not follow the simplicity of oral tradition. Part of her artistry stems from the original manner in which she fuses different motifs together (Mitchell 65).

I would argue that despite the similarities in the titles and works of the conteuses, there are enough unique touches that make the women authors in their own right, and not plagiarizers, as they might be considered in contemporary times. With titles like "Il re porco", "Biancabella e la biscia", "Florio e Dorotheo", and "Fortunio", one can clearly see the progression of how collections of fairy tales would soon be developed into stories by d'Aulnoy and the other French women. "Le Roy porc", "Le Serpentin vert", and "Fortunée" are indeed only some of the titles found in their publications.

Further, when one compares d'Aulnoy's tales with the Italian literary tradition, it is clear that many of her motifs, along with a relatively significant number of plots, had already been seen in the tales by Straparola, and in particular in those by Basile. The connection between the French and Italian traditions does somewhat negate the notion that d'Aulnoy and her friends searched for the plots of their tales among the French peasants (Trinquet, "Literary Origins" 34). This is not to negate the argument that the conteuses were creative in their own right, it is simply to say that they took what was best from the Italians, and wove their own touch and unique ideas into some familiar plots and stories. There are likely more tales that are unique rather than direct copies of Straparola and Basile.

For instance, in the *Pentamerone*, which tells the story of Princess Zoza, the princess wishes to speak with Prince Tadeo, who has married Lucia, a slave girl who has taken the place of Zoza. So that she may approach the prince, Zoza offers Lucia three presents that come out of a hazelnut, a walnut and a chestnut. In one of d'Aulnoy's more popular stories, "La Chatte blanche", when the prince asks Chatte blanche to provide him with a magnificent dog to bring back to the king, Chatte blanche presents him with an acorn, which contains the tiniest, most amazing dog anyone had ever seen. Later in the same story, the prince is asked to find the most beautiful piece of muslin in the world. Chatte Blanche gives him a walnut to take back to the palace. When the prince arrives, he cracks open the walnut, only to find a hazelnut, then a cherry stone, then a grain of wheat and finally a millet seed. It is only when he gently breaks open the millet seed that he finds the magical material he was looking for in the first place.

An almost identical motif is found in d'Aulnoy's "L'Oiseau bleu", where objects

(such as a miniature coach drawn by a pink rat) similarly emerge from four eggs, one of which contains a miniature coach driven by four green mice, with a pink rat as coachman (which in turn sounds like elements commonly found in the Cinderella tale types).

Although these motifs may appear as well in folktales in the oral tradition, it is certainly a strong possibility that d'Aulnoy read and was influenced by those found in the *Pentamerone*.

Many of the conteuses altered the functions and motifs of the oral tradition to represent courtly interests of the time. This is not to say that there was a prescribed manner in which the women were to reflect the court to itself or the upper classes to themselves. However, it was expected that d'Aulnoy and her contemporaries would speak about the interests of the aristocracy in their work, and whether this was done in a critical or non-critical fashion, the goal was to make the tales both enjoyable and entertaining (Zipes, "Changing Function" 14).

Mme. d'Aulnoy was not the only woman influenced by the Italian tradition. Mme. de Murat's *Les Lutins du château de Kernosy* (1710), for example, presents three fairy tales embedded within the story of a house party in Brittany. Over the course of several nights, the guests engage in spirited conversation, tell a story, or criticize someone else's tale. This frame narrative reminds readers that fairy tales were a social as well as literary phenomenon (E. Welch 504), and is yet another example of the influence of the structure found in Straparola and Basile's collection of tales.

In fact, some of the conteuses made no secret of mentioning the printed, literary Italian ancestry of their tales. Murat in her *avertissement* to the reader of her *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* (1699) acknowledges that the influence for some of her work is

Straparola:

J'ai pris les idées de quelques-uns de ces Contes dans un Auteur ancien intitulé, *Les Facétieuses Nuits du Seigneur Straparole*, imprimé pour la seizième fois en 1615. Les Contes apparemment étaient bien en vogue dans le siècle passé, puis que l'on a fait tant d'impressions de ce livre. Les Dames qui ont écrit jusques ici en ce genre, ont puisé dans la même source au moins pour la plus grande partie. (Tucker and Siemens 130)

The passage is noteworthy for several reasons. Murat does not hide the fact that she took the outlines of most of her tales from another written source. Murat's "Le sauvage", "Le roy porc", and Le turbot also all come directly from Straparola's tales. For her tale "Le Sauvage", the plot closely follows Straparola's story about Constantine, the daughter of the king of Egypt who disguises herself as a man. This source is also the likely inspiration for d'Aulnoy's "Belle-Belle, ou le Chevalier Fortuné".

Murat also borrowed from Basile, although neither she nor any other French author openly claimed to have been influenced by him (Magnanini, "Postulated Routes" 79). One of her stories, "Peau d'ours", closely resembles Basile's "L'orza". In both tales, a young princess becomes a she-bear in order to escape a terrifying marriage. For Basile, it is a potentially incestuous relationship with her father, and for Murat, the transformation takes place so that the princess can escape from a hideous groom her parents have arranged for her to marry. In both versions, it is when the princess is

disguised as the she-bear that she meets her handsome prince whom she eventually marries.

Only recently has the trail of fairy tales in France been academically linked to its precursors in Italy, yet the link between the Italians and the French is clear. The Italian influence in France was much more profound than scholars may have originally suspected—or admitted--and there is an undeniable influence of the Italians on the French tale-writers. This is not to say that the conteuses did not create any original works of their own, only that they had illustrious forefathers in both Straparola and Basile, who pioneered the genre of the literary tale and who paved the way for future generations of tale-tellers.

Straparola's and Basile's collections preceded the early wave of the contes de fées in France and offered models that were to a certain extent followed in late seventeenth-century France. However, the contes de fées are not only different in style and temperament from their Italian antecedents, they also inaugurated many of the features that are now considered to be stereotypical of the fairy tale form (Seifert, "Subversion" 80-98).

From the evidence discussed above, it appears as though Straparola may have had a stronger influence on the women than Basile, particularly when looking at d'Aulnoy's stories. Far from copying the conteurs of the time, both the French men and women writers borrowed from the Italians and the influence of Straparola in particular on d'Aulnoy had to have impacted her style and choice of topics substantially. D'Aulnoy and the other French women took some of the best elements found in the Italian tales, and then proceeded to add their own touches to the stories, such as the highly detailed

decorative descriptions, the flowery language, and the strong female protagonists. As we shall see in the next chapter, they drew from the well of classical tradition in treating a major theme of the fairy tale—metamorphosis. Further chapters will demonstrate the common motivic elements throughout the women's tales, focusing on motifs that stress transformation through various forms of adornment and embellishment.

Chapter 3: –Mythological References and Metamorphosis

Classical writings were an important source of material for the conteuses in writing their tales. Tales, themes, motifs and references from antiquity have a significant presence in many of the conteuses' stories, raising the question of what prompted these inclusions. One factor is that, in deciding on different elements to utilize in their tales, women writers may have wanted to emphasize their educated background. A solid knowledge of classical literature and mythology would be necessary for the conteuses to seamlessly weave classical references into the plot of the fairy tales. The successful mingling of mythological names and elements within tale plots adds a certain level of erudition to these literary tales. As has been already discussed, the conteuses were highly influenced by the Italian tales that came a century before them, but in including classical and mythological elements, they raised the tale to yet another level.

MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCES

There are numerous instances where classical elements and mythology play a role in the conteuses' fairy tales, but this chapter will focus on how they treated metamorphosis. Yet, their use of mythological names and places within the tales cannot be minimized, because it provides the high-culture narrative context for their perspective on metamorphosis, which is informed by the incorporation of traditional fairy tale motifs, such as marriage to an animal bridegroom, or transformation as punishment for wrongdoing. While the theme of metamorphosis has long been present in literature, the

manner in which the conteuses depict the transformations and the frequency of their appearance in the tales is particularly interesting. Metamorphosis is one of their most frequent themes, and thus is viewed by the conteuses as a critical element to the plot of their stories.

Mythological and classical literary references of various types are also recurrent in many of the conteuses' tales. The conteuses' knowledge of erudite material made it possible for them to include such references in their tales, and it also provides further confirmation that the tales were written for an audience with similar education and knowledge that would appreciate and easily understand them.

At first, it would seem that these references are mere erudite touches destined to enhance the stories and raise them to a higher literary level. Yet, the mere fact that they have a steady presence throughout the tales makes them noteworthy and impels a closer look at which mythological names and places have been used. This closer look suggests that the conteuses may have indeed been attracted to the rich symbolism of these mythological fragments. Drawing from the well of myth and the imaginary to go beyond the immediacy of their context, they may have found even the darker side of the classical myths they alluded to particularly propitious to expressing their own complex view of the world, and inserted in their tales those motifs that spoke most clearly to the kind of women's literary culture they were part of.

Anne Defrance has a very specific viewpoint about the use of mythology in the tales:

La mythologie enrichit le symbole et y impulse une dynamique. On s'appliquera donc à montrer comment la référence à la mythologie s'effectue sur deux axes. Le premier est horizontal: c'est celui de récit et de l'histoire. La référence peut prendre également l'importance d'un segment. Tel est le cas lorsqu'un personnage mythologique fait irruption pour fournir son aide au héros. Le second axe sur lequel travaille la référence mythologique est un axe vertical. C'est celui du symbolique. Elle opère alors en des couches plus ou moins profondes. De même que le symbole a une structure "feuilletée", la référence mythologique peut être facilement déchiffrable: elle ne marque alors qu'une couche superficielle du texte. (219)

Defrance proceeds to explain that there are two kinds of mythological references. The first is vocabulary choice (what she refers to as "la moins originale"): "Pour Tritonne, elle peut rester vestale, sans que personne ne s'y oppose." Pure in style, this reference is simple. *Vestale* refers to the Vesta, the virgin goddess of the hearth and home. The use of the word does not have a motive or deep symbolism; it is simply a way of saying a young girl rather than a married woman. The second type of reference uses a name outright: "Elle ressemblait à Diane, qui se baigne au retour d'une chasse." Here it is the context in which the name is used that evokes a mythological reference (221-222), and it is this kind of element that will be discussed further on.

From her very first opus, d'Aulnoy often included figures from Greek mythology with symbolic or mythical themes from other traditions. For example, various personified mythological winds, particularly Zephyr, meet the medieval figure of Death

with his scythe in *Lîle de la félicité*. However, d'Aulnoy's heroines most often are equated with Venus, whether in direct references to the goddess, or by surrounding them with little amours or cupids.

In “La Chatte blanche”, the feline heroine provides the prince with an extremely lengthy and detailed account of how she ultimately came to be transformed into a white cat. In describing her voyage to her new home when she was just a baby, Chatte blanche says:

...enfin les fées parurent au nombre de trente-six, elles avaient prié leurs bonnes amies de venir avec elles, chacune était assise dans une coquille de perle plus grande que celle où Vénus était, lorsqu'elle sortit de la mer; des chevaux marins qui n'allaient guère bien sur terre...

Most of the references to Venus have to do with the quality to which she is most associated – her incomparable beauty. The heroines are frequently held up to her standards, and sometimes even surpass them. In “La Grenouille bienfaisante”, the queen is told that “...vous y aurez une princesse plus belle que Venus...” In “Gracieuse et Percinet”, once Gracieuse has been primped and impeccably dressed, it is noted that:

Elle s'habilla aussitôt d'une robe verte à fond d'or; elle laissa tomber ses blonds cheveux sur ses épaules, flottant au gré du vent, comme c'était la mode en ce temps-là; et elle mit sur sa tête une légère couronne de roses et de jasmins, dont

toutes les feuilles étaient d'émeraudes. En cet état, Vénus, mère des Amours, aurait été moins belle...

In “La Chatte blanche”, the heroine describes how the fairies arrive in great splendor to bring her home with them: “Enfin les fées parurent au nombre de trente-six, elles avaient prié leurs bonnes amies de venir avec elles, chacune était assise dans une coquille de perle plus grande que celle où Vénus était, lorsqu'elle sortit de la mer.” This description evokes the image of Venus found in classical paintings and frescoes. The most famous representation of Venus arising from the shell is Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1486), where she is shown standing *contrapposto* on an enormous shell, arising from the foam of the sea. According to Plato, Venus had two aspects: she was a goddess of the earth who aroused humans to physical love or she was a goddess in the heavens who encouraged intellectual love in them (Hunter 134-135).

Sometimes the references to Venus are not direct but rather implied. At one point in “Le Nain jaune”, a siren of extraordinary beauty emerges from the sea, holding a mirror in one hand and a comb in the other. This scene is reminiscent of paintings of Venus gazing at herself in a mirror held by Cupid, in the tradition of Titian and Rubens. Mermaids were seen in the decor of medieval churches, particularly those churches in the British Isles. They were also depicted with their mirror and comb, which attached to them the sins of pride and narcissistic self-beautification. The Church saw the mermaid as a symbol of vanity and lust, of sexual display, and seduction and temptation leading to damnation. Images of mermaids holding a fish or starfish were used to represent a

Christian soul that had been lost to the deadly sin of lust, and were placed in churches to warn churchgoers not to be seduced by such evils (Higgins 28).

While fairy tale women are often compared to Venus, the men are compared to Adonis. For instance, again in “La Chatte blanche”, the likening of the prince to Adonis stresses the importance of beauty in positive male characters as well. Before meeting the White Cat, the prince was “poudré, frisé, parfumé, paré, ajusté, et rendu plus beau qu'Adonis.”

Although the evocation of Venus has the strongest presence in the tales, there are other assorted mythological figures that are used to enhance the visualization of the heroines. Diana was the goddess of the moon and the hunt, and was also a symbol of chastity. D’Aulnoy very astutely compares her heroine in “L’Oranger et l’abeille” to the agile Roman goddess. In describing Aimée, who has taken up the personality and appearance of a huntress on the island she is forced to call home, d’Aulnoy writes:

Elle s'était fait un habit de peau de tigre; ses bras étaient demi-nus; elle portait un carquois et des flèches sur son épaule, un arc à sa ceinture; ses cheveux blonds n'étaient attachés qu'avec un cordon de jonc marin, et flottaient au gré du vent sur sa gorge et sur son dos : elle avait aussi des brodequins du même jonc: en cet équipage elle traversait les bois comme une seconde Diane.

D’Aulnoy evokes here the classical image of Diana/Artemis the huntress. In the comparison of Aimée to this goddess, both the context and the attire play a part. When Diana is shown (clothed) in works of art, she is dressed in a manner similar to Aimée’s

attire: hair tied back, sandals, and a quiver of arrows slung across her back.²⁰ Aimée is d'Aulnoy's version of the goddess, and the distinctive motifs in her description reveal a strong young woman who is able to fend for herself and survive in a strange land basing herself on her innate skill and ability.

Ironically, there is a similar paragraph in another of d'Aulnoy's stories; "La Grenouille bienfaisante". The words "une seconde Diane" are repeated verbatim, yet while the comparison is to the same goddess, the attire is completely different from what d'Aulnoy described in "L'Oranger et l'abeille". D'Aulnoy says that the queen: "...avait pris un habit très avantageux; sa capeline était couverte de plumes de différentes couleurs, sa veste toute garnie de pierreries et sa beauté, qui n'avait rien de commun, la faisait paraître une seconde Diane." The comparison between the queen and the goddess is at first understandable. In the tale, the paragraph preceding this quote discusses a hunt that the queen wishes to accompany in her own chariot, and how she regally presides over the proceedings. The comparison becomes less clear when d'Aulnoy describes the queen's attire in contrast to how the goddess is actually depicted. Diana is always shown dressed in a simple manner – with not much more than a plain, short, white toga. D'Aulnoy's heroine is the opposite – she is dressed ornately and exotically, covered in jewels and feathers. I think the key word in this passage is "seconde." D'Aulnoy is not saying that the queen is a carbon copy of Diana, but rather a new, modern Diana. It is not necessarily her attire that makes the queen resemble the goddess, but rather her regal presence during the hunt.

²⁰ See *Diana of Versailles* (sometimes known as *Artemis with a hind*), a statue located in the Musée du Louvre, Paris. It is a Roman copy (1st or 2nd century AD) of a lost Greek bronze original attributed to Leochares, c. 325 BC.

There is an additional mythological reference later in the same story. Throughout the tale, Aimée and her lover Aimé have transformed themselves into various objects in order to escape from the clutches of the evil ogres who have kept them as prisoners. Near the end of the story, Aimée has changed herself into a bee, and changes Aimé into an orange tree.²¹ A beautiful and wealthy young woman named Linda comes upon the tree and wants to pluck one of its blossoms, but the jealous bee keeps stinging her each time she approaches. One of Linda's ladies-in-waiting has the following advice for her: "Je suis d'avis, madame, que vous vous armiez comme une amazone; et qu'à l'exemple de Jason, lorsqu'il fut conquérir la Toison d'or, vous alliez courageusement prendre les plus belles fleurs de ce joli arbre." This sentence calls to mind two mythological figures when referring to one fairy tale character: the Amazons, who were a race of warrior women, and Jason, who led the crew of the Argonaut in discovering the Golden Fleece. Both the Amazons and Jason were known for their courage and prowess, and these are the characteristics that Linda is encouraged to embody. She agrees, and throws herself whole-heartedly into the role:

Linda trouva quelque chose de plaisant dans cette idée; et sur-le-champ elle se fit faire un casque couvert de plumes, une légère cuirasse, des gantelets; et au son des trompettes, des timbales, des fifres et des hautbois, elle entra dans son jardin, suivie de toutes ses dames, qui s'étaient armées à son exemple, et qui appelait cette fête, la guerre des mouches et des amazones.

²¹ Further discussion on the transformations will take place later in this chapter.

The great importance of this selection is both the appearance of Linda as an Amazon, and the situation that recalls Jason's adventure. The fact that d'Aulnoy compares a female character (Linda), to a male character (Jason); reinforces the concept of feminine power that is present throughout the story (Defrance 250-251). Both women dominate the passive Aimé in the tale. Aimée controls his transformations throughout their journey, and Linda dominates Aimé by her desire to remove one of his branches, which she successfully does.

Linda accepts the mythological suggestion, which propels the next portion of the story. She picks up her sword and cuts off a branch of the tree, thus (unknowingly) cutting off Aimé's finger in the process. According to legend, the Amazons mutilated male children at birth. The Freudian symbolism of cutting off a finger is equal to the act of castration, thus reinforcing Linda's appearance as the female warrior (Defrance 249-250).

Diana reappears in another of d'Aulnoy's tales. In "Le Nain jaune", there is a passage where the heroine is described as being clothed identically to the goddess of the hunt:

On la voyait presque toujours vêtue en Pallas ou en Diane, suivie des premières dames de la cour habillées en nymphes ; enfin, pour donner le dernier coup à sa vanité, la reine la nomma Toute-Belle ; et, l'ayant fait peindre par les plus habiles peintres, elle envoya son portrait chez plusieurs rois, avec lesquels elle entretenait une étroite amitié. Lorsqu'ils virent ce portrait, il n'y en eut aucun qui se défendît du pouvoir inévitable de ses charmes.

Here, d'Aulnoy actually makes a point of saying that Toute-Belle was dressed like Diana or Pallas (Athena). She also mentions how Toute-Belle's portrait was painted by many artists, not unlike the two referenced goddesses who were frequently depicted in numerous paintings and works of art.

There is a brief mention of Diana in "L'Oiseau bleu", where d'Aulnoy says that Florine:

...s'était arrêtée au bord d'une fontaine dont l'eau argentée bondissait sur de petits cailloux, elle eut envie de se laver les pieds ; elle s'assit sur le gazon, elle releva ses blonds cheveux avec un ruban, et mit ses pieds dans le ruisseau : elle ressemblait à Diane qui se baigne au retour d'une chasse.

Again, although Florine has not been hunting, it is both her appearance and her demeanor that recall the goddess.

D'Aulnoy also makes many overt references to Amor or Cupid, and to the story of Cupid and Psyche, most evidently in "Le Serpentin vert", which is an elaborate, modern retelling of the Apuleius' version. Early on during her imprisonment in the castle, Laideronnette is cautioned to read the story of Cupid and Psyche in which d'Aulnoy quite plainly asserts that her heroine is walking in the footsteps of her ancient counterpart:

Comme tous les pagodes cherchaient avec empressement à divertir leur nouvelle reine, il y en eut un qui lui apporta l'histoire de Psyché, qu'un auteur des plus à la mode venait de mettre en beau langage: elle y trouva beaucoup de choses qui avaient du rapport à son aventure, et il lui prit une si violente envie de voir chez elle son père et sa mère, avec sa soeur et son beau-frère, que quelque chose au monde que pût lui dire le roi, rien ne fut capable de lui ôter cette fantaisie. « Le livre que vous lisez, ajouta-t-il, vous peut faire connaître dans quels malheurs Psyché tomba. Hé! de grâce, profitez-en pour les éviter.

There is nothing subtle or casual about the insertion of the reference to the Cupid and Psyche myth. D'Aulnoy is very deliberately telling her readers that she is using the ancient story as a base model for her fairy tale, and encourages her heroine to heed the lessons learned by Psyche: “elle lut et relut Psyché pour être en garde sur tout ce qu'on lui dirait, et sur tout ce qu'elle devait répondre.” Although there are other tales which evoke the tale, (such as the Opera of “Cupid and Psyche” in “La Chatte Blanche”), this appears to be the only tale that uses a mythological story as a reference, and not just the name of a character.

Although the Cupid and Psyche myth is utilized as a basic structure of the fairy tale, the outcome of Laideronnette's curiosity has the opposite result. She is warned by her mother that she cannot possibly be as fortunate as Psyche:

Je croirais bien plutôt, répliqua Laideronnette, que c'est le dieu d'Amour lui-même. - Quelle erreur ! s'écria la reine Bellotte, l'on dit à Psyché qu'elle avait un

monstre pour époux, et elle trouva que c'était l'Amour: vous êtes entêtée que l'Amour est le vôtre, et assurément c'est un monstre; tout au moins mettez votre esprit en repos, éclaircissez-vous sur une chose si aisée.» La reine en dit autant, et son gendre encore davantage.

In the “Cupid and Psyche myth”, Psyche looks upon her hidden, sleeping husband and is delighted to find the handsome youth Cupid. Laideronnette, seeing the similarities in her situation, gives in to her desire for the truth and looks upon her husband during the night, certain she will be similarly pleased with what she discovers. Her discovery is anything but pleasant:

Ah! Curiosité fatale, dont mille affreux exemples ne peuvent nous corriger, que tu vas coûter cher à cette malheureuse princesse ! Elle aurait eu bien du regret de ne pas imiter sa devancière Psyché, de sorte qu'elle cacha une lampe comme elle, et s'en servit pour regarder ce roi invisible, si cher à son cœur. Mais quel cri épouvantable ne fit-elle pas, lorsqu'au lieu du tendre Amour blond, blanc, jeune et tout aimable, elle vit l'affreux Serpentin Vert aux longs crins hérissés.

Though the stories are centuries apart – the message is ultimately the same. Insatiable curiosity and desperate desire for something that one is not meant to have result in unfortunate outcomes with the protagonist instantly regretting his or her digression.

In “Ricdan-Ricdon” by Mme. L’Héritier, the heroine Rosanie dreads the task of weaving that she is destined to complete. With the aid of a magic wand, the task

becomes infinitely easier for Rosanie and “elle fit voir aussi à cette princesse de la tapisserie plus belle et mieux travaillée que celle d'Arachné.” In the Ovidian story, Arachne was a great mortal weaver who bragged that her skill was greater than that of the goddess of crafts, Athena. Arachne refused to acknowledge that Minerva was responsible for her talents, and angered, the goddess arranged for a weaving contest between the two women. Arachne chose to weave a tapestry that depicted the gods in an unfavorable light. At the conclusion of the contest, Minerva was so enraged that a mortal could dare insult the gods, that she destroyed the tapestry and turned her into a spider (Desmond and Sheingorn 199).

Mentioning Arachne as a motif reinforces the appearance of textile arts that L'Héritier makes such a central element of her story. I will discuss this in depth in the next chapter. It also seems that Rosanie (albeit with the help of magic) has now taken the place of Arachne as the talented mortal weaver/embroiderer with Arachne now being elevated to the position of Minerva. Although none of the boasting and pride that Arachne possessed in the original myth makes an appearance in L'Héritier's tale, mainly for the reason that Rosanie is only able to weave skillfully with the assistance of the magic wand, the reference is still effective.

A somewhat obscure classical reference is found in Murat's *Etoillette*: “Or cette forêt était celle qu'habitaient depuis plusieurs siècles les Centaures jaunes; c'était l'azile qu'ils avaient choisi, après la malheureuse affaire qu'ils eurent contre les Lapithes, aux noces de Pirithoüs.” Lapiths were legendary formidable men of Greek mythology, superior in strength and power. As a result of their complicated genealogy, they were said to be a kindred people to the Centaurs. The best-known legend associated with the

Lapiths is their battle with the Centaurs at the wedding feast of Pirithous, the *Centauromachy*. The Centaurs had been invited, but, as they were not accustomed to wine, their wild nature came to the fore. When the bride was presented to greet the guests, the centaur Eurytion leapt up and attempted to rape her. All the other centaurs then jumped up and joined in, straddling both women and boys. In the battle that ensued, Theseus came to the aid of the Lapiths. They cut off Eurytion's ears and nose and tossed him out of the festivities. In the battle the Lapith Caeneus was killed, and the defeated Centaurs were expelled to the northwest (Leeming 236).

The names Lapithes and Pirithous are not used in reference to any character, nor to establish a comparison with any. In fact, they make such a fleeting appearance, that in reading the story too quickly; it would be easy to miss these two words. Using such obscure references is a solid example of the education that Murat must have had in order to comfortably insert these particular references so easily in her tale.

What is unusual here is that Murat would choose such a story even as a passing reference—its connotations are brutal, violent, and fierce...not at all the type of aesthetic effect one would expect in a fairy tale. What was she trying to evoke then, by choosing this passing reference? Given her unusual lifestyle, this rather unpleasant story has elements that mirror moments of her life. There are traces of a disastrous marriage, bisexuality, and exile in the myth as well as in the real-life drama of Mme Murat.

Although the above references would not necessarily be limited to use by those with a deep knowledge of the classics, it is still evident that the conteuses had a working knowledge of classical mythology, and were comfortable enough with the details of those stories to weave the names seamlessly into their tales. It also is worth noting that not

only were the conteuses knowledgeable enough to utilize these names, it also helped that their educated readers would also likely be familiar with the material that was referenced in the tales.

I feel that the use of classical mythology in scattered references throughout the tales demonstrates not only a sign of an educated author, but also a deep appreciation of the literature that came before them. One could easily see mythology as an early version of a fairy tale – complete with motifs, fantastical elements and quests resulting in rewards. By acknowledging the existence of mythological characters through the regular evocation of their names, the conteuses acknowledge their ancient ancestors.

Some references are prominent, and some receive just a passing mention, but the fact that there is such a concentration of classical names throughout the conteuses' work signifies their importance. Although the conteuses' intentions may have been varied and are hard to ascertain, one defining aspect of their use of this material is their wish to elevate the literary tale to a level of erudite discourse that only educated readers would be able to fully appreciate. They were also thus able to demonstrate their skill in the areas of aesthetics and rhetoric and underscore their professionalism as writers.

METAMORPHOSIS – LITERARY HISTORY

There are numerous types of marvelous actions and events that take place within fairy tales such as magical modes of travel, gifts enhancing physical traits, and fantastical rewards for a task well accomplished. Of all these, metamorphosis is among the most prominent. Not only are the main characters transformed into other beings or given the

power to transform others, but the marvelous agents often use their powers to change their own appearance. Sometimes metamorphosis becomes an obstacle, for example when a hero or heroine is transformed into another form of being as part of an evil spell. Metamorphosis can also be used to overcome certain obstacles and can help the protagonist to avoid capture or pain (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 81).

There is a rich history of metamorphosis beginning with classical literature that appeared thousands of years ago, and endures in modern novels, plays and movies. Ovid's (43 BC- 17 BC) *Metamorphoses* stands as one of the foundational works in the literature of transformation in Western art, and its influence on early modern writers was immense. Ovid chose the theme and method of metamorphosis not as a whimsical vehicle for amusement but to present the process of transformation as a means of relating the inner workings of the mind to the workings of nature – reconciling, as it were, the human with what lies outside the human (Asker 1).

One of the earliest tales of antiquity is believed to have appeared somewhere in the 170's or 180's AD. Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, sometimes referred to as *The Golden Ass*, (*Asinus aureus*) is the only known complete Latin novel to survive in its entirety (Adlington vii). The protagonist's new form as an ass provides the narrator with a unique vantage point from which he is able to better gather together the threads of the mundane world to weave his fantastic tale. The frame of the central metamorphosis narrative is well known: the story of Cupid and Psyche is told by a drunken old woman to a prisoner of a gang of bandits, in order to take her mind off her troubles (a situation not unlike Basile's *Pentamerone*, where there is a frame tale surrounding other smaller tales).

The plot was actually taken from a Greek work often attributed to a man named Lucius of Patrae called *Loúkios è ónos*, *Loukios/Lucius or the Ass*. Knowledge of Lucius of Patrae comes from the Bibliotheca of Photius, Patriarch of Byzantium in the 9th century, who records the reading of a collection of tales of miraculous transformation made by this Lucius. It has been suggested that Apuleius wrote both the Greek and Latin *Metamorphoses*, and that Apuleius drew on Lucius of Patrae but introduced his own deeper meanings (Lindsay 16). It was greatly improved upon by Apuleius, who edited the original version and then expanded upon it by inserting stories of love, sorcery and in particular, the long and beautiful allegory of “Cupid and Psyche” (Adlington xii). Guillaume Michel translated the full Latin text of the classic novel into French in 1522. Louveau then used Michel’s translation as a resource for his own translation in 1586 (Gaisser 291). The “Cupid and Psyche” tale was then expanded into a romance by La Fontaine in 1669, and adapted for the stage by Corneille in 1678 (Accardo 70).

The presence of metamorphosis and the story of “Cupid and Psyche” were well established in the literary world when the conteuses wrote their tales. In the French tradition, folkloric and literary both, it is very often found within tale type 425A (search for the missing bridegroom) which already made appearances in Straparola’s *Le piacevoli notti* in 1550, and in Basile’s *Pentamerone* in 1646, both of which were a source of reference for the conteuses. Straparola’s “Re Porco” exhibits a piggish husband who enjoys rolling in mud before sharing a bed with each of his three wives. Basile’s *Pentamerone* included four “La Belle et la bête” tale variants. The first three, “Lo serpo”, “Lo Catenaccio”, and “Pinto Smalto” resemble Apuleius’ tale in that the husbands in each story are reputed to be, but are not actual monsters (Hearne 32).

In fairy tales, human transformation into an animal is usually a tragic fate which degrades the victim into a nonhuman. The transformed individual not only experiences physical changes, but metaphysical changes as well – the loss of speech, the inability to express emotion, and the loss of belonging to the familiar human world. Géza Róheim notes that in the European folktale, the animal metamorphosis of the hero is brought about by an injured person (Róheim, *Fire in the Dragon* 32). Metamorphosis is a critical manifestation of the marvelous, which highlights the importance of the body in the contes de fées and all fantasy literature. Indeed, “the marvelous foregrounds the body as a site of desires and fears, as a site from which to perceive how the real is manipulated by the literary fairy tale” (Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality* 141).

Transformation into an animal becomes a humiliating dehumanization for the character, but it has no lasting effect on the victim, and it only helps increase the story’s tension. The folktale has become a [mostly] happy fiction, which by artistic necessity requires that the concluding motif be the main task in the hero’s series of adventures – namely, return to human form. As a motif, transformation sets up the disenchantment and the happy ending (Röhrich 83).

There are numerous variations to metamorphosis and it affects not only protagonists but antagonists as well. Additionally, metamorphosis can be self-willed, as it is for powerful fairies (both good and bad) and metamorphosis can be cast upon an unsuspecting hero or heroine. Sometimes it is to the benefit of the hero, at other times it is a hindrance. Whatever the situation, it abounds in dozens of tale types and in many different permutations. Further, with the physical transformation usually comes an emotional transformation that derives from undergoing this life-altering experience.

The allusion to emotional change, tragic and unwanted forms, and life-altering experience indisputably call to mind the psychoanalytical dimensions of metamorphosis. The psychoanalytical analysis delves deeply into the subconscious in order to arrive at a satisfactory explanation of symbols in fairy tales. They deal with primordial desires which are often private and unable to be expressed overtly, so they are revealed subtly through the use of symbols (Mitchell 29).

By devoting an entire chapter in her d'Aulnoy book to metamorphosis, Jane Tucker Mitchell acknowledges the central role played by this theme. She notes that the favoritism d'Aulnoy shows towards transformation is her penchant for highlighting the differences between good and evil, ugly and beautiful, life and death. Mitchell goes on to say that:

The duality of the metamorphoses maintain this paradox between man's two natures, that is, the spiritual and the physical, the positive and the negative, or even the benefic and the malefic. Since most of Mme d'Aulnoy's tales show some kind of metamorphosis, it is obviously one of her most important motifs and it carries the theme of the mutability of all things, for everything is in a constant state of flux in the twenty-five *contes*. (71)

Vladimir Propp highlighted the complex nature of transformation as it is portrayed in wonder tales. According to him, no tale type can be studied in isolation, nor can any motif be examined without reference to the whole. He demonstrated that tales draw on a pool of about 150 components, which tale-tellers organize into a framework of

thirty-one functions enacted by seven character types. His complete definition is as follows:

Le conte merveilleux est un récit construit selon la succession régulière des fonctions citées dans leurs différentes formes, avec absence de certaines entre elles dans tel récit, et répétition de certaines dans tel autre. (Morphologie du conte 182)

In his book *Les Racines historiques du conte merveilleux*, Propp devotes an entire chapter to magical assistants, and makes an interesting statement about heroes who actually transform into animals in order to help themselves. Propp says:

Il faut ajouter que l'aide du conte peut être considéré comme le talent personnifié du héros. Dans la forêt le héros reçoit, soit un animal, soit la capacité de se transformer en animal. Nous avons suffisamment étudié le conte pour établir que le héros qui se transforme en animal est plus ancien que le héros qui reçoit un animal. Le héros et son aide sont fonctionnellement un seul et même personnage. Le héros-animal est devenu le héros plus l'animal. (216)

Propp acknowledges that transformation or metamorphosis had a heavy presence in many tales. He realizes that characters often merge into each other, and that attributive elements as well as functions are subject to laws of transformation, thus bringing to light the dynamic principle of wonder tales. Propp also argues that to unfold the overall picture

of transformation brings out the core theme of wonder tales. He surmises that wonder tales are ultimately a transformative genre dealing with metamorphosis, and that transformations affect tale characters, for it is their fate to cycle through contrasted aspects of themselves (Da Silva, "Transformation" 982-983).

METAMORPHOSIS AND THE CONTEUSES

Although metamorphosis has been a popular choice of theme for folktales and literary fairy tales, spanning hundreds of years and cultures, it is particularly prevalent in the conteuses' tales, most noticeably in the tales of d'Aulnoy. By far the largest number of Mme. d'Aulnoy's fairy tales involve the transformation of men/women into animals. All but two of her twenty-five *contes* include some kind of transformation as part of the plot (Mitchell 58). The majority of these tales relates how the hero or heroine is changed into an animal by a fairy curse or enchantment. The passages that describe the actual act of metamorphosis are some of the most appealing of d'Aulnoy's work. The vivid descriptions enhance the concept of transformation by careful details and touches of humor. Whether she is describing the morphing of skin into feathers, or the snout of a mouse slowly changing into a face, d'Aulnoy makes each act of metamorphosis an intricate part of the plot.

D'Aulnoy seemed to have a natural understanding of animals and their characteristics. Her vivid descriptions enhance the transformation scenes. Mary Elizabeth Storer noted that: "Elle a une connaissance sympathique des animaux, vraiment

remarquable dans une femme de salon, inspirée en cela par Mme Deshoulières, sinon par la Fontaine” (32).

Wilfried Floeck contrasts the (bourgeois) classical aesthetic of unity, which he associates with analysis, universality and rationality, with the (aristocratic) baroque aesthetic, informed by unstable identities, a universe in metamorphosis, and a marked sensual dimension (251). However, such classifications are not as clear when looking at the conteuses' fairy tales. To illustrate the point, one need only examine d'Aulnoy's metamorphosis narratives, which give much evidence of the hedonistic element associated with the baroque. Yet the sensuality which is so crucial to d'Aulnoy's narratives does not entirely rule out the analytical element Floeck wishes to confine to classic texts. The sensual descriptions of shape-shifting present in d'Aulnoy's tales of are accompanied by a shedding of skin (metamorphosis) which can be conceived of as making a clear pathway to the inner self. The self (in progress) which typifies these tales represents at the very least a preliminary step in the direction of psychological analysis. The writing of the aristocratic d'Aulnoy's amplifies the text to express both the stirrings of personal autonomy and the social imperatives of court and salon (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 162).

The influence of the “Cupid and Psyche” myth is evident in many of Mme d'Aulnoy's tales, especially where the main interest is love. The classical tale is even specifically mentioned in several tales, including “Gracieuse and Percinet” and “Le Serpentin vert”. Yet, deep within d'Aulnoy's many variations on the “Cupid and Psyche” narrative can be found echoes of the prevailing conditions of unhappy, forced unions between incompatible mates. Not unreflective of her own failed marriage, many

of the husbands who are beasts in her stories lose their fairy tale outlandishness and eventually become a darkly humorous metaphor of the circumstances of her life (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 284).

The tumult of d'Aulnoy's life reflects how difficult it was for a woman of independent spirit to rid herself of a less than stellar husband. One of the themes which she returned to frequently, in several different variations, was the animal bride and the animal groom. Her pages are crowded with shape-shifters, and d'Aulnoy seized the opportunity to use the mythological theme of animal metamorphosis, which allowed her to create a world of pretend in which happiness and love are sometimes possible for a heroine, but are often won after a harrowing and elusive struggle (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 286). D'Aulnoy's tales of metamorphosis thus offer a stridently unconventional vision of femininity. Patricia Hannon claims that shape-shifting makes it possible for d'Aulnoy's heroines to explore identities that are at odds with the prevailing seventeenth-century ideology that enclosed women in the domestic sphere and associated them with the body and disorderly sexuality (Seifert, "Fairy Tales, Subversion" 58).

In her stories, d'Aulnoy's heroes and heroines accede to knowledge via the adventures of the metamorphosed self. The world of the hero or heroine is explored through the ever-changing body, which plays an active role in the quest for knowledge and truth. Once the character has been transformed, the fluid boundaries of the metamorphosed self enable the journeys away from the court and into the forests and countryside of counter-identities. However, although many of her heroes and heroines are temporarily transformed into some lower creature, they are always noble to the end (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 79).

D'Aulnoy's "Le Serpentin vert" is a narrative which obviously and openly derives from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*. Animal bridegroom stories cannot have any relationship to reality because marriage to an animal has never been a reality. "Le Serpentin vert" seems to deliberately reconstruct the ancient tale in a literary fashion towards a more French taste. D'Aulnoy does use different variations on the classic tale. First, the main characters, the Green Serpent, Laideronnette and Magotine are all hideously ugly, whereas Cupid, Psyche and Venus are all celebrated for their extraordinary beauty. The second variation comes when Laideronnette chooses to live alone, thereby rejecting even the possibility of love, unlike Psyche who is refused love and experiences powerlessness by being abandoned on top of a mountain. Finally, d'Aulnoy does not utilize the plot device of an oracle to announce the heroine's marriage to a monster. Unlike Psyche, Laideronnette encounters her future husband twice before their marriage, and what horrifies her each time is the hideousness of his physical appearance (Rubin 141).

Jacques Barchilon, who studied this legend from its early beginnings as a myth up to its presence in fairy tales, observes that d'Aulnoy deliberately unsettles her readers with her version (*Le conte merveilleux* 1-12). In lieu of a beautiful heroine d'Aulnoy gives her readers Laideronnette, the antithesis of Psyche, for the evil fairy made her "parfaite en laideur." She is so ugly that she begs her parents to let her live alone. She boards a boat in order to sail away, hits a rock, and is saved by the ugly green serpent whom she had previously ignored due to his extreme hideousness. She awakens in a palace where she is waited on by charming creatures called pagodes²², and although she

²² D'Aulnoy's description of the pagodes is rich with detail and imagination: "Les plus grands avaient une coudée de haut, et les plus petits n'avaient pas plus de quatre doigts; les uns beaux, gracieux, agréables; les autres hideux, et d'une laideur effrayante: ils étaient de diamants, d'émeraudes, de rubis, de perle, de cristal, d'ambre, de corail, de porcelaine, d'or, d'argent, d'airain, de bronze, de fer, de bois, de terre: les uns sans

has everything she can desire, she becomes unhappy with her life there. An unseen voice announces that he is the ruler of this kingdom, that he loves Laideronnette, and wants to marry her with one stipulation – that she swears not to look at him until his penance of two years is completed.

Driven by her natural curiosity and following in the footsteps of her ancient predecessor, Laideronnette disobeys her husband. She has already heard the story of “Cupid and Psyche” from the invisible voice that she has married, and after studying the myth, she has all intentions of listening to her mate’s warning not to follow Psyche’s example. Despite her best intentions, Laideronnette succumbs to her natural curiosity (after being encouraged by her family) and instead of a handsome god, she finds a vile serpent. Playing on her reader’s expectations by substituting a hideous serpent for the legendary handsome lover, d’Aulnoy highlights her own role as a modern writer in the fairy tale world. This unique invention is evidence of the writer’s craft.

By spying on her husband she espouses the literary tradition that she simultaneously reenacts. The old literary model, with its misogynist commonplaces against women’s curiosity, shows the heroine’s suffering at the hands of Magotine. Tradition has demonstrated that curiosity, a valid piece of the quest for knowledge, must be punished when it manifests itself in the “inferior” human mind (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 114).

As is characteristic of several of her works, d’Aulnoy amplifies the unstable identities of her metamorphosed characters by moving them back and forth between human and animal natures according to a day and night chronology. For example, the

bras, les autres sans pieds, des bouches à l'oreille, des yeux de travers, des nez écrasés: en un mot il n'y a pas plus de différence entre les créatures qui habitent le monde, qu'il y en avait entre ces pagodes.”

Green Serpent is a serpent by day and a man at night. (Similarly, in “La Biche au bois”, the heroine is a doe during the day and a woman once the night comes) (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 116).

After Laideronnette is rescued from the wicked Magotine by her protective fairy, she is forced to spend three years in a mountain forest full of animals capable of speaking and reasoning. They themselves have also been metamorphosed, and must finish their term before being restored to their human state. These creatures explain to Laideronnette that fairies have transformed them into animals corresponding to their moral weaknesses. They have all been changed by the fairies according to a strict system of symmetry between flaw and punishment, reminiscent of the system of retribution for sins in Dante’s hell – tattlers have become parrots, those who mocked their friends are turned into monkeys, and most significantly, a jealous lover who overwhelmed his sweetheart with unjust accusations and beat her cruelly was changed into a wolf by fairies who appeared before him to prevent him from assaulting her again. What is significant about this final transformation is that it is not an unjust one, but rather one that is deserved on account of his inner and outer beastly nature. The punishment makes his inner nature manifest in his outer appearance (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 290).

There are mirrors of Dante throughout many of d’Aulnoy’s tales. The most obvious one is when the characters are doing penance and they meet humans who have been transformed into their animal counterpart so that the punishment suits the sin. Similar to the shades that spoke to Dante, in “Le Serpentin vert” the canary discusses this concept with Discrète (formerly Laideronnette) who has now been made beautiful from the magical waters she drank (Mitchell 79):

Il faut que vous sachiez, madame, que plusieurs fées s'étant mises à voyager, se chagrinerent de voir des personnes tombées dans des défauts essentiels, elles crurent d'abord qu'il suffirait de les avertir de se corriger; mais leurs soins furent inutiles, et venant tout d'un coup à se chagriner, elles les mirent en pénitence: elles firent des perroquets, des pies et des poules, de celles qui parlaient trop ; des pigeons, des moineaux, des serins et de petits chiens, des amants et des maîtresses; des singes de ceux qui contrefaisaient leurs amis: des cochons de certaines gens qui aimaient trop la bonne chère; des lions des personnes colères; enfin le nombre de ceux qu'elles mirent en pénitence fut si grand que ce bois en est peuplé, de sorte que l'on y trouve des gens de toutes qualités, et de toutes humeurs.

In addition to reflecting Dante's views on the metamorphosis of humans, Jane Tucker Mitchell notes that the fairy tale lends itself to the same four levels of interpretation as the *Commedia*. She says:

On the literal level the fairy tale portrays man's experiences in a Secondary World. Allegorically, man is torn between good and evil. Morally, good is rewarded and evil is punished and analogically, it might be the depiction of essential processes within the soul (82).

The duality of the metamorphoses maintains a kind of paradox between man's two natures, that is, the spiritual and the physical, the positive and the negative. Since

most of Mme d'Aulnoy's tales show some kind of metamorphosis, it is obviously one of her most important inclusions and it carries the theme of the mutability of all things, according to which everything is in a constant state of flux (Mitchell 71).

At the very end of the tale, d'Aulnoy once again evokes Psyche, and includes another mythological figure as well – Pandora (who also caused her difficulties as a result of her curiosity):

Sur un secret qui doit nous rendre misérables,
 Pourquoi vouloir ouvrir les yeux?
 Le beau sexe a surtout cette audace cruelle.
 Prenons-en il témoin la première mortelle,
 Sur elle on nous a peint et Pandore et Psyché,
 Qui voulant percer un mystère,
 Que les dieux aux mortels voulaient tenir caché,
 De vie turent les auteurs de leur propre misère.

“Le Serpentin vert” illustrates the pull between good and evil within the heroine who condemns her lover to a longer sentence through her curiosity, but who also saves him. This tale displays a number of the “Cupid and Psyche” motifs: the invisible or supernatural hero, the jealous evil fairy, prohibitions, curiosity, tasks, and a visit to the underworld (Mitchell 92). In this tale, as in so many others by d'Aulnoy, malevolent transformations are gradually resolved, monsters return to their human forms, and lovers become an ideally beautiful couple (Harries, “Violence of the Lambs” 57).

Metamorphosis is also at the heart of “La Chatte blanche.” What makes her use of this element stand out from other fairy tales containing this theme, is that this particular metamorphosis empowers the heroine, who presides over her own unique alternative court. Even in her enchanted and metamorphosed state, Chatte blanche remains appealing and lovely, unlike some of the products of other harsher transformations that fairy tale characters are put through. D’Aulnoy frequently places the accent on the human traits of her animals, and this is particularly present in the intelligent and erudite “La Chatte blanche.”

Defying common fairy tale practices, d’Aulnoy deliberately has her *hero* play the role of the innocent who commits an act of transformative violence. Only he can release her from her feline form by cutting off her head and tail and throwing them into the fire. The prince must be prepared to dismember the cat at her command. D’Aulnoy seems to be saying that transformation does not come without risk and even violence. Although the beginning of the story focuses on the hero’s family and his quest, the tale is ultimately about the highly educated Chatte blanche, her transformations, and her power (Harries, “Violence of the Lambs.” 58).

She explains towards the end of the story that it is due to her mother’s transgressions that she finds herself in this enchanted state. Before Chatte blanche was born, her mother desired forbidden fruit from a magical fairy garden. The fairies granted the queen her wish, on the condition that she present to them her soon-to-be-born daughter. The queen (somewhat) reluctantly agrees, and thus Chatte blanche comes to be in the possession of the fairies. She subsequently falls in love with a handsome knight whom she wishes to marry, but the fairies forbid it because they have selected the dwarf

king Migonnet for her husband. The princess makes a ladder to escape the tower she is imprisoned in, but instead the knight climbs up to see her. They are surprised by the fairies who have brought along Migonnet, and in anger they send their dragon to devour the knight. The fairies then change the princess into a white cat, with her only hope of disenchantment to be found in a prince who perfectly resembles her lover.

The readers do not see the initial transformation of Chatte blanche. What they do see is the violent transformation that takes her from her present metamorphosed state and brings her back to her original human form. After coming upon Chatte Blanche's enchanted castle and spending several years with her while he completes his quest, a young prince has fallen in love with the beautiful and enchanting white cat. After bestowing much kindness and generosity on the prince, she makes a final and shocking request of him. She tells him that the time has come to break the spell that hangs over her castle, and in order to do so, the prince must kill her by cutting off her head. Despite his protests, she convinces him to do the impossible, and before his eyes she is transformed into a beautiful princess. Due to his complete obedience to her throughout the entire story, it is the request that is surprising, and not the fact that the prince follows through with it:

Les larmes vinrent deux ou trois fois aux yeux du jeune prince de la seule pensée qu'il fallait couper la tête à sa petite chatonne, qui était si jolie & si gracieuse. Il dit encore tout ce qu'il pût imaginer de plus tendre pour qu'elle l'en dispensait. Elle répondit opiniâtrement qu'elle voulait mourir de sa main ... en un mot, elle le pressa avec tant d'ardeur qu'il tira son épée en tremblant &, d'une main mal

assurée, il coupa la tête & la queue de sa bonne amie la chatte. En même temps, il vit la plus charmante métamorphose qui se puisse imaginer: le corps de Chatte blanche devint grand & se changea tout d'un coup en fille, mais quelle fille!

The prince's reluctance and his tears are marks of a sentimental and perhaps even feminized hero. Violence is a rather foreign concept to him, particularly because he has to direct it against the creature that he loves (Harries, "The Violence of the Lambs" 59). The violent act of the prince and the insistence of Chatte blanche that he complete this violent act are the necessary conditions of the unveiling of her identity and ultimately of her liberation. In his book on violence in French literature, James Day posits that Chatte blanche sacrifices herself to violence not only to be reborn, but also in recognition of the violence she must be willing to accept in order to return to a more significant kind of power. He also makes the interesting suggestion that d'Aulnoy's tale implies that such violence is a compromise that women must ultimately make in order to achieve and retain power in the world (35).

Anthropology has underscored not only the prevalence of ritual in all societies, but also its intimate linkage to social process. This is not limited to humans but includes animals as well. They also ritualize their lives, and ritual can in fact be a bridge to connect the animal ways with human ways. Ritualized activities have become necessary for both animal and human survival. It may at first be shocking to think of linking ritual with violence, but Maurice Bloch notes that rituals can serve to maintain the status hierarchies of a society, and he proposes that human violence is displaced onto a transcendental power figure – in this case Chatte Blanche. Bloch also argues that rituals

involve a reversal of the normal processes of life, the progression from birth to maturity and eventually death (5). Human beings can borrow some of the transcendental power via the ritual process, transforming themselves in the process (Bowie 161-165).

The motif of restoration to human shape by means of decapitation is present in numerous tales across different cultures. The efficacy of undoing a magic spell by means of decapitation has been part of a widespread popular belief, and frequently this motif is assigned to animal helpers. Beheading is a specific means of disenchantment – the point of the act is ultimately to kill the enchanted body and release the human shape (Kittridge 1-14).

La Chatte blanche is a combination of two tale types: AT 310, “The Mouse Bride” and AT 310, “The Maiden in the Tower”. It appears however, that there was not a version of tale-type 402 extant from the time that Mme d’Aulnoy was writing. She likely found inspiration for AT 310 in Basile’s “Petrosinella” (or possibly even her colleague’s story “Persinette”, which was written by de la Force and published in her collection *Les Contes des contes*, thus pointing to the *Lo Cunto de li cunti* as a source for the original story) (Blamires 73).

Liberated by this violent act of decapitation, Chatte blanche is able to return to her original form and give voice to her true identity. Although the transformation forces her to leave her idyllic surroundings and enchanted castle, her restored state also allows her to return to the real world and reclaim a political power that both she and her mother had previously abandoned. The overall story of Chatte blanche suggest that to enjoy such unchallenged power, women must make painful concessions to the constraints of society, concessions that equivocate calling for violence upon themselves. This violence is

ultimately bearable because it permits women to become or remain significant players in society's all-important game of power. However, Chatte blanche's symbolic death and return to the world do not leave her with a complete loss of power. She reenters the world as a powerful monarch and in the process gains a companion to rule beside her (Day 36).

D'Aulnoy also explores the male as well as the female body through metamorphosis. The transformation of the monarch in "L'Oiseau bleu" is not violent, but has more of an ethereal gentility. The sovereign's disgrace assumes a form which strips him of his dignity. Roi Charmant's metamorphosis is brought on by his refusal to engage in a pre-arranged, loveless marriage. When he rejects the unattractive Truitonne in preference for her more pleasing stepsister Florine, he undergoes a humiliating transformation at the hands of Truitonne's ally, the fairy Sussio:

En même temps le roi change de figure : ses bras se couvrent de plumes et forment des ailes ; ses jambes et ses pieds deviennent noirs et menus ; il lui croît des ongles crochus ; son corps s'apetisse, il est tout garni de longues plumes fines et mêlées de bleu céleste ; ses yeux s'arrondissent et brillent comme des soleils ; son nez n'est plus qu'un bec d'ivoire ; il s'élève sur sa tête une aigrette blanche, qui forme une couronne ; il chante à ravir, et parle de même.

The description of the king's transformation is extensive - his arms change to wings, his feet change to claws, and his skin turns to feathers. What does not change is his ability to speak.

The choice of bird is notable - it is likely not what North American's identify as a bluebird, but rather a bird that is blue. Why then choose blue as the color of the bird? The color of items is usually identical to items found in nature. Blue is a spiritual, non-material hue identified with the heavens, which often leads to thoughts of purity and piety (The Virgin Mary is often seen wearing blue robes) (Ashliman 9). At its lowest meaning, blue signifies depression and despair (not unlike how the king was feeling after his transformation and because he could not be with his beloved.) It is a significant color across many religions, and significant in fairy tales as well. Fairy tales are sometimes referred to as *contes bleus*. The bluebird may be identified with the soul/anima, and the bird's ability to fly liberates it (symbolically) from the weight of the world. Much like God and angels, the fact that a bird can fly means it can transcend gravity and is thus seen as a connecting force between heaven and earth (Knapp, *French Fairy Tales* 119).

His metamorphosis is a requisite step along the arduous path to amorous salvation. Had the young roi Charmant who comes to court and falls in love with the pretty young princess not been changed into a bluebird, there would be no example of true love. The metamorphosis and merveilleux events that take place in the story provide the tests to prove that the king's and princess's love was pure and the final proof for the moral that one should marry for true love. The king, in his transformed state, goes through great torture in trying to speak with his beloved. He is tricked into landing on a tree that is hung with knives and blades, and practically dies – both from physical and emotional distress, at the thought that he cannot speak to Florine. Florine's troubled state equals that of the king's, because she thinks that roi Charmant no longer desires her

company. This story recalls Marie de France's *Yonec*, which also features a lady locked in a tower and the mangling of the hero.

There is somewhat of a parallel between "L'Oiseau bleu" and the previously discussed tale, "La Chatte blanche." Both tales are graphic in their descriptions of the use of swords, knives and blades. Used deliberately to break a spell in the case of "La Chatte blanche.", and used treacherously to maim in the case of "L'Oiseau bleu"; both tales make specific and noticeable use of these items. In the case of "La Chatte blanche.", the white cat asks her prince to use his sword on her, in "L'Oiseau bleu" the evil Sussio and Truitonne use the blades to penetrate the feet and body of the bluebird. Swords, knives and blades are on the surface weapons, but when looked at from a psychoanalytical point of view, they are sexual weapons. In her work on Jungian Psychology, Marie-Louise von Franz explicitly equates the male organ with deadly force, and wrote that it finds symbolic equivalents first in things that resemble it in shape, and second in things that resemble it in function. They are characterized by penetration into the body and injury – thus sharp weapons of every kind (knives, daggers, spears, sabers) fit into this category (Von Franz, *Projection* 21).

Metamorphosis often moves beyond social constraints, for example when the enchanted roi Charmant flutters at the window of the prison tower of his beloved Florine. In his transformed state, he pursues his courtship with little caresses, peckings and cooings. Such a transformation draws on the familiar motif of the animal husband, derived from *The Golden Ass*, and not only suggests multiple identities and transgressive passion, but also a fundamental undermining of the social hierarchy through the disabling of male authority and the empowering of the female (Brown, *A Critical History* 83).

“L’Oranger et l’abeille” also includes a sexually charged scene while the two main characters are in their metamorphosed state. It demonstrates the satisfaction that Aimée and Aimé (as the bee and the orange tree) have while Aimée is an active partner – she is the one who enters one of Aimé’s flowers. It is important to note that the encounter is described from the female’s point of view. (Aimé tells Aimée of the many pleasures that *his* flowers can give to *her*.) Under the guise of metamorphosed forms, feminine sexuality is expressed in an aggressive way.

It is rare for humans to be changed into anything other than animals in fairy tales. The above example demonstrates Aimé being changed into an orange tree, and another similar event takes place in d’Aulnoy’s “Fortunée.” This is only the second tale in d’Aulnoy’s oeuvre where a man is changed into some kind of plant--the third is at the end of “Le Nain jaune” where the two lovers are changed into palm trees to be eternally intertwined together.

One of the more perplexing tales to involve metamorphosis includes a rather uncomfortable element found in European fairy tales. Both Basile and Perrault wrote stories where the heroine is forced to change into an animal in order to flee patriarchal incest. Basile’s “L’orsa” and Perrault’s “Peau d’âne”²³ show the female protagonist undergoing a metamorphosis that facilitates her escape from a wretched situation. Murat’s version of this tale, “Peau d’ours”, does not contain the element of incest, but rather the heroine metamorphoses in order to avoid marrying – literally- a beast of a man; Rhinoceros.

²³ Perrault’s version remains the least produced fairy tale from his collection.

The she-bear variant deals with tensions that arise from possessiveness, rivalry, ownership and procreation, in the triangle composed of mother, father and daughter. Its historical changes reflect the way that different cultural moments have dealt with this central question. The fairy tale princess of this tale type wears a skin of shame, but her pathetic appearance contains a kind of humility and lack of vanity. In Murat's "Peau d'ours", the bodily transformation of this heroine takes her to thresholds she could have otherwise not reached. Noble-Epine's metamorphosis allows her to escape the horrible prospect of marriage to Rhinoceros, and thus to live a freer, happier existence in the presence of Zelindor.²⁴ The liberty that her metamorphosis permits her to experience actually provides her with a new life – it helps her rather than hinders her. Her animal shape lifts her from the normal constraints of being in a young woman's body and ultimately takes control of her identity (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 325, 354).

The interesting element of the metamorphosis in these tales is that here, beauty becomes the beast. Shape-shifting also modifies the conditions of confinement, a principle that does not obtain for men enchanted into animal form, like the monstrous rhinoceros himself, or the more traditional Beast of the cycle. As a she-bear, Noble-Epine acquires more freedom of movement than as a young woman, and more freedom of choice. In animal form, she enjoys tender and even abandoned flirtation with her prince: "Ce Prince, plus charmé que jamais de son ours, ordonna qu'on en eut grand soin, lui donna une belle grotte de rocailles, entourée de statues, et où il y avait un lit de gazon

²⁴ In facing the paradox of intimacy with a perfect stranger, the female partner in arranged marriages of an earlier era was also expected to give up any notion of autonomy. Marriage in general was seen as the "absolute surrender" of woman to man. Maria Tatar. *Off With Their Heads! Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. 142.

pour s'y retirer la nuit. Il la venait à tout moment ; il en parlait à tout le monde ; il en était fou.”

It is impossible to avoid a comparison between Murat's "Peau d'ours" and Perrault's "Peau d'âne." There are different implications of the choice of animal skin by the two authors. The donkey skin rings of humility and lowly status, whereas the bear skin connotes power and savagery. The story of transformation from man to bear dates back to medieval times, to the story of Valentin et Ourson. It is the story of two twin boys who have been abandoned in the woods as babies. Valentin is raised in the court of Pippin, while Ourson is reared in the forest in the den of a bear, where he grows up as a wild man of the woods. He is eventually overcome and trained by Valentin, and afterwards becomes his friend and servant. The medieval Ourson is contrast between civilized man and a more primal, uncontrollable creature.

Bears were also a defining presence in a folk religious ritual linked to the feast of Candlemas - February 2nd. A bear chase took place involving a lustful bear, costumed hunters, and young men dressed as women and referred to as Rosetta. After an amorous interlude with Rosetta, the creature was killed, revived, shaved, and then killed again. Though evidence for the Candlemas Bear Chase is most evident in the French and Spanish Pyrénées, and in its most developed accounts, is modern, it is suggestive that it was nonetheless widespread in the Middle Ages. Claude Gaignebert actually relates this tradition to the story of Valentin et Ourson.²⁵

²⁵ Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays*. (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1975) 137. See Claude Gaignebert, "Le combat de Carnaval et de Carême de P. Bruegel (1559)," *Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 27 (1972): 329-31.

Both Murat's tale and Perrault's tale fall under the AT index of 510A – “The Persecuted Heroine”, and 510B – “Unnatural Love.” The identifying qualities of the “Donkey Skin” tale cycle (as stories that fall into this category are frequently referred to) are the heroine's disguise and her position as a servant. She allows the rich son/prince to suffer from love sickness for some time before she reveals her true self to him. Typically, in AT 510B the disguise is made of an animal skin or several skins sewn together. Although the thought of placing oneself under such a garment may seem unappealing and surprising in the courtly aristocratic context of the fairy tales, this is another case where they make use of elements of human experience from the distant past and the popular imaginary—when human ancestors depended on animal skin for warmth and other purposes, or used the skins to disguise themselves as animals in order to lure their prey to them (Goldberg 32). Murat's version of this tale type stand out primarily due to her depiction of Noble-Epine appearing as a bear. The bear evokes thoughts of power and brute strength – qualities attached more to men than to women. Murat was a forceful, dominant, figure during her lifetime, and it is likely not a coincidence that she chose such a dominant anima, in contravention to gender script usage, as her heroine's disguise.

There are far more instances in the tales where humans are transformed into animals, but there are some tales that involve the transformation of humans into objects. In d'Aulnoy's “L'Oranger et l'abeille”, the heroine Aimée procures a magic wand from the ogres who have been holding her captive. She manages to escape and save both herself and her lover Aimé, all the while demonstrating skill and cunning in learning how to best use the wand that she has stolen. Once the ogres realized what has occurred, they

begin the hunt for the escapees. Through three series of transformations, Aimée employs the wand to change her, her partner, and the camel they have for transportation into different items in order to deceive the ogres. She then uses the wand to change them all back to their original forms:

Je souhaite, dit-elle, au nom de la royale fée Trusio, que notre chameau devienne un étang, que le prince soit un bateau, et moi une vieille batelière qui le conduirait. En même temps l'étang, le bateau et la batelière se forment...La princesse souhaite de reprendre sa forme naturelle, elle toucha trois fois avec sa baguette, elle en frappa le bateau et l'étang, elle redevient belle et jeune.

Je souhaite, dit-elle, au nom de la royale fée Trusio, que le prince soit métamorphose en portrait, le chameau en pilier, et moi en nain.

Je souhaite au nom de la royale fée Trusio, que le chameau soit une caisse, que mon cher prince devienne un bel oranger, et que métamorphosée en abeille, je vole autour de lui.

Throughout the entire process, it is clear that Aimée is in control. It is she who is in charge of the journey and how the group is protected. She carries a bow and arrow at all times, and even tells Aimé that by changing herself into a living creature (boatwoman, dwarf), the ogres would be more likely to eat and destroy her rather than him, who as an inanimate object (boat, portrait) would be of no interest to them.

Aimée also determines what objects and creatures she, Aimé and the camel are transformed into. Each time Aimé is metamorphosed, he is changed into a passive object which Aimée can control. She steers the boat, she determines who is in the portrait, and as a tree she puts him in a box from where he cannot escape. Her dominance over Aimé is complete and total. “Girl as helper of hero” is referred to as AT 313, and although in d’Aulnoy’s version Aimée is not technically a magician’s daughter, as is the norm for that tale type, when one fills in the blanks, she could be considered as one in light of her dexterity with the magic wand.

Equally impressive is the skill that Aimée rapidly develops in learning the fairy art of transformation. She had only just recently acquired the wand, and d’Aulnoy makes a point of saying that although she was unknowledgeable prior to the procurement she quickly learned under pressure:

La belle princesse était bien neuve dans l’art de féerie’ elle ne savait pas tout ce qu’elle pouvait faire avec une telle baguette; et il n’y avait que les grandes extrémités qui puissent lui donner des lumières tout d’un coup.

In the second transformation sequence, she changes her lover into a portrait of Mélusine; the woman who is often represented as half woman, half fish or serpent. Mélusine’s story is the opposite of Cupid and Psyche, whereas she asks her new human husband not to seek her out when she is in her bath, which of course he does and thus her horrible secret is discovered. This element of the tale is completely original and unique

to d'Aulnoy, and the gender-transgressive nature of the transformation is another sign of d'Aulnoy's heroines who demonstrate dominance and creativity in her tales.

When the heroes transform themselves for the third time, they lose the magic wand and are unable to regain their human form. Their adventures while transformed represent an integral part of their quest and their relationship, which finally leads to marriage. It seems the marvelous is seen as an abnormal state that leads to, or results in (what is presented) as normalcy. The abnormal hides the normal, but the abnormal also paves the way for the normal (Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality* 35)

The final transformation is also the most crucial to their developing relationship, because it is this act that finally allows them to express their physical desire for each other. Metamorphosis doesn't obstruct their love; it permits them to express their mutual attraction both in words and in actions. Fearing that she will be attracted by other trees in the area, Aimé encourages Aimée to enjoy his flowers: "Vous trouverez sur mes fleurs une agréable rosée et une liqueur plus douce que le miel: vous pourriez vous en nourrir." Aimée affirms her love to him by saying: "Vous me verrez sans cesse voltiger autour de vous, et vous connaîtrez que l'Oranger n'est pas moins cher à l'Abeille que le prince Aimé l'était à la princesse Aimée." She then encloses herself in one of his flowers, which is both a sexual act as much as it is an expression of love and tenderness: "En effet, elle s'enferma dans une des plus grosses fleurs comme dans un palais; et la véritable tendresse qui trouve des ressources par tout, ne laissait pas d'avoir les siennes dans cette union."

This tale recognizes the sexual pleasure of both the hero and the heroine, emphasizing her active role in the sexual part of the relationship – *she* enters one of *his*

flowers. It can be argued then that d'Aulnoy adapted folkloric tradition so as to give a vision of feminine sexuality that exceeds not only the bounds of courtly love (Aimée defends her tree from potential predators) but also the passivity to which so many other heroines are condemned (Seifert, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality* 123-125).

It is fitting to end this section with the most famous and well-known transformation tale. Beaumont's version of "La Belle et la bête", which falls under the specific tale type of 425C – appeared in her collection entitled *Magasin des enfants* in 1756. It is a much shorter variant of Mme. Villeneuve's version, which was written in 1740.

The Beast has already undergone his transformation from the moment he is first encountered by Belle's father in the story. The merchant finds himself lost in the forest, and stumbles upon an enchanted castle in the woods where he seeks refuge from the winter storm outside. After receiving hospitality from his invisible host, Belle's father angers the Beast by plucking a rose from the garden as he is preparing to leave. The Beast demands restitution, and tells Belle's father that he must remain in the castle as his prisoner.

The merchant returns home to bid farewell to his family, and in an unselfish and loving act, Belle takes the place of her father and returns to the Beast's castle where she expects to spend the rest of her life. Much to her surprise, she finds that the Beast is much different than his outer appearance would suggest. After some time, the Beast allows Belle to visit her family, and when she finally returns to the castle after being away for a long time, she finds the Beast practically dead from a broken heart. Belle, realizing that she has unquestionable feelings for the creature, professes her love, and is

shocked when the Beast is suddenly changed into a handsome young prince. He reveals to her the details of his transformation as well as to why the curse has been lifted: “Une méchante fée m’avait condamné à rester sous cette figure jusqu’à ce qu’une belle fille consentit à m’épouser, et elle m’avait défendu de faire paraître mon esprit.”

Throughout the story, there is no confirmation to the reader that this creature is anything other than a hideous beast, who, without need for further clarification, can talk and reason like any human. Likewise, there is also no confirmation as to why the prince was initially transformed to begin with. It is for this reason that Belle truly shows what a person of character she is – because she loves this creature without knowing what lies beneath his unattractive and frightening exterior. It is important to stress that Beaumont purposefully made the tale moralistic so that it could better serve to improve the manners of upper-class youngsters when it was published in her *Magasin des enfants, ou dialogues entre une sage gouvernante et plusieurs de ses élèves de la première distinction*. Since that time it has served as the primary model for most modern “Beauty and the Beast” adaptations in the western world (Zipes, *Art of Subversion* 39).

There is strong evidence that “La Belle et la bête” is not a story of feminine submissiveness but of feminine empowerment. Belle is not sacrificial and powerless, but rather in charge. She is the mistress of the house per the insistence of the Beast, and everything and everyone is at her command. She has the power of choice in that she chooses to come to the castle of her own free will, she is not coerced but chooses to marry, and she alone holds the power to bring about the transformation of the Beast. In fact, all the men who surround Belle (her father and the Beast) are both ultimately weaker than her (Griswold 64).

Jungian followers see the various characters in a tale as representations of different facets of a single individual's personality. Problems rise to the surface when an individual rejects parts of his or her personality. They need to integrate all parts of their personality into a whole, and this is often seen in tales where there is a marriage.

Jungians see the Beast as Belle's animus; as a part of her personality that she has blocked out, a part that is animal like as well as sexual. Part of her responsibility is to acknowledge that side of her rather than turn away from it (Von Franz, "Process of Individuation" 194).

But since the title of the tale is "La Belle et la bête", it is important to realize the second protagonist in the tale. The transformed prince has problems of his own that cannot be ignored. Since this is equally the Beast's story, his development must be looked at as well. The tale presents a test of his ability to be a gentleman and to wait patiently for a woman to act on her own accord (Griswold 57). Just because he looks like an animal however, does not necessarily mean that his human persona has been completely squashed. Beaumont has incorporated muted savagery into the character of the Beast, but at the same time he does not live in a cave but rather he functions like the lord of a sumptuous manor, which is what links him to civilization. He remains aware of what he once was, and what he currently is when talking to Belle:

Mais, outre que je suis laid, je n'ai point d'esprit : je sais bien que je ne suis qu'une bête.

On n'est pas bête, reprit la Belle, quand on croit n'avoir point d'esprit : un sot n'a jamais su cela.

Mangez donc, la Belle, lui dit le monstre, et tâchez de ne vous point ennuyer dans votre maison ; car tout ceci est à vous; et j'aurais du chagrin, si vous n'étiez pas contente.

Vous avez bien de la bonté, dit la Belle. Je vous avoue que je suis bien contente de votre coeur; quand j'y pense, vous ne me paraissez plus si laid.

Oh dame, oui, répondit la Bête, j'ai le coeur bon, mais je suis un monstre.

The other interesting aspect of the way the male figure is constructed here is the implicit feminine identity in that he is always referred to as *la Bête*. Belle is attracted to the caring and nurturing (feminine) qualities of the Beast because she never had the warmth and support of her own mother (Gad 27-48). Further, whereas as Belle uses the term *la bête*, anaphorized as *elle*, (she) when discussing her domestic partner with her family, her father and sisters refer to the beast as *un monstre* – anaphorized as *il* (he). Belle emphasizes her sense of the beast's vulnerability and nobility, while her family maintains his stance that the creature is evil and inhuman (Livia and Hall 366).

It is the unselfishness and kindness of Belle that allows the transformation to take place. At the moment of transformation of the Beast back into his human form, a good fairy appears and speaks to Belle:

La Belle, lui dit cette dame, qui était une grande fée, venez recevoir la récompense de votre bon choix: vous avez préféré la vertu à la beauté et à l'esprit, vous méritez de trouver toutes ces qualités réunies en une même personne. Vous allez devenir une grande reine ; j'espère que le trône ne détruira pas vos vertus.

There is a final act of transformation which affects Belle's sisters. It is in retaliation for such negative behavior towards their kind sister. The good fairy punishes them, saying:

Je connais votre cœur, et toute la malice qu'il renferme; devenez deux statues, mais conservez toute votre raison sous la pierre qui vous enveloppera. Vous demeurerez à la porte du palais de votre sœur, et je ne vous impose point d'autre peine que d'être témoins de son bonheur. Vous ne pourrez revenir dans votre premier état qu'au moment où vous reconnaîtrez vos fautes : mais j'ai bien peur que vous ne restiez toujours statues.

With la Bête there is a transformation not only of the exterior but of the interior as well. In his current animal-like state, he loses some of human-specific qualities, for example, the ability to read. This is in direct contrast to Belle, who is clearly literate and intelligent. "Mais ce qui frappa le plus sa vue fut une grande bibliothèque, un clavecin, et plusieurs livres de musique. On ne veut pas que je m'ennuie, dit-elle tout bas." Whereas Belle spends much of her time reading, the Beast describes himself as without wit

(Accardo 86): "...je suis laid, je n'ai point d'esprit: je sais bien que je ne suis qu'une bête."

There are other signs of Belle's strength of character besides her willingness to sacrifice her life for her father. She is portrayed not as a flighty, silly creature but rather a young woman of great poise and depth. Even when left alone for the first time in the Beast's castle, she maintains her composure in the face of unprecedented fear: "Lorsqu'il fut parti, la Belle s'assit dans la grande salle, et se mit à pleurer aussi, mais comme elle avait beaucoup de courage, elle se recommanda à Dieu, et résolut de ne se point chagriner pour le peu de temps qu'elle avait à vivre..."

The Beast is identified with a male sexuality which needs to be controlled, changed, or domesticated through civilité, but further on in the story the Beast is perceived as a principle of nature within every human being, male and female, young and old (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 280).

Although d'Aulnoy by far utilizes metamorphosis as a dominating force throughout her collection of tales, other conteuses employ this classical element in their stories as well. Mme. de Murat makes unique use of metamorphosis in "Le Palais de la vengeance." The beautiful princess Imis has fallen in love with Philax, a prince who resides in the same court. The two protagonists are very happy and love each other, but have the misfortune of bearing the anger of Pagan the Enchanter, who is attracted to Imis and is jealous of the love shared between the young couple. After Philax (the hero of the story) is transported to a dark forest by the envious Pagan, he begins wandering through the area in the hopes of learning more about his new surroundings. While traveling through the forest, he rests near a cypress tree, only to discover that the disembodied

voices he had heard earlier were actually coming from the trees themselves: “Il en fut moins surpris que de s'apercevoir que c'étaient ces arbres mêmes qui se plaignaient, comme des hommes auraient pu faire...L'arbre lui cri : “Arrête, arrête, n'outrage point un prince malheureux et qui n'est plus en état de se défendre.”

The astonished Philax reacts in disbelief, and asks the tree to relate the circumstances that have placed him in his current state: “Je veux bien te l'apprendre, lui dit le cyprès, et puisque depuis deux mille ans voici la première occasion que me donne le destin de me plaindre de mes malheurs, je ne veux pas la perdre.”

The tree goes on to provide the details of his metamorphosis, both the person who caused it (the Fairy Céoré) and the reason for it (unfulfilled love). The cypress tree, as well as other trees near him, had originally been princes who were caught in the wrath of the Fairy Céoré. In Greek tradition, cypress trees have been associated with death and mourning since antiquity. The cypress became a symbol of the immortal soul (thus Murat's prince trapped in a tree was expected to live in that form forever) and its branches were carried during funeral processions as a symbol of irrevocable death. Cypress trees are frequently seen in cemeteries in Greece, acting as tall shadowy monuments to the dead whom they watch over (Danforth and Tsiaras 99).

Metamorphosis plays a highly dominant and central role in the majority of tales written by the conteuses. The women were able to project many of the strong feminine qualities they demonstrated in themselves – such as intelligence, cunning, and skill. They were also able to highlight some of the fears that they collectively shared - such as arranged marriages to a less than suitable partner.

Within this chapter we have seen how they seamlessly wove both mythological elements and standard fairy tale motifs into their stories. The mythological references enhance the stories, reinforcing the fact that they were written by educated women for a similarly educated audience. The prevailing presence of metamorphosis in the tales allowed the women to take an element that had been present in both the folk and classical tradition and make it their own by their creative and detailed descriptions that often accompanied the act, as well as the reasons why the metamorphosis occurred. The motifs that bolster metamorphosis also allow the conteuses to emphasize the energy and power of their heroines, showing them boldly breaching frontiers between life and death, violence and rebirth, extinction and resurrection.

This creativity and detail can be seen even more heavily in the conteuses' use of contemporary references that are planted throughout their tales. Motifs of spinning and weaving, descriptions of the clothes and jewels that their characters wear, and finally how their characters live and conduct themselves in their fairy tale world are a strong presence throughout the tales, and provide important variations on the theme of transformation and its link to power—the sort of power the conteuses appropriate for themselves through their narrative devices and plot twists, but also through its representation on the body proper. These elements will be the focus of the next two chapters and serve to illustrate the innate talent and originality of the conteuses.

Chapter 4: Text and Textiles

WOMEN, GENDER ROLES, AND CRAFT

In this chapter, I will look at the unique use of motifs connected to the making, consuming and wearing of textiles. Each aspect of this array of processes discussed in this chapter will further demonstrate the unique style adopted by the conteuses. These references to textiles are broken down according to the crafts needed to create the luxurious garments worn by fairy tale characters, and to the styles of the clothing (along with jewelry, coiffure accoutrements, etc) and the social messages they convey, in a way that befitted the fairy tale characters and placed them in a setting that was often contemporary and modern. In this chapter, many of these material details mirror the manner in which courtly figures spent their leisure time, but, in keeping with the double function of motifs in the early modern literary fairy tale, also connote complex levels of symbolism. This interpretation relies first on the spinning and weaving motifs.

SPINNING

Throughout history the art of spinning has traditionally been associated with women. In fairy tales, spinning is often depicted as a chore imposed on heroines, who are sometimes unable to master this skill, and other times combine it with perfect beauty and virtue. In all its depictions, spinning, as well as other textile crafts (such as weaving

and embroidery), play a central role in a sufficient number of tales to be considered a significant motif in this study.

Spinning and weaving were ancient crafts practiced for thousands of years. As they appear in the conteuses' tales, both spinning and weaving have a notable presence that exemplifies the use of this technology and allows the reader a glimpse into how these skills were often viewed by both those who practiced them and those who demanded them.

Flax spinning in medieval Europe was an important supplementary occupation for peasant women and men in some parts of France, notably in the north near Flanders. Women did most but not all of the flax spinning. Wool production followed similar paths, with men and women spinning the yarn and men weaving it into cloth (Farr 24). Despite their low pay, the girls and women spinning silk into thread were both adroit and capable. In his look at women workers in France, Daryl Hafter notes that the skill was in the worker, not necessarily the work (Hafter 86).

Women were frequently employed in the textile industry. The distaff for spinning thread was the universal symbol of women in the Middle Ages, and in fact the term "spinster", literally meaning someone who spins, came to mean a single woman precisely because so many single women in the Middle Ages made their living by spinning (Hanawalt and Dronzek 39).

Spinning is the art of transforming any loose fibers such as wool and flax into yarn or thread. Raw wool comes directly from the animal's fleece (not always sheep) and has to be washed and scoured. Then it is untangled by being drawn between wire brushes called cards, which allowed the fibers to run in one direction. The final step was the

actual act of spinning. The original tools of the spinner were the distaff and the spindle. The everyday distaff was usually a short, often forked stick. Fibers were tied to the distaff (a long staff) to prevent them from becoming tangled, and were grasped in the spinners left hand. The standard spindle was much simpler: a short rod used to provide momentum and a downward pull for the work. Women usually stood when spinning and the yarn was attached to a specialized weighted tool called a drop spindle. In addition to keeping tension on the yarn, the drop spindle was spun to help twist the fibers together to produce sturdy yarn (Jenkins 82). For domestic use, the spindle had the excellent advantage of allowing the spinner to take it outside with her, thus permitting her to look after the flock while spinning. The spindle was also easy to make and cost very little (Peate and Jenkins 282). Many draperies in Europe adhered to the traditional method of hand spinning with the drop spindle, but gradually the newer techniques of producing yarn on the spinning wheel spread over Europe (Van der Wee 401).

By the early fourteenth century, spinning wheels had begun to replace drop spindles, but it would take several more centuries for them to develop into the foot-powered models which are commonly thought of as “spinning wheels.” At first the spinning wheel was turned with one hand and the yarn was twisted with another. It increased output relative to the distaff and spindle method because the spindle was mounted in a fixed place and turned much faster. The spinning wheel also greatly increased productivity in the Flemish cloth industry. Skill at spinning allowed the worker to produce a finer and more consistent yarn. Because the early wheels were at first large, inefficient and unpopular, the spindle remained in common use until the eighteenth century (Mokyr 51).

It is interesting to note that despite the technological advances and improvement in speed made with the invention of the spinning wheel, the quality of yarn from the spindle could not be improved upon, and that the spindle was well-suited to different fibers, thus it is understandable that the spindle was able to compete with more time-saving tools for such a long period. In the later half of the fifteenth century, textile industry guidelines in many cities in France maintained that warp thread should be spun on the spindle and not on the wheel. Although the spinning wheel had been in existence for hundreds of years, the spindle survived for specific use, both among craftsmen and in the countryside, up until the nineteenth century (Peate and Jenkins 282).

When one reads through the conteuses' tales, while there are dozens of reference to spindles and distaffs, one finds very few mentions of spinning wheels (nor are they pictured in any of the frontispieces). In a thorough reading of over forty tales by the French women, there is only one brief mention of a spinning wheel in d'Aulnoy's "Princesse Printanière": the princess gives several fairies a gift consisting of "plusieurs rouets d'Allemagne, avec des quenouilles de bois de cèdre." It is fascinating to observe that in an era where the spinning wheel had been fully incorporated into the textile arts industry, in my corpus, there is only one extremely brief mention of it, followed by a reference to hand-spinning tools.

There are several explanations as to why there is such an uneven balance in the mention of the spindle and distaff versus the spinning wheel. One that I would put forward, exemplifying the double nature of motifs, at once grounded in historically lived experience and in the imagery of myth, is that there is a deep connection to the past and to tradition in having fairy tale characters use the spindle. There is something evocative

and nostalgic about the close and intimate use of the tool, as opposed to the more technologically advanced yet mechanical and impersonal spinning wheel. Indeed, spinning is not a mindless chore; it takes great concentration not to tangle or break the thread.

Another legitimate reason for choosing the spindle is that since numerous tales by the conteuses are based on folktale stories and motifs that were in existence centuries before they began writing, the spinning wheel did not yet exist, and therefore the spindle was the only available tool to complete the task. The *conteuses* could have left that in as a nod to the origins of the tales.

A final reason for the domination of the spindle over the spinning wheel is the association with classical mythology. These were educated women who wrote their tales during the 17th and 18th century, and their knowledge of the classics as well as the constraints of the aristocratic narrative serve as yet another reminder that the tales were meant to be appreciated by equally educated adults, and that they drew on ancient mythical structures.

Women's work, such as spinning, required a certain motor dexterity and know-how that had to be acquired. Still, even though female work was needed in the economy, men looked on this activity as inferior to their own (Farr 8). Within the confines of history, the cheapness of the women's labor made it viable to continue spinning with the distaff and spindle long after spinning wheels had come into widespread use. Therefore the low value placed on women's labor delayed the application of newer technologies (Simonton 75).

As a result of their hard labor, women were able to earn wages by working in the

textile industry. Some women who were not married began to combine their economic resources, and thus supported themselves by weaving, spinning, sewing, and doing other needlework. They found mutual protection in each other and their wages, and gained a sense of identity. These women were also regarded as cheap competition in the labor market by the craft guilds (Conn 9). This demonstrates the independence afforded some women because of their exceptional skills, not unlike the *conteuses* who were frequently not dependent on their husbands to survive.

The idea that women came together to pool their resources and talent elicits a sense of familiarity with an idea highlighted by Lewis Seifert and Domna Stanton in their recent work. In discussing the salons, they said that most of the *conteuses* were members of elite salons and came to know each other in that setting. Their great self-awareness as women writers is on full display in their corpus, wherein they dedicate stories to each other and allude to each other within the tales. Murat insists that her tales are just as good as her contemporaries; L'Héritier says that Murat writes the prettiest novellas in the whole world (Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence* 7).

The reason many women chose spinning as a way to earn a wage was because sometimes spinning was the only possible employment open to women. These women worked for lower wages than men did, because they didn't have families to provide for (Hufton 60). During this period, some women gained deeper self-awareness, self-identity, and independence by being able to live in community with other women. However, there remained for some time a moral ambivalence regarding the financial gains of women through textile creation. It allowed more opportunities for marriage and independence at the risk of becoming too over committed to labor and thus not as

committed to their families (Hufton 422-23).

More significantly, the symbolism of spinning served to define female identity in the sense that it created a set of meaningful associations that applied to women as a social category. It was a gender-specific activity that took place in the household, the area in which at once female power was concentrated and female activity could be constrained and contained. Across the social spectrum, women were expected to be able to practice the art of spinning.

As a motif, the spindle indeed has a rich and interesting symbolism. According to *A Dictionary of Symbols*, by J.E. Cirlot, both the distaff and the spindle are representative of time, the beginning and the continuance of creation. The act of spinning denotes life, particularly because it demonstrates accumulation and growth. The spindle is symbolic of the female sex and thus the symbol of leading goddesses from across the world. The use of the spindle by the Fates of classical literature has re-enforced the connection between spinning and mythology.

The Greeks recurrently associated textiles and their production with magic. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant noted that “For the Greeks, the destiny which binds men is “spun” by the Moirai” or the Fates, daughters of Zeus and Themis (137). Spinning and the tools associated with it were seen as attributes of the Three Fates. The Three Fates were women of classical mythology who spun woolen yarn on their spindle, which was measured and then cut for each life span. These women determined an individual’s destiny, not only the events of life but of death as well. They are generally shown spinning the thread of life, as well as measuring and cutting off the portion allotted to each human being. These women are depicted as unmerciful in their decisions on

ending a human life, and awesome in the power that they wield (Holloway, Wright, and Bechtold 49). Frequently, but not exclusively, Clotho (whose name means “the things that are”) holds the distaff and selects the thread, Lachesis (who name means “the things that once were”) holds the spindle and measures the thread, and Atropos, the oldest and most frightening of the group, (whose name means “the things that are yet to be”), holds the shears which she will use to snip the thread, thus signifying the end of a person’s existence (Berens 133).

There were other Greek mythological figures associated with spinning symbolism, such as Leto. Leto was one of the female Titans, a bride of Zeus and the mother of the twin gods Apollo and Artemis. She was the goddess of motherhood and with her children, a protectress of the young. Her name and iconography suggest she was also a goddess of modesty and womanly demure. Pindar referred to her as the goddess of the golden spindle and the goddess of the golden distaff. As a household goddess, Pallas Athena ruled the implements of domestic crafts, and was sometimes seen with a spindle and distaff in her hands (Rigoglioso 107).

Beyond their symbolism in classical antiquity, spinning tools are also associated with human sexuality. Much of this has to do with the phallic shape of the primary spinning implements - the distaff and spindle.

The long tradition equating female virtue and work ethic throughout Western culture is worthy of note, since virtue was the historically dominant association with spinning. Spinning has been considered a female occupation since biblical times, and denoted domestic industriousness and female virtue as seen in the Bible’s Book of Proverbs (31: 10-13, 18-19):

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands...

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good:

her candle goeth not out by night.

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

(Carroll and Stewart 138)

Such associations of spinning with virtue and women's work were evident early on in the culture of the ancient Greeks who viewed the distaff as a symbol of the highest female virtue and industriousness (Fantham et al 33-34). Alison Stewart further noted that Roman women from all social classes participated in spinning and weaving as part of their housework, and some medieval women followed in these footsteps by taking part in this professionalized craft. By the late Middle Ages, spinning was so tightly bound to womanly virtue that the Virgin Mary and St Elizabeth were frequently shown holding a distaff in paintings and in early modern devotional prints.²⁶

Spinning was thus both a feminine and domestic art, one that Rozsika Parker calls a nearly defining "female sexual characteristic" and "a signifier of sexual difference" (Parker 60). The social history of spinning is crucial to fully appreciating the motif as it

²⁶ For images of Mary with spindle and distaff at the Annunciation, see Wyss, "Die Handarbeiten," especially 155-62, and the anonymous Nuremberg, *Elizabeth and Mary at her Distaff*, panel painting, ca. 1400 (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg), illustrated by Wyss, 171. For St Elizabeth spinning, see Geiler von Kaisersberg, *The Spiritual Spinner according to the Example of the Widow St Elizabeth*, published at Augsburg in 1510 (see Kaisersberg, *Die gaistlich spinnerin*), and at Strasbourg by Johann Knoblauch in 1511, with title page woodcuts by Hans Burgkmair and Hans Baldung Grien.

is depicted in fairy tales. In her study on women and spinning, *Wie den Frauen der Faden aus der Hand genommen wurde: Die Spindel der Notwendigkeit*,²⁷ Gerburg Treusch-Dieter stated that, "it is a historical fact that the spindle remained in the hands of women until the invention of the spinning machine. Spinning can be considered as the paradigm of female productivity" (Treusch-Dieter 12). As standard symbols of female domesticity, occasionally the spindle and distaff were carried before the bride in wedding processions, to demonstrate that her task was to spin yarn. The spindle and distaff, which so often held a significant place amongst the items the bride took to her new home, (usually presented to her the Sunday after her wedding) were not just ordinary tools (Dergny 15-16). They were often decorated and tied up with ribbons, and myrtle or laurel branches, and represented the honest and hardworking woman, signaling that she would turn out to be a good wife and a good mother (Sarti 70). By her spinning, (and possibly as well by her weaving, sewing, embroidery, quilting and other textile crafts), a woman displayed her skills to the rest of the community, evidenced through the quality of her family's clothes and through the furnishings of her home.

During the Industrial Revolution, spinners would have been found in the majority of homes, and for many housewives it would have been second nature to spin after all their other household chores were completed (Bottigheimer, "Tale Spinners" 143). A woman who was a good spinner was a woman who would become a good housewife. A woman who was unable to spin was often ridiculed and seen as worthless.

In the fairy tale arena, spinning becomes an occupation that elicits little more than moans and groans. A clever heroine will devote all her mental and physical resources to

²⁷ In English translation, the title of Treusch-Dieter's book is known as: "How the Thread Was Taken Out of the Hands of Women: The Spindle of Necessity."

finding avenues for escaping the drudgery of sitting at a spinning wheel (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 120). It is not surprising to discover that spinning holds a somewhat ambiguous status, in Western folklore as a whole. It is seen as both a blessing and a curse. Not unlike manual labor, spinning goes hand in hand with industry and achievement, but it is also connected to physical oppression and enslavement. In fairy tales, a girl's best dowry can be her spinning skills. Dexterity in spinning is a trademark of diligence. On the contrary, in folk tales with a more realistic angle, spinning rarely builds character, instead it seems to deform the body and dull the mind, with the heroine doing almost anything to avoid it. Vanity and laziness are considered taboo in the tales; modesty and industry are a sign of character quality. There seems to be a contradiction between spinning as seen in fairy tales versus folktales, but they actually pertain to the contradictions of peasant life. Hard work was one way of getting ahead, or at least staying even, but it also caused disfigurement and could impede the very goals it set out to achieve (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 123)

The spinning of wool and flax often crossed over from the storytelling context into the story itself. For the most part, peasant women would work in spinning rooms or a room that housed the spindle from morning until evening, and the men and young boys would join them in the evening, where there might be some singing, games, dancing, eating, and most importantly, storytelling (Rumpf 65).

The link between female virtue and spinning appears, therefore, to have been solidly ingrained during the Middle Ages and maintained in Early Modern notions of gender, reflected in the texts of the literary fairy tale movement in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. Spinning is thus deeply embedded in myth, folklore and fairy

tales.

SPINNING IN THE TALES

Among the tales in my corpus, the strongest example of the spinning motif is found in Mlle L'Héritier's "Ricdin-Ricdon", considered to be the first literary form of "Rumpelstiltskin" (Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth* 67). Spinning is the catalyst that commences and drives the action, and this motif remains present throughout most of the tale. Many tales show encouragement of good work by girls and women who spin, and meting out punishment to lazy and careless workers (Davidson 107). It is no coincidence that folktale characters insist upon having industrious wives because the country household depends on the wife's collaboration. The heroes of fairy tales look for the most competent as well as the most beautiful women. There is a warning here to women who don't know how to earn their keep, or who aren't smart enough to look after themselves.

In "Ricdin-Ricdon", it is established fairly early on that the heroine has a complete hatred of spinning: "...elle s'abandonna au plus violent désespoir: elle avait pour le métier de filer une aversion insurmontable..." When Rosanie is first spotted by a handsome prince, she is being dragged around the yard by her evil mother. The woman is interrupted by the prince, who has been captivated by Rosanie's beauty and wants to know why she is being abused. The unkind woman tells him a bold lie - that she is punishing her daughter for spinning too much:

Seigneur, je querelle ma fille, parce qu'elle fait toujours le contraire de ce que je lui dis, je voudrais qu'elle ne filât point, et elle file depuis le matin jusqu'au soir, encore est-ce avec une diligence qui n'a point sa pareille; et je ne lui fais toutes les réprimandes que vous voyez à cause qu'elle file trop.

After hearing this confession completely lacking in credibility, the prince then responds to the old hag: “Ah! Vraiment ma bonne femme, si vous haïssez les filles qui se plaisent à filer, vous n'avez qu'à donner la vôtre à la reine ma mère, qui se divertit si fort à cet amusement, et qui aime tant les fileuses, la reine fera la fortune de votre fille.”

After making this impassioned speech in response to the false pretenses presented to him, the prince takes Rosanie back with him to meet the queen, who is delighted to receive such a talented spinner in her court. Rosanie is brought to a room full of some of the best material in the world, described in great detail by L'Héritier. Here we see a prime example of how the women tale-tellers differentiate themselves from their male counterparts. The conteurs would have certainly stated how magnificent the material was, but L'Héritier gives specific details on where the material comes from and even speaks of a specific type of flame-retardant flax. The latter is mythic in nature and goes back to Rabelais and his reference to an incombustible fiber that resembles asbestos:²⁸

La reine fit loger Rosanie dans un appartement où il y avait une enfilade de chambres toutes remplies d'amas de plus célèbres filasses qui fussent dans le monde. On y voyait du chanvre de Syrie, du lin de l'île d'Ithaque; on y voyait

²⁸ See Maurice Piboule, *Un Geant Legendaire: Gargantua : Archeologie, Legendes, Traditions Des Divinites, Des Saints, Des Dragons*. (S.I: M. Piboule, 1998).

aussi du chanvre de Bretagne, du lin de Picardie, du lin de Flandres, et même de ce fameux lin incombustible, dont on fait une toile merveilleuse que le feu le plus ardent ne saurait endommager.

L'Héritier specifies several materials by name and the fact that these materials were legitimate at the time adds an air of authenticity to her tale. Cultivated from the cannabis plant, hemp is the first item mentioned. Before the industrial revolution, hemp was a popular fiber because it was strong and grew quickly. Predominantly used as fiber for cloth and rope, with advances in techniques in fiber processing, hemp was eventually being spun into yarn almost as fine as silk but stronger than cotton, which was much in demand for expensive fabrics (Booth 36).

Although hemp made its initial appearance in Syria in the twelfth century, it had particular significance in Brittany. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, hemp (both woven and raw), was a crucial Breton product. Brittany became rich by manufacturing and selling cloth made from flax and hemp. The weavers from the town of Locronon were the first to make *olonnes*, a kind of hemp cloth which rapidly became highly desirable in its use as sailcloth. The town thus shipped its products around the world to the French, English and Spanish navies (Collins 46). Hemp was also vital for rigging the shipping, both commercial and military, which operated from Brittany's many ports. This led to the development of a hemp industry in the town at the time, making it quite prosperous. The inclusion of such a specific item solidifies L'Héritier's interest in socio-cultural references and up-to-date knowledge about textile practices.

L'Héritier also mentions linen from Ithaca. Located in the Ionian Sea in Greece,

Ithaca is an island celebrated in antiquity as the kingdom of Ulysses. It is identified with Homer's Ithaca, the home of Odysseus, whose delayed return to the island is one of the elements of the *Odyssey's* plot. Although flax has always been a considerable part of the economic development of Ithaca, it was by no means the dominant contributor. I believe that what is notable about this portion of the excerpt is that L'Héritier mentions a geographical location with a great significance in Western literature. There is an element of mysticism about Ithaca due to its repeated appearance in the Greek epic poem, and this adds a somewhat exotic aura to the pile of material waiting to be spun by Rosanie.

Flax was extensively cultivated in Picardy and Flanders and was in high demand. Flax spinning and linen weaving were important supplementary occupations for peasant men and women in some parts of France, notably in the north near Flanders. Women did most but not all of the flax spinning, pulling threads with a handwheel, and then transposing the thread onto bobbins that they gave to weavers who subsequently warped them on looms (Farr 24).

The appearance of such quantities of fine material only increases Rosanie's worries, as she has neither the speed, nor the desire to spin volumes of the exquisite flax. Ironically, she does possess a certain skill and is able to spin quite well, but because she moves so slowly she is unable to produce more than the smallest length of yarn. Rosanie is not only out of place in the court because she is poor, she is also lazy. She has the capacity to spin with great skill, she just chooses not to because of her predisposed hatred of the task. Therefore although she could remedy her situation by spinning as the queen requested, she would have to work so tirelessly that the thought of doing so is enough to deter her from the task.

Terrified by her situation, she sets off from the court with every intention of ending her life, so much does she hate spinning; “Avec la haine terrible que je sens pour la filerie...Je ne sais pas où commencer, ni par où finir un si ennuyeux et si assommant.” On her journey, she meets a strange man to whom she tells her tale. After hearing her tale of woe, the strange man, who has identified himself as Ricdin-don, bestows upon Rosanie a magic wand, which will enable her to become a magnificent spinner. As nothing comes without a price, Rosanie must return the wand in three months time, and must address Ricdin-Ricdon by name upon meeting him, or he will control her forever. After what seems like a simple request (as it always does), Rosanie accepts the wand, returns to the castle and promptly forgets the name.

Upon returning to the castle, Rosanie tests out the wand on the queen’s flax which “...devint sur-le-champ une livre de fil, tel que le plus beau fil de Flandres.” This particular skill gives her a path into the Queen's good graces. This passage speaks volumes to the role of fiber and fabric in early modern Europe's history. Within the context of the story it is worthwhile to note this allusion to the wealth and economic power of Flanders in all aspects of the textile trade. Flanders was a region where the textile trade was a central economic force. Families worked in their homes to supply a clothier who rented the looms, collected the finished product (woven materials) and distributed them for a profit. Flanders’ trading towns made it one of the richest and most urbanized parts of Europe, (the growth of the textile trade meant a rapid increase in population) taking the wool of neighboring lands and weaving it into cloth for both domestic use and export (De Vries 71). As a result, a very sophisticated culture developed, rivaling those of Northern Italy (Lord and Mohamed 203). Woolen fabrics

produced by craftsmen in Flanders were for centuries transported to the Mediterranean and to the East (Malanima 203).

Some twenty cities and towns within Flanders produced cloth for export by the second half of the thirteenth century, and within these cities and towns, the many stages of cloth production employed substantial numbers of people. Another group of cities, meanwhile, specialized in the trade associated with textile productions: supplying the raw wool and distributing the finished cloth (TeBrake 20).

The queen admires Rosanie partly for her beauty, but really because of her reputation as a spinner, (which is of course, based on magic). She cherishes all the articles that Rosanie magically produces. Once Rosanie takes possession of the magic wand, she creates an image that satisfies if not exceeds society's expectations. As a result of her newfound talent and skill with other domestic chores, Rosanie marries up. Maria Tatar finds irony in this part of the tale: The daughter "works her way up the ladder of social success through her alleged accomplishments as a spinner, yet also manages to avoid sitting down at the spinning wheel" (*The Hard Facts* 123). As is said in the tale, "Il sembla même qu'on oubliait l'extrême bassesse de sa naissance."

The second half of the story does not focus on the spinning motif as much, but there is enough in the beginning to make it one of the dominant motifs of the tale. Zipes summarizes "Ricdin-Ricdon" in saying:

Rosanie's spinning brings out her qualities of diligence, loyalty, and especially honesty, for she admits that her spinning is dependent on the miraculous intervention of supernatural powers. She spins her story, and her fate is in

intertwined with her aristocratic origins and courageous efforts to improvise and to overcome deceit according to the norms of the French civilizing process and the values established by French aristocratic women. Throughout the entire tale, spinning and female creativity remain the central concern and are upheld as societal values that need support. (Fairy Tale as Myth 67)

Although most other French tales do not have spinning as the dominant motif, it does make an appearance in several other stories. In d'Aulnoy's "Le Serpentin vert", there is a brief yet notable mention of spinning. It is at the point in the tale where Laideronnette has betrayed the Green Serpent and looked at him even though he had asked her not to give into her temptation. Once Laideronnette sees the hideous form of her husband, she is banished from the kingdom by the wicked Fairy Magotine. Magotine then punishes her by requiring Laideronnette to complete seemingly impossible tasks. One of the tasks involves domestic work, specifically the act of spinning that Laideronnette must accomplish:

Oh çà! dit Magotine, voici une quenouille chargée de toile d'araignée, je prétends que vous la filiez aussi fine que vos cheveux, et je ne vous donne que deux heures. - Je n'ai jamais filé, madame, lui dit la reine, mais encore que ce que vous voulez me paraisse impossible, je vais essayer de vous obéir.

Putting aside the obvious fact that working with cobwebs would have been a challenge for even the best spinner, the interesting part of this passage is that Laideronnette

dejectedly admits that she does not know how to spin. This is seemingly a rarity in fairy tales, since most of the female characters appear to have at least some knowledge of it, even if they don't enjoy it or are not particularly skilled at it.

Interestingly, If male protagonists must routinely submit to character tests and feats of strength and courage, then female protagonists are required to demonstrate competence in the domestic arena – tests that turn into tasks. They are often placed in humble, if not downright demeaning circumstances, and they seemingly often complete lengthy journeys which result in them being subjected to new domestic drudgery (Tatar, *The Hard Facts* 116).

Laideronnette gives the task her best effort, but between her unfamiliarity and the difficulty of this particular task – she is left completely frustrated: “Lorsqu'elle voulut filer cette crasseuse toile d'araignée, son fuseau trop pesant tombait cent et cent fois en terre, elle eut la patience de le ramasser autant, et de recommencer l'ouvrage à plusieurs reprises; mais c'était toujours inutilement.” The young girl becomes discouraged, and “jetant sa quenouille par terre” she resigns herself to fail. As so often happens with many fairy tale characters stuck in a seemingly impossible situation, Laideronnette is ultimately saved by a supernatural being, here the Green Serpent, who through the intervention of la Fée Protectrice, quickly and invisibly spins the cobweb to perfection: “Aussitôt on frappa trois coups, et sans qu'elle vît personne, sa quenouille fut filée et dévidée.”

After the allotted time has passed, Magotine enters Laideronnette's chamber with the intention of seeing the girl frustrated and the task uncompleted. She even says outright: “Voyons l'ouvrage d'une paresseuse qui ne fait ni coudre, ni filer.” She is therefore shocked upon entering the room and seeing the perfectly spun cobwebs. As she

looks at the surprise on the wicked fairy's face, Laideronnette defends herself by saying: "Madame, dit la reine, je ne le savais pas en effet, mais il a bien fallu l'apprendre."

Magotine acknowledges the skill that spun the thread and says to her: "Quand Magotine vit une chose si étrange, elle prit le peloton de fil d'araignée, et lui dit: vraiment vous êtes trop adroite, ce serait grand dommage de ne vous pas occuper."

It is notable that d'Aulnoy focuses in particular on Laideronnette's difficulty with this task, suggesting that Laideronnette was not made for such work. Passing this and other subsequent trials of domesticity leads the heroine to the final and most difficult task where she will travel to Hell, much like Orpheus in his search for Eurydice. Anne Duggan interestingly notes that: "By depicting domestic work in oppressive terms, and by introducing into the classical story of Psyche a female Orpheus, d'Aulnoy distances *mondain* women from domesticity to give them more noble pursuits" (*Salonnières* 211).

"Le Serpentin vert" is a classic example of AT 425B – The Disenchanted Husband: The Witch's Task. 425B is a subtype of AT 425A – The Search for the Lost Husband. This tale type contains a cluster of closely related tales which tell the story of how a human girl enters into marriage with an enchanted being, whom she loses after breaking a promise to him. She eventually wins him back after the completion of arduous tasks (normally for the evil creature who transformed the husband initially).

425B usually follows a basic sequence of events:

- 1) Heroine's marriage is arranged.
- 2) Heroine weds husband in his enchanted form.
- 3) Husband establishes a taboo.

- 4) Heroine violates the taboo.
- 5) As a result, the husband flees.
- 6) Heroine searches for her husband.
- 7) Witch assigns impossible tasks to the heroine, who eventually accomplishes them.
- 8) Husband (disenchanted) and wife are reunited.

Although different aspects can be highlighted or economized in different tales, the basic structure remains the same. In her version of this particular tale type, d'Aulnoy chooses to focus on the impossible task; specifically the act of spinning that Laideronnette must accomplish. Also worth noting is that a story found in Basile's *Lo Cunto de li cunti* entitled "La radice d'oro" (The Golden Root) also falls into the category of AT 425B, having many similar qualities found in "Le Serpentin vert", and even further worth noting is the use of a spindle in one of the impossible tasks:

Eccoti prendi queste sette fusa, con queste sette fichi, e questo vasetto di miele, e queste sette para di scarpe di ferro, cammina tanto, senza mai riposarti, finchè si consumano, che vedrai nella cima di un stanno a filar da li sopra, e con il filo involto all'ossa de'morti, e tu stà vegliante, come cala a basso il filo toglie l'osso, e legaci il fuso unto di miele, con il fico in vece del verticello, perchè tirandolo in sù, sentendo il dolce, diranno: "Chi mi ha addolcita la mia boccuzza, li sia addolcita la sua venturuccia."

(Therefore, to provide against your peril, take these seven spindles with these seven figs, and a little jar of honey, and these seven pairs of iron shoes, and walk on and on without stopping, until they are worn out; then you will see seven women standing upon a balcony of a house, and spinning from above down to the ground, with the thread wound upon the bone of a dead person. Remain quite still and hidden, and when the thread comes down, take out the bone and put in its place a spindle besmeared with honey, with a fig in the place of the little button. Then as soon as the women draw up the spindles and taste the honey, they will say — “ He who has made my spindle sweet, Shall in return with good fortune meet!”)

D'Aulnoy's "La Chatte blanche" is a lengthy and detailed story full of interesting motifs, including several paragraphs toward the end of the tale that deal with spinning. Towards the end of the tale, Chatte blanche recounts the story of her transformation to the prince, and discusses her life with the old fairy who caused her so much misery. After the old fairy angrily realizes that her young princess has been speaking with a male visitor from her window high up in the tower, Chatte blanche recounts the following episode:

Elle me donna mon déjeuner et ma quenouille. "Quand tu auras mangé, ne manque pas de filer: car tu ne fis rien hier, me dit-elle, et mes sœurs se fâcheront." En effet je m'étais si fort occupée de l'inconnu, qu'il m'avait été impossible de filer. Dès qu'elle fut partie, je jetai la quenouille d'un petit air mutin...

Chatte blanche then describes in detail her attempt to communicate with the knight with whom she had fallen in love, and his subsequent desire to marry her. Devastated at the thought that this could never happen because she was forever locked in a door-less tower, Chatte blanche breaks down into tears of despair. The treacherous fairy comes to see her, and Chatte blanche lies to the fairy so as to keep her young knight a secret:

Je répondis en tremblant que j'étais lasse de filer, et que j'avais envie de faire de petits filets pour prendre des oisillons, qui venaient becqueter les fruits de mon jardin. Ce que tu souhaites, ma fille, me dit-elle, ne te coûtera plus de larmes, je t'apporterai des cordelettes tant que tu en voudras.

Much like her predecessors in fairy tales, Chatte blanche is expected to spin in order to prove herself useful to the evil fairy. Her lack of interest due to the distraction of her lover causes the fairy to react angrily. Chatte blanche uses the twine not for a net, but for a rope ladder to hang out the window. Since of course the fairy did not know what Chatte blanche's true intentions were, she says to the young princess:

Mais ma fille, ton ouvrage est semblable à celui de Pénélope, il n'avance point, et tu ne laisses pas de me demander de quoi travailler. "Ô ma bonne maman! disais-je, vous en parlez bien à votre aise; ne voyez-vous pas que je ne sais comment m'y prendre, et que je brûle tout?"

Here the old fairy references Penelope, the Greek heroine who pretends to weave a design for a burial shroud for Odysseus by day, but unravels it each night to keep her suitors at bay until her husband returns. This subtle reference allows d'Aulnoy to reaffirm to her readers her solid knowledge of the classics, as well as her ability to seamlessly work these references into her tales.

Sometimes it is the tools associated with spinning that are more prevalent in the tales than the act of spinning itself. In “L'Adroite Princesse”, by L'Héritier, the story centers around three daughters and their father. As is the tradition in fairy tales, the names given to the three girls reflect their personalities. Nonchalante, the eldest daughter, was so lazy she could barely bring herself to get dressed, go outside, or even eat. Babillarde, the second daughter, was utterly unable to stop herself from babbling to anyone and anything just to hear herself talk. Both of them lead lives of idleness of the mind and the body.

The youngest girl, named Finette, was, in contrast, a paragon of skill and vivacity and never indulged in a single idle thought or action. She was everything her sisters were not and as a result of her intelligence, wit and virtue, she was her father's favorite. When the father had to take leave of his daughters for a long journey, he needed to decide on a way to ensure that his daughters held themselves to the highest conduct in his absence. He visited a fairy and made the following request:

Pour Finette, je suis sûr de sa vertu, cependant, je la traiterai comme les autres, pour faire tout égal; c'est pourquoi sage Fée, je vous prie de me faire trois quenouilles de verre pour mes filles, qui soient faites avec un tel art que chaque

quenouille ne manque point de se casser sitôt que celle à qui elle appartiendra fera quelque chose contre sa gloire.

After explaining the concept of the distaff and warning his daughters not to stray from the moral path he had laid out for them, he locks them in a specially prepared tower and takes his leave from them. Finette knew the value of a distaff, as she counted spinning among one of the activities that kept her busy while locked away in the tower: “Son fuseau, son aiguille, et ses instruments de musique lui fournissaient des amusements.”

Ultimately the two elder daughters are swayed by a wicked prince who manages to enter the tower, and as a result of their indiscretions, the glass distaffs shatter. The sexual symbolism of the distaff is on full display with this incident. The fact that L’Héritier chooses to use such a sexually charged item as a representation of the girls’ virtue demonstrates at once the emphasis that she puts on the proper behavior of young women, and her certitude that the sexual content of the instrument will be widely understood and its representation culturally acceptable to readers. The distaff of the virtuous Finette remains intact and it is she alone who can show it unbroken to the father upon his return. The two older daughters are sent to the fairy (who initially made the magical items) for punishment. The girls’ punishment is a warning to other young immature women reading this tale. Particular attention is given not so much to their immoral behavior (both of Finette’s sisters bore children to the cunning prince as soon as they met him), but to the fact that young women should keep busy and not be idle. A girl

like Finette who took her responsibilities (such as spinning) seriously, certainly would not have strayed from her path:

Pour commencer la punition des princesses, la fée les mena dans une galerie de son château enchanté, où elle avait fait peindre l'histoire d'un nombre infini de femmes illustres qui s'étaient rendues célèbres par leurs vertus et par leur vie laborieuse. Pour comble de chagrin, la fée leur dit avec gravité, que si elles s'étaient aussi bien occupées que celles dont elles voyaient dans les tableaux, elles ne seraient pas tombées dans les indignes égarements où elles s'étaient perdues.

The distaff is a symbol associated almost exclusively with womanhood. In a male-dominated world, the tools of spinning are a sign of a woman's strength, skill and resourcefulness and subjection all at once. The father could have chosen to have any item made out of glass, but in choosing to use a distaff as a measure of his daughters' virtue, the father selected a feminine symbol which, when used correctly, is representative of a woman's skill. The contrast between the two craft products used in this imagery - yarn and glass - makes for an interesting juxtaposition. Yarn is a soft and malleable material, while glass is brittle, delicate and easily destroyed. The shattering of the glass distaff has obvious sexual connotations, as the virginity of the sisters is visually compromised by the image of the distaff being splintered into hundreds of tiny pieces. It is a vivid imagery of what it is to no longer be sexually innocent.

Spinning tools make somewhat of a sinister appearance in Murat's "Peau d'ours". After having previously escaped the clutches of the evil ogre Rhinoceros, Princesse

Noble-Epine marries her Prince Zelindor and becomes the loving mother of two twin boys. Living in bliss, Noble-Epine has no idea that Rhinoceros was still furious at her and plotted revenge. The ogre devised the following plan:

Il se déguisa en marchand de quenouilles, n'ayant que ce moyen d'entrer dans le palais, où la Reine aurait pu le reconnaître. Il s'avisa donc de courir les rues d'autour, et de crier à tue tête: Quenouilles d'or et fuseaux d'argent à vendre! Les nourrices et les gouvernantes des petits Princes étaient aux fenêtres, et cette marchandise leur plaisant fort, elles furent monter le marchand dans leur chambre. Si elles furent surprises de son effroyable figure, elles avaient encore plus d'envie des quenouilles et les marchandèrent.

It is the uncontrollable desire that the governesses have for these spinning items that causes them to ignore the questionable character selling them, because although he (and the women) know that the items are worth a great deal, the ogre asks only to spend a night in the little prince's bedroom in return for six distaffs and spindles for each of the women. In a classic example of something unbelievable being acted upon without hesitation in fairy tales, the governesses and nurses accept this offer. To the horror of everyone in the castle, the next morning the innocent little princes are found dead in a pool of blood, brutally murdered with their throats slashed open.

It is emphasized several times throughout this episode how badly the women want the spindles and distaffs. So badly, in fact, that they use terrible judgment in arranging to procure them, and the end result is the death of innocents: "Les nourrices et les

gouvernantes, étonnées de la bêtise du marchand, poussées du désir d'avoir des trésors si bon marché, et n'y voyant d'ailleurs nul inconvénient, accordèrent sa demande..."

Their desire to possess these fantastic objects overrides common sense, which is sacrificed in order to get one step closer to the tools that would surely make them the envy of their peers. The conditions for marriage in a folktale accurately reflect real social needs. Men demanded that a wife be able to weave, spin and bake. Thus a golden or silver spindle, as a wish or a gift, is one of the most important folktale objects (Röhrich 196).

In her article on AT 425B, Francesca Canadé-Sautman notes that spinning objects make frequent appearances in that particular tale type and that:

Ces objets usuels et caractéristiquement féminins prennent des formes magiques (filant ou dévidant tout seuls) ou précieuses (en or, en diamants). Si la deuxième femme insiste pour avoir ces objets ce n'est sans doute pas seulement pour leur beauté. Elle doit bien savoir qu'il sont chargés de signification dans les rites de mariage. (38)

Giving in to a seemingly absurd request (such as allowing a complete stranger entrance into a space that should be secure) in exchange for a wonderful object is a common motif in French folktales. It is usually found as a variant in AT 425B.

D'Aulnoy's tale "L'Oiseau bleu" makes use of this motif as well, (by using jewelry and marvelous items to gain entrance to a secret room) as is discussed later in this chapter. It is not necessarily about judgment, but rather about the unstoppable and uncontrollable

urge to possess an extraordinary object. The variant in Murat's tale has a particularly gruesome outcome.

MARVELOUS MATERIAL

The spinning elements discussed in the above tales provide an excellent way of inserting an important aspect of contemporary life into the fairy stories. The realistic action of spinning itself is blended effortlessly with the magical elements, producing a unique and fascinating motif. The material that is created from the art of spinning results in woven pieces of cloth, and thus it is relevant to discuss the final step which is responsible for the creation of the wondrous items mentioned in some of the tales. Although it is never actually stated how the marvelous cloth comes to be, one may assume it was likely woven by fairies or another magical creature. While textile arts cannot be considered a traditional motif, the fact that marvelous, woven cloth makes several appearances throughout the conteuses' tales - both as décor and as magical material - warrants a brief introduction to the history of weaving.

One of the most ancient crafts, hand weaving is a method of forming a pliable plane of threads by interlacing them in a rectangular motion. Invented in a pre-ceramic age, it has remained essentially unchanged to this day. Even the latest developments in the craft through introduction of power machinery have not changed the principle of weaving. The development of weaving is heavily dependent on the development of textile fibers, spinning and dyeing, all of which play a role in the creation of fabric (Albers *On Weaving* 19-21).

Weaving became increasingly mechanized as time passed. Early looms were simply large, square wooden frames. These frames were mounted vertically and the yarns that formed the warp of the cloth were hung straight down from the top of the loom. By the fourteenth-century, more complex looms were developed. These looms were still wooden frames but instead of being simple vertical squares, they were now massive machine in which the cloth weavers seated at these machines used a combination of hand and foot controls to weave the yarns into the cloth (Newman 95).

In early Greek culture, weaving was almost always done by women, although male weavers did exist. The Greeks in particular were fascinated by fiber arts as a source of motifs. Weaving by women was often linked to ideas of enchantment, for the Greeks recurrently associated textiles (and their production) with magic. Many mythological stories contain a female character who weaves, such as Penelope, Arachne (the mortal weaver who bragged that her skill was greater than that of Athena, and was subsequently turned into a spider by the goddess), and Philomela (who was raped and her tongue cut out, so that her only means of communication was to weave an account of her sufferings into a tapestry and send it to her sister).

The most prevalent example of marvelous cloth occurs in “La Chatte blanche” by Mme. D’Aulnoy. Three sons are sent off by the king, their father, on a mission to hunt down exotic items which will prove their worthiness to rule the kingdom upon the king’s retirement. Two of the items are standard, a companion for the king (in this case a dog), and the final item, a princess worthy of being a future queen. Even after his sons bring him three exotic dogs, the king is not yet ready to give up his crown and tells his sons to travel the world once more, this time in search of a beautiful piece of muslin: “...qu’ainsi

il leur donnait un an à chercher, par mer et par terre, une pièce de toile si fine, qu'elle passât par le trou d'une aiguille à faire du point de Venise.”

The brothers part ways and the youngest brother returns to Chatte blanche, whom he met on the first portion of his journey. Chatte blanche lives in a magnificent enchanted palace, where felines are the only residents and where the proud history of cats is represented in art throughout the castle. During his pleasant stay at the magical castle, the young man becomes enchanted with Chatte blanche and her lifestyle. When the moment comes for the prince to leave Chatte blanche and return to his father with the dog, she is the one who sends him on his way with a one-of-a-kind minuscule dog that amazes everyone in the court. So naturally, when it comes time for the prince to complete the second quest, finding an exquisite piece of muslin, he returns immediately to Chatte blanche.

The son does not return to Chatte blanche just for the muslin, as it was her companionship that he treasured, but the cat of course has what he is looking for. In all her other descriptions about the cat's life at their enchanted palace, d'Aulnoy speaks of common (more-or-less) cat-related activities – eating mice and pigeons, hunting, playing, etc. Weaving is really the sole activity d'Aulnoy mentions that is the domain of humans. Ultimately, the cats in the tale are all enchanted humans, but it is interesting that in their transformed state, weaving is the only uniquely human skill that they continue to practice.

From when he first set foot in the palace, the prince is surrounded by luxury and the marvelous; for instance in the room where he slept: “tout était tapissé d'ailes de

papillon.” He returned to the cat, certain that she alone could provide him with what he needed:

Chatte Blanche prenant un air plus sérieux, lui dit que c'était une affaire à laquelle il fallait penser, que par bonheur elle avait dans son château des chattes qui filaient fort bien, qu'elle-même y mettrait la griffe et qu'elle avancerait cette besogne, qu'ainsi il pouvait demeurer tranquille, sans aller bien loin chercher ce qu'il trouverait plus aisément chez elle, qu'en [aucun] lieu du monde.

Upon his departure, the young prince is presented with a walnut said to contain the exotic material requested by the king. When the prince returns to his father's castle, he opens the walnut, and after struggling through several other nuts, kernels and grains (much like a Russian nesting doll), the prince comes to a miniscule millet seed, which, when opened, contained the most amazing piece of material ever seen by human eyes:

...il en tira une pièce de toile de quatre cents aunes si merveilleuse, que tous les oiseaux, les animaux et les poissons y étaient peints avec les arbres, les fruits et les plantes de la terre, les rochers, les raretés et les coquillages de la mer, le soleil, la lune, les étoiles, les astres, et les planètes des cieux: il y avait encore le portrait des rois et des autres souverains qui régnaient pour lors dans le monde: celui de leurs femmes, de leurs maîtresses, de leurs enfants, et de tous leurs sujets, sans que le plus petit polisson y fût oublié...L'on présenta l'aiguille, et elle y passa et repassa six fois. Le roi et les deux princes aînés gardaient un morne silence,

quoique la beauté et la rareté de cette toile les forçassent de temps en temps de dire que tout ce qui était dans l'univers, ne lui était pas comparable.

Although this magical piece of muslin could never exist in reality, this passage highlights the respect and interest people had for the craftsmanship that could be achieved with skillful weaving. Even the most powerful people in the court, the king included, were practically rendered speechless by the magical piece of cloth.

There was a deliberate and conscientious effort that went into the description of the cloth. It was not enough to simply say that the cloth contained beautiful images; d'Aulnoy wanted her readers to be drawn in by the magical material as much as the characters in her story, and for that to occur, she needed to give as vivid a description as possible. The piece of cloth from this excerpt is not only important because of its extraordinary beauty, or because it is so intricately ornamented, but because it is encyclopedic in nature. The description is so full of information that it cannot simply be considered mere decoration or a magical gift, but rather as a representation of the order of the world and current affairs.

Spinning and weaving are metaphors for transformation, and transformation is woman's work. There is a progression of development from the very beginning of this art form: The woman of the house spins flax or wool into yarn, from which she then produces clothes, then appropriates old clothes into rags, rags into quilts or rugs and quilts or rugs into art (Gould xxiv). As the distaff, spindle and loom were tools of magic for the Fates of Greek mythology, so too were they often a source of enchantment for the heroines of the French tales. Some critics have even suggested that the structure of fairy

stories, with their repetitions, reprises, elaboration and minutiae, replicates the thread and fabric of one of women's principal labors – the making of textiles from the wool to the finished bolt of cloth (Warner, *Beast to the Blonde* 23).

Women and textile arts have been associated with each other for thousands of years. While motifs associated with textile arts may not be the most prevalent in the corpus of tales I discuss, they are nevertheless extremely present, and infuse the narratives with the depth, sexual imagery, and social significance that is evoked by textile techniques through the symbolic level. The use of these motifs, which highlight the industriousness, cleverness, and virtue of women, are also stark reminders of the condition of women in early modern society and the social expectations placed on them. As such, they act as incontrovertible gender markers that produce a non-universalist form of symbolism beyond notions of essence and archetype, grounded in the specific historical experience of early modern women.

CLOTHING AND JEWELRY

Having examined the appearance of textile arts in connection with selected heroines of the *conteuses'* tales, we will now look at the ultimate product of spinning and weaving – the clothing and other accoutrements worn by the heroes and heroines as they live out their daily existence in the tales. Clothing plays a much more complex role than merely covering or adorning, and engages a series of social and symbolic codes.

In many fairy tales, external beauty is a sign of inward virtue and outward nobility. The presence of good looks and beautiful clothes is as important in the tales told in the Salons as it was in courtly French society (Thelander, "Mother Goose" 483). Beautiful

clothing makes recurring appearances throughout many tales, which prefer to speak of clothes rather than bodies. The beauty of both mortals and otherworldly beings in the fairy tale is indicated above all through what is associated with them – worldly possessions, castles, marble palaces, etc. (Lüthi, *Fairytales as Art Form* 16). Conformity to the aristocratic code, together with polished manners, confirmed one's membership in elite society. The body was transformed into an artifact by a complicated dress code that both obscured and enlarged it. Elegant clothing constituted part of an elaborate system, which if properly manipulated, signified superior status (Stanton 127-30).

Costume consists of clothing and adornment, and they artfully communicate a culture's conception of how its society is structured and the position of an individual in that society. Textile and clothing scholars Justine Cordwell and Ronald Schwartz note that:

Clothing and adornment are universal features of human behavior, and an examination of when they reveal, and attempt to conceal, contributes to our knowledge about the fabric of cultures and to our understanding of the threads of human nature. (1)

Incorporating lavish descriptions of decor, clothes, and jewelry- fairy tales participated in the period's infatuation with fashion and rich materials. The genre certainly cultivated a relationship with the culture of consumption. Both produced and consumed by cultured society, this new literary conte was a world apart from its simpler folkloric parallels. It constituted a unique modern genre that reflected the social and aesthetic interests of the

time (Cordwell and Schwartz 1).

FRENCH FASHION: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

France has a long and intricate history with clothing and fashion. Beginning in medieval times, there were strict guidelines to follow. According to E. Jane Burns:

Sumptuary laws flourished in southern France from the mid thirteenth-century through the fifteenth-century as urban legislation designed primarily to curb public display of finery among aristocrats. The sumptuary regulations by royal decree that apply to northern France in the thirteenth-century, however, address class boundaries more specifically. They attempt to regulate, along with other expenditures, the dress of non-noble men and the women of their rank who have been usurping the visual distinction previously reserved for members of the aristocracy. In so doing, these royal decrees attest to the power of clothing to overwhelm biological heritage and effectively forge a social body from cloth. (32)

Burns goes on further to say that royal sumptuary legislation was an attempt to enforce class hierarchy by regulating costly dress for men and women. At the same time, these regulations revealed how lavish attire sculpted and fashioned noble identities socially (Burns 33).

These ordinances were designed in order to regulate consumption according to one's status and income. Rich clothing and other conspicuous consumption was of

considerable importance in the noble courts of France, populous cities, and in particular the social and political center of Paris. Display of sumptuous items became a point of growing tension, both in the public spaces and in private households. Sumptuary regulations point out what may have been most desired by the public, and thus what these authorities found most threatening. The regulations are concerned more with stabilizing how much a person could consume and display relative to his or her income than with prohibiting dubious attire, a distinction often not fully recognized (Heller 317).

Fashion and luxury were closely linked by the fact that new consumer products were often regarded as luxuries. At first, many fashionable extravagances (such as watches, shoe buckles, etc.) were owned by elites in early Modern Europe, but gradually became available for mass consumption. However, although fashion and luxury are in some ways related, they are different concepts. Luxury is a permanent designation based on rarity and expenditure, but fashion is fleeting and ephemeral. Maintaining a wardrobe that is constantly in fashion implies a certain degree of luxury because it requires constant upgrade, but it was actually more possible to be regularly *à la mode* than ostentatious. This means that fashion – both now and in the past, can reach a larger proportion of the population than luxury. That is the assumption of what occurred in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. There was a significant increase of the quantity of goods available on the market; some of which were luxury goods consumed by the upper classes, while others were low-priced imitations of those goods (Claverias 75).

Sustained by the cultural prestige of Versailles, French dress achieved an extraordinary level of elegance and was the focal point of rich and distinguished society in Europe. Clothing provided a way of observing the mechanisms of court society in

action – it was a way of demonstrating rank and acquiring prestige. It was a critical element in the realities of a system which was controlled by the king and those in his court. During the reign of Louis XIV, France emerged as a shining example of civilization, elegance and the last word in fashion and style (Lemire 23). The court of Louis XIV established France as the ultimate trendsetter among the elite in Europe. The king welcomed in an era of unprecedented extravagance and splendor not seen previously in the court. Excess, luxury, color and texture became synonymous with Versailles. Louis XIV was well aware of the symbolic nature of clothing, and saw the potential importance of fashion to French industry. Undoubtedly, the clothing worn by the Sun King was meant to represent what he stood for: unparalleled power and glory. The monarch chose not to represent himself as a warrior-king but as the symbol of the most magnificent court in the history of the Western world. The king and his court saw the value of French fashion leadership. Textiles were the foundation of the fashion industry, and some of the finest materials of gold and silver fabrics, and silk were being produced in France (Steele 21).

When at his court, the king insisted upon strict guidelines for women. Ladies at the court could not wear comfortable and loose manteaux, rather they had to wear grand habit with its tight lacing, bare shoulders and elaborate embroidery. This style held women's bodies straight, and made them appropriately disciplined for formal court appearances (Mukerji 235).

Clothing in the court of Versailles was not just a matter of fashion, but was also a means of preparing for the performances of power that occurred on a daily basis. Wearing costumes was pleasurable and a way to take on a public identity. Fashion was

historically an art of pretense. The fashion system on Europe began when wealthy merchants used clothing in their attempt to equal the nobility. Through costumes and politics they were able to achieve a new social identity. Dress at Versailles was similarly filled with pretense and politics. Nobles at the court used extraordinarily elaborate and current clothing in their attempt to be powerful Frenchmen (Mukerji 235).

Distinctions of dress played a central role in setting the French elite apart from the lower orders. Over and above this traditional role of rich apparel, Louis XIV successfully promoted costume as a means of advertising the French luxury industries. He and his entourage set French styles on the road to European supremacy, with male dress at Versailles being every bit as superb as its female counterpart (Spawforth 51).

As fashion progressed into the eighteenth-century, some of the most sumptuous, flamboyant textiles were produced during that period: considered the heyday of the soieries of Lyon. In the second part of the eighteenth-century, a specialized press, read by both men and women (and written by female journalists concealed under male names and visa versa), developed and spread from the capital. These periodicals proclaimed Parisian good form and the appeal of an attractive appearance, heralded the clothing crafts and trades, and provided rules for care of the body and codes of beauty (Roche 187).

In many respects, the French women's tales are all about cultural pleasures, in addition to being about men and women enjoying the act of pleasing each other by their physical appearance. As much as real men and women enjoy the act of primping in order to impress the opposite sex, so too do the characters who inhabit the fairy tale world of the women writers. Primping was also done to impress the same sex as well, yet not necessarily in a sexual sense. The approval of others with regards to one's clothing and

appearance is important in today's society and was absolutely a matter of social life or death in the Ancien Régime. The fictional men and women take pride in their appearance by enhancing it with makeup, jewels, and fine clothing (Duggan, *Salonnières* 218). If priming was an important ritual for the audience reading the tales, certainly fictional characters would also follow this practice. Luxurious clothing, impressive jewels and elaborate coiffures all add to this heightened observation on current cultural mores.

It's only to be expected that d'Aulnoy and the other women would see fit to highlight the potentially superficial, but in reality, very important motif of clothing. In their culture, where appearance and poise played such a critical role in aristocratic society, readers of the tales would enjoy and appreciate the stories even more with these realistic elements seamlessly interspersed among the more magical elements of the plot.

CLOTHING AND THE TALES

Mme. d'Aulnoy weaves many details into her descriptions, which would undoubtedly be appreciated by her audience of aristocratic women reading the tales. In "Gracieuse et Percinet", in order to please her father, the heroine:

Elle s'habilla aussitôt d'une robe verte à fond d'or; elle laissa tomber ses blonds cheveux sur ses épaules, flottant au gré du vent, comme c'était la mode en ce temps-là, et elle mit sur sa tête une légère couronne de roses et de jasmins, dont toutes les feuilles étaient d'émeraudes.

The anachronism of “en ce temps-là” is a bit disconcerting because the description in this excerpt is not an example of seventeenth-century attire, nor is it acceptable in medieval times other than for the dressing of a virgin at her wedding. If anything, this description evokes more of a mythological description of a goddess, and the line that follows: “En cet état, Vénus, mère des Amours, aurait été moins belle; cependant la tristesse qu'elle ne pouvait surmonter paraissait sur son visage.” reinforces the idea that d’Aulnoy was perhaps depicting a mythological woman as opposed to a historical one.

The description of Gracieuse only enhances the overall picture that has already been painted. The crown of flowers alludes to a non-contemporary manner of dress, making Gracieuse’s style medieval in style. Although d’Aulnoy describes many of the virtues possessed by the heroine (she is portrayed as sweet, intelligent, learned and industrious), there are no words devoted to her physical attributes. (This is in direct opposition to Grognon - her nemesis, to whom much attention is given by describing her less than desirable features.) The great detail given to the splendid clothing Gracieuse is wearing simply becomes a vehicle describing yet another moral virtue: her lack of vanity (DeGraff 92).

This is not to say that Gracieuse is not beautiful – only that she herself is refreshingly not aware of it, whereas it is obvious to everyone else. D’Aulnoy’s heroines often are compared to Venus, whether in an outright reference, or by placing them in a setting equated with the goddess. After dressing her in all her finery, d’Aulnoy says about Gracieuse: “En cet état Vénus, mère des Amours, aurait été moins belle; cependant la tristesse qu'elle ne pouvait surmonter paraissait sur son visage.” D’Aulnoy uses an equivalent mythological comparison in another one of her tales, “La Chatte Blanche”,

when she compares the prince to Adonis, which stresses the importance of beauty in positive male characters as well.

Whereas the inwardly beautiful Gracieuse has an equally outwardly beautiful appearance, Grognon, whose inner soul is ugly and tainted, is given a rather sinister and even clownish attire:

Cette laide créature était bien occupée à se parer. Elle se fit faire un soulier plus haut d'une demi coudée que l'autre, pour paraître un peu moins boiteuse. Elle se fit faire un corps rembourré sur une épaule pour cacher sa bosse; elle se mit un œil d'émail le mieux fait qu'elle put trouver, elle se farda pour se blanchir; elle teignit ses cheveux roux en noir; puis elle émit un robe de satin amarante²⁹, doublée de bleu, avec une jupe jaune et des rubans violets.

The soulier d'une coudée plus haut could possibly be seen as a subversive dig towards the king. High heels arose in Europe in the late sixteenth century and became popular for men and women throughout the seventeenth century. They were worn by Louis XIV to raise his short stature, and were thus adopted by his courtiers in imitation. In fact, a man of low birth could be referred to as a plat-pied, a flat foot, since he could not afford to wear shoes with high heels (DeJean, *Essence of Style* 91). Perhaps this is d'Aulnoy's subtle way of mocking the king's height and his attempt to artificially increase it.

The color amaranth, which is a reddish-rose or magenta color, represents immortality in Western culture because the name is derived from the name of a flower in

Greek mythology. It grew in the abode of the Greek gods on Mount Olympus, and never died. It is thus a symbol of immortality. Something that is perceived as everlasting may be described by the adjective amaranthine (B. Walker 423). Although the symbolism of immortality does not quite fit with the image of Grognon, the inclusion of such an unusual color demonstrates a high level of eruditeness from the author.

Non-noble characters like Grognon who attempt to give off a noble appearance without actually truly being noble thus end up looking tacky and gaudy (Duggan, *Salonnières* 218). Gracieuse's clothing description, although shorter, has a quiet classiness about it, a quality that is lacking in Grognon's apparel. "Less is more" is an appropriate qualifier to these two young women. Grognon's appearance has so many unattractive elements clashing together, that the final result is anything but pleasing to the eye. Instead of improving her appearance, it makes her even more hideous. There is equally no mention of any of her inner qualities (not that there any pleasant ones); it is all about her unattractive outer appearance.

As Grognon continues to become more wicked, and in turn, more ugly throughout the story, Gracieuse retains her beauty and the clothing she wears only enhances her appearance. Later in the story:

Lorsqu'elle fut levée, on lui présenta des robes de toutes les couleurs, des garnitures de pierreries de toutes les manières, des dentelles, des rubans, des gants et des bas de soie; tout cela d'un goût merveilleux: rien n'y manquait. On lui mit une toilette d'or ciselé; elle n'avait jamais été si bien parée et n'avait jamais paru si belle.

Gracieuse is truly bedecked in every kind of imaginable accessory leaving no part of her body undecorated. Between the lace and ribbons which enhance her already luxurious dresses to the embossed gold jewelry with which she is adorned, nothing is forgotten when d'Aulnoy describes the beautiful attire of her heroine. Lace was a particularly valuable commodity during d'Aulnoy's life, and was frequently in great demand. Frustrated by France's reliance on imported lace, Colbert instructed the French ambassador in Venice to provide feedback on lace-making and as a result imported thirty lace-makers to France in order to begin a new French industry. In 1695 he established lace industries in Alençon, Valenciennes, Arras, Quesnoy, Sedan, Chateau-Thierry, Loudon, and Aurillac, and made conditions for the Venetian workers conditions so attractive that they preferred to remain rather than return to their own country. It was soon forbidden to buy lace from other countries so that the French industry could flourish (Crowston 34).

D'Aulnoy's hero, although not as elaborately dressed as his counterpart, is also clothed in splendid attire – and a specific reason is given: “Percinet entra dans sa chambre, vêtu d'un drap d'or et vert (car le vert était sa couleur, parce que Gracieuse l'aimait.)”

Displaying nobility through the body was practiced by both men and women, a trait which d'Aulnoy frequently highlights in her tales. Anne Duggan states:

That positive male and female characters are intelligent and seek to please each other through their physical appearance undoes the dichotomy between male intelligence and female beauty. By making beauty both a female and a male

virtue, d'Aulnoy furthermore renders gender-neutral the attachment to fashion and artifice. D'Aulnoy upholds fashion as a visible sign of one's nobility and affection for another person. With respect to the expenses incurred in dressing fashionable, however, that is a matter for the fairies." (*Salonnières* 221)

For men, dressing in finery, while not as overtly present in the tales as it is for women, nevertheless exists. Before meeting with Chatte blanche, d'Aulnoy notes about the prince that: "Après qu'on l'eût poudré, frisé, parfumé, paré, ajusté, et rendu plus beau qu'Adonis, les mains le conduisirent dans une salle superbe par ses dorures et ses meubles." Preparing to meet the titular queen in *La Belle aux cheveux d'or*, Avenant combs his hair and powders himself: "Il prit un habit de brocart, des plumes incarnates et blanches; il se peigna, se poudra, se lava le visage, mit une riche écharpe toute brodée à son cou, avec un petit panier, et dedans un beau petit chien, qu'il avait acheté en passant à Bologne. "

In each instance, the character's exterior appearance is constructed in such a way as to display his or her inner nobility. Stylish attention to one's appearance becomes a sign that one wishes to please without, however, the connotation of sinful behavior. It also signifies nobility.

It is not only the men and women in this story who are dressed up, but animals as well. Their adornment reflects similar qualities to those their human counterparts possess: "Quand le cheval qu'on menait à Grognon parut auprès de celui de Gracieuse, il avait l'air d'une franche rosse, et la housse du beau cheval était si éclatante de pierreries que celle de l'autre ne pouvait entrer en comparaison." D'Aulnoy not only felt it necessary to

adorn her human heroes and heroines with beautiful accessories, but also the non-human characters as well.

It is true that both in reality and in the fairy tale world characters dress to impress those around them, but Mme de la Force makes a point of describing the clothing of a protagonist who lives completely alone, yet dresses as if she were attending the finest affairs and being admired by everyone. In “Persinette”, the title character is a young girl who has been shielded from the world with no human companionship other than her wicked captor, who is her only contact with the outside world. It is due to the indiscretions of her parents before her birth even occurred that Persinette is the target of this cruel punishment, but she does her best to be content with her unfortunate situation.

Once the wicked witch realizes that the young girl’s beauty will be unsurpassed, she locks her in a magical silver tower in order to keep prying eyes away from the treasure she wished to keep all to herself. It is in the tower that Persinette has access to everything she could possibly need – including the finest clothing and jewels imaginable: “Persinette n'avait qu'à ouvrir les tiroirs de ses cabinets, elle les trouvait pleins des plus beaux bijoux; ses garde-robes étaient magnifiques, autant que celles des reines d'Asie; et il n'y avait pas une mode qu'elle ne fût la première à avoir.”

The specific mention of “des reines d’Asie” invokes the idea of Orientalism in France during the reign of Louis XIV. In intellectual circles at the time, there was a great interest in the studies of Asian culture (Dew 7). Early Orientalism had an immense impact on French culture. Exotic luxury goods from abroad transformed daily life and also had a concrete impact on French society. It has been argued that endorsing oriental splendor at court gave rise to the creation of “Frenchness” through fashion (McCabe 3-5).

The reference to the word “reine” demonstrates that even in the description of the marvelous and rich wardrobe, de la Force sees her characters as powerful heroines, as well as impeccably dressed women. The two ideas can coexist, not only in reality but also in the fairy tale world.

While it is not unusual to mention beautiful clothes and jewels in a fairy tale, it is rather interesting that Persinette is all dressed up – but is also completely alone. “Elle était seule dans ce beau séjour, où elle n'avait rien à désirer que de la compagnie...” Why such elaborate clothing when there is nobody around to admire it? Although women generally tended to dress in order to impress the opposite sex, there is something to be said about a woman who dresses well for her own pleasure, whether there is someone there to admire her or not. A woman who is content to make herself attractive for her own sake means that she takes pride in herself, *for* herself, and does not necessarily need to do so for the benefit of a man’s attention, but rather for the pleasure it brings her as a woman.

Mme de Beaumont makes a subtle statement toward clothing in “La Belle et la bête.” She describes Belle, the heroine, as being virtuous and bright, while her older sisters are portrayed as coarse and unintelligent. When Belle’s father presents his three daughters with the opportunity to choose a gift from his travels, the two elder daughters: “...le prièrent de leur apporter des robes, des palatines, des coëffures, et toutes sortes de bagatelles.” whereas upon gentle pressure from her father, Belle says “je vous prie de m'apporter une rose, car il n'en vient point ici.”

Ironically, it is the rose that is the catalyst for Belle becoming the prisoner of the Beast. Upon becoming lost in the woods, Belle’s father finds himself in an enchanted

castle where he is given food and shelter. When he leaves the castle the next morning, he remembers Belle's request and plucks a branch of roses from an arbor outside the castle. (He is unable to fulfill his eldest daughters' request because he is returning home poorer than when he started.) Angry at what he perceives as ungratefulness for the hospitality he has provided for the man, the Beast demands that the merchant bring back one of his daughters in return for his selfish act, or he will perish.

When the merchant returns home and tells the story of the Beast, Belle's two sisters berate her, completely missing the fact that their father has gone through this traumatic experience, and instead lament: "Voyez ce que produit l'orgueil de cette petite créature, disaient-elles; que ne demandait-elle des ajustements comme nous; mais non, mademoiselle voulait se distinguer." This is quite a superficial thought in such a difficult moment for the family. And Belle does indeed distinguish herself from her sisters, in that her request is a simple and pure one, while the wish of her sisters is greedy. The irony of the request is that while the materialistic desires of the sisters will ultimately cause an unhappy ending for them, the simplicity of a rose is the catalyst which will first bring about danger and ultimately provide Belle with a happy ending.

Belle unselfishly tells her father that she will be the one to fulfill the Beast's demands. She returns to the castle and spends her days there with only the Beast for a companion. As the events of the story unfold, the Beast slowly falls in love with Belle, and releases her to see her father. He graciously sends along with her a trunk full of magnificent dresses and jewels. When Beauty returns home: "Elle prit la moins riche de ces robes et dit à la servante de ranger les autres dont elle voulait faire présent à ses sœurs." The Beast, anticipating Belle's selfless actions, does not allow that to happen

and the trunk magically disappears, only reappearing when she agrees to keep the dresses for herself.

This particular tale is noticeably different from many of the other tales in that, while clothing plays a role within the story, it does not play a role for Belle. She is constantly described as being intelligent and having her wits about her. Beautiful clothing, while appreciated, is not something that makes her feel happy or complete. This is a fairly significant difference between Belle and the heroines of many of the other fairy tales. Mme de Beaumont was not a grand lady of Versailles, but rather a governess living in England who wrote about the best ways to educate the young (Sale 58). In her portrayal of Belle as exemplary of proper upbringing, she further solidifies the importance of brains - in addition to beauty.

A similar concept is seen in “La bonne petite souris” by d’Aulnoy. At the beginning of the tale, a beautiful queen is wrongfully imprisoned by a wicked king. The kindness she shows to a lowly mouse is well rewarded when the mouse reveals herself to be a powerful fairy. In gratitude for the fairy’s kindness, the queen offers her newborn child to the fairy asks her to take the baby away for safekeeping. Unfortunately, as the fairy is preparing to leave with little Joliette, the wicked fairy Cancaline whisks her away. The little girl grows up away from her mother, (who has since been freed by the good fairy), manages to run away from Cancaline, and ultimately becomes a turkey-herd for the wicked king who imprisoned her mother at the start of the tale.

News spreads in the kingdom that the king’s son is planning on marrying his turkey-herd. The good fairy decides to see this young girl for herself, as she is overcome with curiosity as to how such a lowly creature could find her way into the prince’s heart.

The fairy is surprised to find a beautiful girl: "...vêtue d'une grosse toile, nu-pieds, avec un torchon gras sur sa tête. Il y avait là des habits d'or et d'argent, des diamants, des perles, des rubans, des dentelles qui traînaient à terre; les dindons se hochaient dessus, les crottaient et les gâtaient." Joliette has no intention of marrying the ugly and mean-spirited prince, resulting in her complete rejection of the finery that surrounds her: "Laissez-moi en repos avec mes petits dindons; je les aime mieux que toutes vos braveries." A girl of lesser integrity and self-esteem would have seized the opportunity to raise herself from her lowly state, marry the prince and take the beautiful clothing that comes with the union. But Joliette stands firm and keeps her integrity.

The fairy comes to realize that this girl is Joliette, and because she knows that the rags she wears are not befitting to her true stature, says to her:

Mais je voudrais que vous fussiez plus propre, car vous ressemblez à une petite souillon; prenez les beaux habits que voilà, et vous accommodez. " Joliette, qui était fort obéissante, quitta aussitôt le torchon gras qu'elle avait dessus la tête, et la secouant un peu, elle se trouva toute couverte de ses cheveux, qui étaient blonds comme un bassin, et déliés comme fils d'or.

After Joliette sees herself in the beautiful garments that look so foreign on her, the fairy remarks: "Qui croyez-vous être, ma chère Joliette, car vous voilà bien brave?" To which Joliette replies: "En vérité, il me semble que je suis la fille de quelque grand roi." A change of clothes in a fairy tale often equals a change in state (Gould 420). Although

she always maintains a noble inner quality, it was not until she puts on the exquisite garments that Joliette sees herself as royal figure she actually is.

One ensemble is always more beautiful than the next, more magnificent than any other dress ever made, only to be outdone by the girl who is wearing it. The fairy tale is perfectionistic. It seeks the extreme and the high degrees. There are hyperboles in characters, actions, and of course, clothing (Lüthi, *Fairytales as Art* 57). The wicked king gives his servants the order to fetch Joliette in order to force her to marry the prince. When the servants arrive they find a girl dressed in: “une belle robe de satin blanc, toute en broderie d'or, avec des diamants rouges, et plus de mille aunes de rubans partout. Jamais, au grand jamais, il ne s'est vu une si belle fille ; ils n'osaient lui parler, la prenant pour une princesse.” Something as simple as a change of clothes makes a former turkey-herd almost unrecognizable. What a character is wearing makes other characters form immediate impressions about rank and class.

Although they do not play a major role in every story, enough detailed accounts of clothing are written down in other tales, that they deserve to be mentioned even though they do not necessarily move the action of the plot forward. In d'Aulnoy's “Le Nain jaune”, on the day of Toute-Belle's wedding day, she is dressed more beautifully than any other day:

Ce n'était que diamants jusqu'à ses souliers, ils en étaient faits, sa robe de brocart d'argent était chamarrée d'une douzaine de rayons du soleil que l'on avait achetés bien cher; mais aussi rien n'était plus brillant, et il n'y avait que la beauté de cette princesse qui pût être plus éclatante: une riche couronne ornait sa tête, ses

cheveux flottaient jusqu'à ses pieds, et la majesté de sa taille se faisait distinguer au milieu de toutes les dames qui l'accompagnaient.

The rayons du soleil no doubt are a reference to the Sun King and his magnificence. The mention of gold and silver in this paragraph is another allusion to the monarchy. Fashion at the time of Louis XIV was a question of etiquette, with Louis XIV as the lawmaker. He desired the precise regulation of clothing according to minute distinctions of rank. Although he was relaxed about using lace, he demonstrated strong ownership about the use of woven material and gold and silver trimmings, declaring that the use of this particular kind of brocade belonged solely to himself, the princes of his family, and certain subjects on whom he chose to bestow this privilege (Steele 22).

Although it seems to come from an imaginary world, Toute-Belle's dress follows the historical model of the clothing worn by the sixteenth-century Fairy Queen, Elizabeth of England. Apart from the lavish ornamentation that was a feature of so much of Elizabeth's clothing, she wore styles that tended towards progressively exaggerated and fantastic, which was primarily a reflection of what was being worn in Europe at the time (Somerset 51).

In a portrait painting by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, simply entitled *Elizabeth I* (1592), Elizabeth is shown in full royal regalia. She wears a dress of extraordinary size and magnificence, with a large French farthingale³⁰ covered with jewels and pearls. Her lengthy sleeves fall behind her from her shoulders to the ground.

³⁰ A farthingale is a type of structure used under Western European women's clothing in the late 15th and 16th century to support skirts into a desired shape. It is expanded by a series of circular hoops that increase in diameter from the waist down to the hem and are sewn into the underskirt to make it rigid.

Her dress has an open laced ruff³¹ and her head is framed by a wired head rail, a kind of huge gauze collar. Ropes of pearls extend to her stomach (Vincent 82). There is a good chance that this kind of imagery was highly influential when d'Aulnoy was creating the dress for her fairy tale characters.

In the celebrated painting, *The "Rainbow" Portrait of Elizabeth I*, (1600-1603), (attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger), Elizabeth is wearing an elaborate crown and rich garments. Her uncovered bosom and unbound hair signify her status as a maiden and a virgin, but her richly embroidered garments also suggest that the image depicts her as a bride (Montrose 139). Elizabeth is depicted as the sun that makes the rainbow possible. This image is solidified by the inscription "*Non sine sole iris*" (No rainbow without the sun). The portrait is a magnificent display of youthful virginity highlighted by her fantastical attire. The masque-like headdress is topped with a crescent moon in reference to the virgin goddess Diana. Pearls, a symbol of chastity, cover her body from her hair and ears down to her throat and wrists. There is a jeweled serpent of wisdom that encircles her wrist (Frye 101-102).

Although beautiful clothing is most often centered on young girls, there is no shortage of handsome young men who appear dressed in elaborate outfits that rival that of their female counterparts. In "Fortunée" by d'Aulnoy, although the titular heroine of the story originally has nothing but a simple "habit de toile", her handsome prince (who for most of the story is an enchanted pot of flowers) is impeccably dressed the first time he meets her: "Il était habillé d'une longue veste mêlée d'or et de soie verte, rattachée par

³¹ A ruff evolved from the small ruffle at the drawstring neck of a shirt. Usually worn wide and full, it served as a changeable piece of cloth that could be laundered separately while keeping the wearer's jacket from becoming soiled at the neckline. The ruff increased in size, becoming a symbol of aristocracy.

de grandes boutonnières d'émeraudes, de rubis et de diamants; il avait une couronne d'œillets, ses cheveux couvraient ses épaules.”

Once the prince appears to Fortunée in his human state, the girl is of course enamored by his charm and gallantry. Upon seeing the two young people side-by-side, la Reine des Bois (the prince's mother who, despite her considerable powers, was unable to prevent the enchantment of her son at a young age) feels an immediate need to change Fortunée's appearance:

La reine, qui ne la souffrait vêtue en bergère qu'avec impatience, la toucha, lui souhaitant les plus riches habits qui se fussent jamais vus; en même temps sa toile blanche se changea en brocart d'argent, brodé d'escarboucles; de sa coiffure élevée, tombait un long voile de gaze mêlé d'or ; ses cheveux noirs étaient ornés de mille diamants...

Now that Fortunée's status as a princess has been revealed, her outward appearance must reflect her newfound status, as well as the inner beauty and virtue that has always been there.

PRECIOUS STONES AND METALS

Clothing is important, but there are other personal decorative elements utilized by fairy tale writers. Jewels are a frequently mentioned motif within many tales. Sometimes generic jewelry as adornment is mentioned, other times a specific jewel is named. Gold,

for example, expresses the highest degree of beauty. The expensive precious metal has great value and an unmistakable connection with the sun. The fascination with gold goes so far that the beautiful people in the fairy tale – both male and female – often have golden hair that is the crowning glory of an already perfect individual (Lüthi, *Fairytales as Art* 15). Jewels can be part of an ornate ensemble, a reward for a task well done, or a catalyst for making the plot progress. Regardless of their function, the fact that they play such a notable role in so many tales makes them a valid and interesting motif to include in this chapter.

D'Aulnoy's *L'Oiseau bleu* makes use of jewels throughout the lengthy tale. After King Charmant is transformed into a bluebird as a result of his unwillingness to wed the ugly Truitonne, he spends every night visiting the girl whom he does love - the beautiful Florine. Each time he visits her in the lonely tower where she has been imprisoned, he brings her gifts – one more hyperbolically beautiful than the next. Rings, bracelets, watches; all bestowed upon the princess as tokens of the king's undying love:

Il prit des pendants d'oreilles de diamants, si parfaits et si beaux qu'il n'y en avait point au monde qui en approchassent... Il en apporta les plus riches bracelets que l'on eût encore vus : ils étaient d'une seule émeraude, taillés en facettes creuses par le milieu, pour y passer la main et le bras... l'Oiseau amoureux ne manqua pas d'apporter à sa belle une montre d'une grandeur raisonnable, qui était dans une perle : l'excellence du travail surpassait celle de la matière.

Although the princess is clearly flattered by the attention, she reproachfully says to the king: “Pensez-vous, que mes sentiments pour vous aient besoin d’être cultivés par des présents? Ah! Que vous me connaissiez mal.” The king finishes by saying that these precious gifts are the best way he knows to express his love:

Non, madame, je ne crois pas que les bagatelles que je vous offre soient nécessaires pour me conserver votre tendresse; mais la mienne serait blessée si je négligeais aucune occasion de vous marquer mon attention; et, quand vous ne me voyez point, ces petits bijoux me rappellent à votre souvenir.

Florine thus accepts the beautiful gifts and bedecks herself in them every night when King Charmant comes to visit her.

Patricia Hannon noted that draping the body in precious jewels as Florine does, has a direct correlation to the beautiful conversations that the two lovers would have together, with Florine noting that: “Il ne s’est jamais dit tant de jolies choses.” She goes on to say that, “The body awakens to the very language that it inspires, as the jewels, marks of affection that caress the beloved, are converted into discourse, “jolies choses” (*Fabulous Identities* 100).

So significant are the jewels in this particular story that they are the items that eventually bring Florine and Charmant back together after many years of sorrow. Charmant has been changed back into his human form in exchange for letting the hideous Tritonne live in his castle. Florine, disguised as a kitchen maid, uses the jewels in exchange for the privilege of sleeping in the Chamber of Echoes:

“Je me nomme Mie-Souillon, répondit-elle ; je viens de loin pour vous vendre des raretés.” Elle fouilla aussitôt dans son sac de toile ; elle en tira des bracelets d'émeraude que le roi Charmant lui avait donnés. “Ho ! ho ! dit Truitonne, voilà de jolies verrines ; en veux-tu une pièce de cinq sous?” A la vue de ces bracelets, (le roi) se souvint de ceux qu'il avait donnés à Florine...il se fit un effort et lui répliqua: “Ces bracelets valent, je crois, autant que mon royaume ; je pensais qu'il n'y en avait qu'une paire au monde, mais en voilà de semblables.” Truitonne demanda à la reine combien, sans surfaire, elle voulait de ces bracelets. “Si vous me voulez procurer de coucher une nuit dans le cabinet des Echos qui est au palais du roi, je vous donnerai mes émeraudes.

Foolish Truitonne thinks this is a worthless request from a silly peasant girl who doesn't know any better, but Truitonne is the one who is fooled because Florine knows that this chamber is located directly beneath the king's bedroom, and she hopes, correctly, that he will hear her pleas and come to her. Florine's plan eventually works, and she is happily reunited with her king. The jewels, which were such a central part of their early “courtship”, bring the action of the story full circle by allowing the two lovers to become united once more. The idea of a character wanting something so badly they will do anything to get it is part of AT 425B and reminiscent of the beautiful spindles desired by the governesses in Murat's “Peau d'ours.”

In de la Force's “La Bonne femme” the three children that the good woman comes upon in the woods are each found wearing a ribbon around their neck with a small

jewel attached to it. Lirette has a golden cherry enameled with crimson, Mirtis has a medlar, and Finfin has an almond of green enamel. In addition to these pieces, the girls both have various jewels in their headdresses which allow the good woman to find herself in comfortable circumstances.

Magnificent clothing and jewelry can have a twofold effect. It can either enhance beauty that is already there, or it can emphasize ugliness of both looks and persona. The French women writers tend to focus on the former, highlighting the beauty of their heroines and using elaborate garments to draw attention to loveliness that already exists in abundance. Elegant dresses only serve to highlight an equally elegant inner persona, and allows the heroine's inner beauty to shine through with abundance.

There are several observations one can make in looking back on stories filled with elaborate descriptions of clothing. There is a connecting thread linking these descriptions, an underlying message that when all these tales are read back to back, the message becomes even clearer. The heroines of the tales are beautiful, competent, intelligent women (much like the writers who created them) and while the protagonists enjoy and appreciate the beautiful clothing with which they are often presented, it is not something that they desire or demand. Most of the time, it is simply a requirement of the individual's rank or a special occasion that calls for dramatic garments. It is as if the authors were explaining to their readers that women can appreciate materialistic and feminine items without being considered shallow or foolish. While a rather simplistic notion, it is a valid one, and is one that can be appreciated by a modern reader as well as a reader of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. A lesser character would not only desire these materialistic possessions above all others, she would demand and expect

them (which the lesser characters often do). While it is with a woman's appreciation for, and love of beauty that the clothing is described in detail, it is with a woman's willpower that she accepts these gifts out of respect for the giver and the occasion.

Young women of character in the conteuses' tales stand out from the passive heroines who occupy stories by other authors. While they appreciate something as beautiful as an elegant dress or a sparkling jewel, it is rarely something that they profoundly desire nor is it something they demand. It is this innate goodness that the conteuses' choose to highlight through the many kind-hearted heroines in the tales. These women who inhabit the tales are also elegant and refined, with a quiet strength that carries them through even their most difficult challenges. Frequently of royal rank, the heroines (even if they don't know it), are elegant in both their actions and their attire. In the next chapter, the clothing and jewels so beautifully worn by the heroines will be put to good use as the fairy tale characters take part in a variety of activities and events that require elegant attire and etiquette.

Chapter 5: – The *Habitus*

The *habitus* is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structure's structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes. Each class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions. (Bourdieu 170)

At the end of the eighteenth century, an English visitor to the Southern Netherlands confirmed that: “the forms and fashions of the French in familiar life, their courtesy and style of society, their taste for show and ornament, their amusements and entertainments, are imitated here” (Knapp, *French Fairy Tales* 109). The region's culture had indeed long ago become a vestige of the French culture that reached its apex during the reign of Louis XIV, when France emerged as the shining example of civilization, elegance, and the last word in fashion and style (Lemire 23).

The French conteuses broached many significant subjects in their tales, and their succinct style was enhanced by details of the living conditions, manners, etiquette, and refined social habits of their protagonists. Elaborate feasts, masked balls, magnificent clothes, luxurious fabrics, elegant interiors, and impressive jewels, all form a richly descriptive backdrop to the narratives. Of all the motifs discussed thus far in this study, those connected to the notion of *habitus* seem to most strongly showcase the feminine

skill and sensitivity that the conteuses brought to their tales. In effect, as we shall see, the incorporation of these elements also reflects more complex narrative strategies, creating a mirror effect between the imaginary and the real, but also a foundation for the symbolic.

For sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, *habitus* is a name given to an acquired system of generative schemes. The *habitus* defines the categories, modes of accepted behavior and systems of interaction possible in a given social context (Hall, Stimson, and Becker 125). Individuals and groups surround themselves with many material things – such as furniture, books, and paintings. They also surround themselves with certain practices – such as games, entertainment, and sporting events. Bourdieu additionally notes that:

Taste, the propensity and capacity to appropriate (materially or symbolically) a given class of classified, classifying objects or practices, is the generative formula of life-style, a unitary set of distinctive preferences which express the same expressive intention in the specific logic of each of the symbolic sub-spaces, furniture, clothing or language. Each dimension of lifestyle “symbolizes” with the others, and symbolizes them. (173)

The insertion of common and realistic elements of daily life –pertaining to clothes, recreation, etc. – into a supernatural and unrealistic world at first allows readers of a tale to see a reflection of their current society in the imaginary literary one. Whether a particular reader had the fortune of participating in some of the lifestyles depicted by the conteuses, or whether it was something that could only be fantasized about, the fairy tales of the French conteuses seem at first a valuable source of the depiction of current

cultural mores. Not all artificial worlds share the same aesthetic particular to court culture, as some also borrow from a familiar repertoire of images found in popular culture. There are well-established visual representations that create a sense of home and ultimately a zone of visual comfort for participants – the *habitus* of the imaginary. Further, the inclusion of so many proper names and places adds not only a certain *Zeitgeist* to the conteuses' tales, but also consolidates a dose of realism. The realistic details constitute a sharp contrast to the merveilleux elements that are incorporated in the stories, yet the combination of both is inseparable from the conteuses' particular aesthetic. Mme d'Aulnoy in particular excelled at filling her tales with names of actual people and places. This authentic touch adds a great deal of realism to the tales, which indeed stands out even more when placed next to the marvelous and fantastic images that normally populate the fairy tale landscape (Mitchell 41).

While the conteuses used their stories to provide elaborate descriptions of the aristocratic daily life and lifestyle that was so familiar to them, at the same time they were working the symbolic potential of objects and materials into a complex interplay of economics and gender. There are essentially three separate elements of the *habitus* manifest in these tales: where a character lives (palaces, architecture, etc); the ornamentation that enhances those buildings (jewels, mirrors, etc.); and finally the type of entertainment (opera, theater, etc.) enjoyed by those who live in such luxurious surroundings. Further exploration of the *habitus* will demonstrate the positive and negative uses of wealth associated with these elements, the symbolism behind the chosen décor, and finally the social underpinnings of the realistic descriptions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century entertainment.

Many specific items are used in describing the *habitus*, both inside and outside the dwelling places. Items such as precious stones, gold vessels, seashells, coral, mirrors, and foodstuffs such as expensive wines, are carefully chosen by the authors to signal a symbolic relation between gender and economics, as well as between consumption and politics. The following sections will discuss both the material items that make up the fairytale's *habitus*, and the symbolism behind these elements.

Versailles/Castle

One of the most significant among the "realistic" interjections favored by the conteuses is the reference, both written and subtly implied, to the Palace of Versailles.

A tale that makes good use of a sumptuous castle motif which strongly evokes Versailles, is Murat's "Le Palais de la vengeance." Murat describes the palace in a way that encourages the reader to visualize a building that could only be described as opulent and breathtaking, with no equal to be found anywhere else (thus very much like the Palace of Versailles). Imis, the heroine, has been transported to the palace of Pagan, who claims to love the princess more than her chosen lover, Philax. Upon waking, she takes in her new surroundings:

La princesse, en revenant de son évanouissement, se trouva dans une chambre de corail de diverses couleurs, parquetée de nacre de perles, environnée de nymphes qui la servaient avec un profond respect...les nymphes pour dissiper sa douleur la menèrent en divers endroits du palais; il était tout bâti de coquillages luisants, mêlés avec des pierres précieuses de différentes couleurs, ce qui faisait le plus bel

effet du monde; tous les meubles en étaient d'or et d'un travail si merveilleux qu'on voyait bien qu'il ne pouvait venir que de la main des fées.

Murat mentions that the palace was covered with precious materials, but gives more attention to two in particular – coral and pearls. The semi-precious natural substance of coral makes a repetitious appearance in many of the conteuses' tales. Coral is an organic substance which grows in the sea like a tree. When it first grows, the original color is green, but once it is exposed to air it turns red. It was thought to make fruit multiply, drives away phantoms, and provides the possessor a good beginning and prosperous conclusion (Shackford 114).

In Roman folklore, coral was from ancient times a recognized amulet against the evil eye. Almost every medieval lapidary after the twelfth century assured the faithful that coral had the power to protect their minds from the malice and snares of the common enemy, and it was believed to be created by God to safeguard holy places (Manley 386-387).

According to medieval lapidaries, coral has long been a symbol associated with women (Donkin 259). Said to have sprung from the blood of Medusa the Gorgon (according to Greek legend), coral derives from two Greek words meaning “daughter of the sea” (O’Dowd 190). Italian women, who used it to predict their periods, would wear coral near their groin in order to regulate menstrual flow. In its natural state, red coral was believed to turn pale during the flow, and then become brighter after. Because it was used for such a private matter, it was carefully hidden from the eyes of men, because if a man saw it, the coral would lose all its magic powers (which also included granting

reason, prudence, courage, wisdom and curing sterility) on those who wore it (Cunningham 100).

Pearls became the ultimate fashion accessories in the courtly world of European royalty and nobility – part of a luxurious material world of silks, velvets, gold, silver and gemstones from around the globe. The extravagance of European courts during the two hundred years following the discovery of America was largely fuelled by pearls which were in abundant supply compared to all other gems. The noble rich competed with each other both in how many pearls they wore, and how large the pearls were. There is evidence of this preserved in portraits showing the Hapsburgs, Medicis, Tudors and Stuarts. In these portraits they are shown wearing pearls as earrings, as decoration on hats, cloaks and gloves, and, perhaps most significantly, in the ultimate object of royalty – on the crown (Kunz and Stevenson 23, 455).

Europe was flooded with many gemstones, but the wearing of pearls, as well as other jewels, was jealously guarded by royalty through the imposition of sumptuary laws (Saunders 251). In Saxony in AD 1612, it was decreed that: “The nobility are not allowed to wear any dresses of gold or silver, or garnished with pearls; neither shall ... professors and doctors of the universities, nor their wives, wear any gold, silver or pearls for fringes, or any chains of pearls” (Kunz 25). We learn that in Venice 1609: “Pearls, or anything which imitates pearls, shall be forbidden to all ... women, men and boys or girls of every age and condition at all times and in all places” (Kunz 26).

Pearls were such a sign of wealth, status and ambition in European and Europeanized societies, that higher-valued Persian pearls were taken to the Americas, sold to affluent Hispano-Americans, and the with the profits merchants purchased

cheaper American pearls which people of more modest means could purchase in the European market. This complicated pattern of trade and exchange in pearls solidifies the fact that a pearl's quality was an index of the owner's social and economic standing (Donkin 334).

Upon the death of Elizabeth I, her body was draped with pearl necklaces, earrings and pendants. Pearls became so important in the rarified world of European monarchies where they were both worn and displayed, that the period has been referred to as the “Pearl Age” (Kunz 454).

A palace covered in coral and pearls could only exist in the fairy tale world, yet one cannot help but be reminded of Versailles, with its lavish style and gold décor throughout. In his book on the palace and gardens of Versailles, André Pératé describes Versailles’ beautiful Grotto of Thetis as being:

...dedicated to the glory of the Sun, whose beams resplended in golden bars upon its threefold railing. In the inside, the rock worker Delaunay had modeled and painted the strangest figures, mixed to the King’s cipher and the image of the Sun, with mother of pearl, coral, and the most varied shells. (55)

Returning to the “Le Palais de la vengeance”, as Imis comes to be familiar with her surroundings, Murat takes time to also describe the exterior of Pagan’s palace:

Les nymphes, après avoir fait voir à Imis le palais, la conduisirent dans des jardins, dont la beauté ne peut être représentée...une nymphe apprit à la princesse

que Pagan régnait dans cette île, dont il avait fait par la force de son art le plus beau lieu de l'univers... Toute la mer parut couverte de petites barques de corail couleur de feu, remplies de tout ce qui pouvait composer une fête maritime fort galante. Au milieu des petites barques, il y en avait une beaucoup plus grande que les autres, sur laquelle les chiffres d'Imis paraissaient partout formés avec des perles...

Here there is a clear reference to the magnificent gardens that extend past the palace of Versailles. Besides the gardens of the palace, Murat also mentions the aquatic entertainment that Louis XIV and his court had staged with nearly full-sized warships for the pleasure of those at the palace. The description of a maritime grotto filled with shells and pearls, and the mention of boats made of coral brings to mind the goddess Venus (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) rising from the waters in her shell. The description of the grotto with its rococo decor, coupled with the coral boats, puts a rather feminine touch on the otherwise masculine element of maritime activity.

An elegant “hall of mirrors” makes an appearance in a fairy’s palace in Murat’s “Le Palais de la vengeance.” The fairy Céoré has conceived of a tournament to lure Orizée (a prince with whom she had become enamored) to her court. She fully expected him to win, but when this did not come to pass, she took her revenge on all the princes who had competed in the tournament: “...elle enchanta des glaces de miroirs', dont une galerie de son château était toute remplie'. Ceux qui la voyaient représentée seulement une fois dans ces glaces fatales ne pouvaient se défendre de sentir pour elle une violente passion.”

This is a very clear reference to the equivalent found in Versailles, only instead of elegant balls and festive galas, this enchanted Hall of Mirrors is the site of wicked magic – as all men who saw the fairy’s reflection could not help but fall madly in love with her, and only her. This is also somewhat reminiscent of the Medusa legend, whereas the evil Gorgon was able to turn men to stone with just one glance. Because of this power, no one was able to destroy her until Perseus used her deadly glance against her. He approached the Gorgon never looking directly at her, using his shield as a mirror to follow the monster, thus avoiding the curse and killing her in the process. In Murat’s story, Céoré floods her hallway with mirrors, not even giving the men an opportunity to look away or in another direction, therefore trapping them with her ever-present gaze.

Mirrors are a frequent element found throughout numerous other tales as well. In “La Belle aux cheveux d’or”, walking through “sa galerie aux grands miroirs”, Belle looks at herself in her great mirrors “pour voir si rien ne lui manquait” before meeting Avenant. Similarly in *Le Prince Lutin*, the princess finds herself in an area made: “tout entier de grandes glaces de miroirs, car on ne pouvait trop multiplier un objet si charmant.” Both scenes recall the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles, and the second points to multiplying the image of the king (Duggan, *Salonnières* 230).

In “Le Nain jaune”, in order to trick the fairy of the desert into believing he is in love with her, the king of the gold mines turns to the mirror:

... cela l'obligea de s'approcher d'un grand miroir, et s'adressant à lui: “Fidèle conseiller, lui dit-il, permets que je voie ce que je peux faire pour me rendre

agréable à la charmante fée du désert, car l'envie que j'ai de lui plaire m'occupe sans cesse.” Aussitôt il se peigna, se poudra, se mit une mouche, et voyant sur une table un habit plus magnifique que le sien, il le mit en diligence.

Later, while pining for his lost love, the king walks along the beach and writes his sorrows in the sand. While writing his verses in the sand with his stick, the king looks into the ocean and sees the following: “...il aperçut une femme d'une beauté extraordinaire....Elle tenait un miroir dans l'une de ses mains, et un peigne dans l'autre.” The woman rising out of the ocean holding a mirror is an inescapable reminder of the figure of the mermaid, but also connotes the image of the goddess Venus holding her mirror. It is also noteworthy that these are not magical mirrors of any kind – they are simply ornaments either found in the fairy castles or used by the characters themselves.

At the time when d'Aulnoy wrote her tales, mirrors were extremely costly to produce, thus they were purchased only by those with the means to afford such a luxury item. Throughout the seventeenth century, glass was mostly imported to the rest of Europe from Venice and the island of Murano. By the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, most European countries had their own mirror-glass making industry, particularly England and France.

Versailles set the fashion for mirrors and mirror galleries throughout Europe. The production of mirror-glass in France was accelerated by the patronage of Louis XIV, with Versailles' Galerie des Glaces being the most elaborate example of rooms paneled with large plates of mirror glass. Throughout the seventeenth century, the difficulty and expense of making flat glass that was suitable for mirrors confined ownership to an

exclusive minority. Kings and queens considered mirrors suitable gifts to be exchanged with other heads of state. The risks of breakage involved in the process of grinding, silvering and transportation heightened the rarity of mirrors (*Grove Encyclopedia* 110).

The appearance of mirrors in both the tales is a tangible symbol of wealth and luxury. The fact that they correspond to Louis XIV's Versailles only made the objects (and Versailles itself) even more intriguing to those who would never get to see them. Mirrors make frequent appearances in the tales, and emphasize the adornment of the many characters who pass by them or gaze at themselves in them. In tales like "Gracieuse et Percinet", "Le Rameau d'or", and "La Chatte blanche", the specific fates of the characters or references to them are inscribed on the tower and palace walls, in much the same way that Louis XIV's personal history was inscribed on the walls of Versailles. The marvelous décor of d'Aulnoy's tales thus evokes the greatness of salons like those of Versailles.³²

Versailles is evoked again in "Gracieuse et Percinet", with more subtle references to the Sun King and his palace. While Gracieuse is wandering hopelessly in the woods: "C'était une illumination si magnifique, qu'il n'y avait pas un arbre dans la forêt où il n'y eût plusieurs lustres remplis de bougies; et dans le fond d'une allée, elle aperçut un palais tout de cristal qui brillait autant que le soleil."

Towards the end of the tale, after her many challenging adventures, Gracieuse once again finds herself in the fairy palace of Percinet. This time, however, she sees an outdoor area: "...elle aperçut le jour et un jardin rempli de fleurs, de fruits, de fontaines, de grottes, de statues, de bocages et de cabinets." Percinet's garden has a conscious and deliberate design at work with statues, fountains, and sculptures. All of them are

reminiscent of the magnificent gardens that extend far beyond the walls of Versailles. Nature, while it has a place in the garden, does not have free reign over it. Civilization and elegance are clearly present in this outdoor space (Duggan, *Salonnières* 230).

At the end of the story, Pagan, who knows he has lost Imis to her true love, Philax, constructs a plan to execute his revenge: “...il éleva dans son île un palais de cristal, prit soin d'y mettre tout ce qui peut être agréable à la vie, hors le moyen d'en pouvoir sortir.” Is Murat making a subtle statement with this final act in her tale? Versailles was a place of beauty as well, filled with every desirable thing imaginable. But was it a place of true happiness? Having infinite pleasure brings joy for a certain period of time, but even though one can have everything one could possibly want and need, not having freedom to control one’s life can be just as frustrating as not having anything at all.

When Merveilleuse is hopelessly wandering through the forest in “Le Mouton”, she is about to give up hope of reaching a safe location when all of a sudden she stumbles upon a surprising opening in the forest:

...mais quelle fut sa surprise, en arrivant dans un endroit assez spacieux, tout entouré d'arbres, de voir un gros mouton plus blanc que la neige, dont les cornes étaient dorées, qui avait une guirlande de fleurs autour de son col, les jambes entourées de fils de perles d'une grosseur prodigieuse, quelques chaînes de diamants sur lui, et qui était couché sur des fleurs d'oranges; un pavillon de drap d'or suspendu en l'air, empêchait le soleil de l'incommoder.

D'Aulnoy's embellishments make the sheep's territory seem sensual and inviting. As seen envisioned by the heroine, Mouton becomes the embodiment of desire. Such descriptive scenes as this one, lend a bodily weight to the text. D'Aulnoy substitutes Mouton's natural palace for the materialistic palace of Versailles:

Elle ne vit point d'autres palais qu'une longue suite d'orangers, de jasmins, de chèvrefeuilles et de petites roses muscades, dont les branches entrelacées les unes dans les autres formaient des cabinets, des salles et des chambres toutes meublées de gaze d'or et d'argent, avec de grands miroirs, des lustres et des tableaux admirables.

This untamed natural realm owes much of its evocative power to d'Aulnoy's mastery of description and attention to details (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 118).

THE CHATTE BLANCHE CASTLE

Versailles may be the most well-known and realistically evoked castle setting found in the tales, but there are also imaginary palatial descriptions designed to make an equally impressive statement. One of the most unusual and heavily detailed such dwellings is the enchanted castle in d'Aulnoy's "La Chatte blanche", a story which projects themes of courtship and feminine individuality. The castle possesses many realistic touches which could easily be seen as similarities to the Palace of Versailles. However, it is also is a fantastic place with jewel-encrusted walls and mysterious

servants. It is the contrast of the fantastical and realistic in d'Aulnoy's elaborate descriptions that make Chatte blanche's castle particularly noteworthy.

The walls of Chatte blanche's tower act as a picture gallery of scenes representing: "l'histoire de toutes les fées depuis la création du monde jusqu'alors." Her salon is decorated with portraits of famous literary cats, from Rabelais' Rodillardus to Puss-in-Boots. There is a literary history inscribed in the castle itself. It is the site of royal entertainments – ballets, fireworks, a hunt, even a naval battle the prince can observe from a terrace – but it is also a house of fictions, elaborately constructed like the royal divertissements that mirror the entertainment at Versailles (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time* 41). For as realistic as some of the touches may seem, it is still a castle that can exist only in imagination.

The court of this learned worldly feline is presented as a *nouvel ordre*, which both rivals and emulates that of Versailles. Patricia Hannon notes that "Chatte blanche's resolution of political rivalries is reminiscent of Louis XIV's divisive strategies pitting aristocrat against bourgeois" (*Fabulous Identities* 86): "*Chatte blanche ne voulut pas qu'on détruisît absolument ces pauvres infortunés. Elle avait de la politique et songeait que s'il n'y avait plus ni rats, ni souris dans le pays, ses sujets vivraient dans une oisiveté qui pourrait lui devenir préjudiciable.*"

Theater, ballet, carrousels, fireworks, hunting outings, and court intrigues animate this isolated court with its Versailles-inspired interiors. Chatte blanche's domain is distinguished by courtiers, who, according to the visiting prince, have "plus d'esprit et de galanterie que les nôtres" and by "poètes qui on infiniment d'esprit" (Hannon, *Fabulous Identities* 86).

The young prince thus encounters an enchanted castle, the center of an ideal, magical, universe where political and personal powers are re-imagined and are given a decidedly feminine stamp. The details used in the castle's description establish the castle not only as a realm of the marvelous, but also as a space dominated by feminine sexuality. Other portions of the description represent the castle as a society where female collaboration and community are privileged. Once Chatte blanche has undergone her violent transformation at the end of the story, her return to the outside world signals an acknowledgement that such feminine power can exist only in an isolated and imaginary realm. Real power, the only power that truly matters, has to be exercised in the imperfect and masculine world of human society (Day 35).

The castle is an elaborately described location, with great attention paid to the luxurious setting and décor. In fact, Chatte blanche's court is located in the exact château whose sumptuous garden inspired her mother's need for the forbidden fruit enclosed within its walls. It is as a result of the queen's insatiable desire that leads her to give up her unborn daughter in exchange for the fruit, which further ultimately results in Chatte blanche's transformation:³³

Abricots, pêches, pavies, brugnons, cerises, prunes, poires, bigarreaux, melons, muscats, pommes, oranges, citrons, groseilles, fraises, framboises, accourez à ma voix. - Mais, dit la reine, tout ce que vous venez d'appeler vient en différentes saisons. - Cela n'est pas ainsi dans nos vergers, dirent-elles, nous avons de tous les fruits qui sont sur la terre, toujours mûrs, toujours bons, et qui ne se gâtent jamais.

³³ See Chapter 3 for further detail on the details that caused Chatte blanche's metamorphosis.

Of the dozen or so varieties of fruit mentioned by d'Aulnoy, the temptation of Adam and Eve to eat the apple in the Garden of Eden is immediately brought to mind. For Chatte blanche's mother, not only is the apple one of the temptations, but she has an entire garden of fruit to be tempted by. Once she makes the conscious decision to partake in fruit from the forbidden garden, she is doomed to be responsible for her lack of will-power.

D'Aulnoy does mention here three very specific varieties of fruit: bigarreaux (special kind of cherry), and muscats (Muscat grapes) and pavies (clingstone peach). Bigarreaux cherry trees, commonly called sweet cherries, are large, vigorous growers and make a magnificent tree with large, open, spreading heads. The Muscat grape is believed to be the first grape ever domesticated by humans. It is extremely popular for use in wines, but is also frequently utilized as a food item. Muscat grapes' appearance can be white or very dark red or purple, with a vine of dark green leaves (Toussaint-Samat 512). The most interesting of the three fruit mentioned here is the pavier – a very old type of peach discussed in the writings of Jean-Baptiste de la Quintinie (Toussaint-Samat 645). La Quintinie was the director of fruit gardens, (a position specially created for him) head of the potager, (a traditional kitchen garden) and agronomist to Louis XIV (Mukerji 151). Although these fruits do not appear to have a significant symbolism to enhance the plot, what is interesting is that d'Aulnoy takes the time to mention fruits with a somewhat exotic flair to them.

The seventeenth century was known for exquisite gardens and sumptuous landscaping found at Versailles and on a lesser scale at other chateaux. It is the period when garden art was being defined. The architectural character of French Renaissance

gardens was translated, on an immensely grander scale, into the baroque gardens of the seventeenth century, in which the great André Le Nôtre was the preeminent designer (Taylor 170). The above passage sounds much like an outdoor fantasy version of the orangeries found on the grounds of Versailles and other luxury palaces. In her book on the gardens of Versailles, Chandra Mukerji indeed noted that: “Nature was *made* miraculous through French ingenuity apparent in the glistening fountains, marble furniture dripping with cool rivulets of water, the enormous Orangerie, and the stately grotto at Versailles” (15).

Orange trees and their fruit have a distinct history at Versailles. They were the pride of its gardeners, and a source of concern for Louis XIV himself. The king actually wrote to his minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert to express his anxiety about the new plantings, wanting to know what the orange trees looked like. The Sun King was very proud of the trees whose blossoms perfumed his apartments, and the trees were even used to decorate the Galerie des Glaces on festive occasions (Toussaint-Samat 664). The sumptuous gardens laden with fruit trees, boxes of rosemary and other herbs, and beautifully pruned shrubbery and trees were undoubtedly an influence for d’Aulnoy when creating her imaginary castle.

Moreover, this château of desire is also one of fairy-tale writing. The wandering prince seeks refuge from a storm inside this literary palace signed “d’Aulnoy” and “Perrault”: “...les murs étaient d’une porcelaine transparente, mêlée de plusieurs couleurs, qui représentaient l’histoire de toutes les fées...les fameuses aventures de Peau d’Ane, de Finette, de l’Oranger, de Gracieuse, de la Belle au bois dormant, de Serpentin Vert, et de cent autres, n’y étaient pas oubliées.”

The reference to d'Aulnoy's fairy tale characters like Finette and Serpentin vert functions like a signature, which is equal to that of Perrault with "Peau d'âne" and "La Belle au bois dormant." This suggestion of equality between the salon writer and the academician is confirmed when the prince admires the heroine's intellect and talent for eloquence. According to the hero, Chatte blanche is a fine candidate for membership in "les académies fameuses des plus beaux esprits" (Hannon *Fabulous Identities* 86).

D'Aulnoy does not skimp on dressing up the castle and does so as lavishly as she does for her heroines. From the moment the prince passes through its magic walls, the castle's beauty is on display: "...se sentant poussé vers une grande porte de corail, qui s'ouvrit dès qu'il s'en fut approché, il entra dans un salon de nacre de perle, et ensuite dans plusieurs chambres ornées différemment, et si riches par les peintures et les pierreries qu'il en était comme enchanté." Later on, once the prince has been cleaned up and dressed in rich garments, he is led into a room where: "Le couvert était mis; il y en avait deux, chacun garni de son cadenas d'or; le buffet surprenait par la quantité de vases de cristal de roche et de mille pierres rares.

The castle is described as being covered with carbuncles, mythical gems said to emit radiant light: "Ainsi guidé par la lumière qu'il voyait, il arriva à la porte d'un château, le plus superbe qui se soit jamais imaginé. Cette porte était d'or, couverte d'escarboucles dont la lumière vive et pure éclairait tous les environs."

A carbuncle was the name used in ancient times and the Middle Ages for a cabochon-cut red stone – particularly a garnet (Shipley 40). A carbuncle was red in color, and was the lord of all stones, surpassing the wonders of others, even larger ones. Because of its superiority, it was believed that those who wore it were given honor and

grace by people who encountered the wearer (Shackford 115). Carbuncles also possessed medicinal significance. Beasts who drank from a stream where carbuncles had been washed were cured of their illness. Wretched people tortured by unhappiness forgot their adversity upon gazing at the stone (Thunø 154). The red of the carbuncle is well representative of the bloody sacrifice that the prince must make of his beloved cat at the end of the story. By cutting off the cat's head, Chatte blanche is "resurrected" back into her true human form, and ultimately saves the prince by ensuring his triumph in his quest.

The overall effect of these descriptions is to evoke palaces that shine and sparkle with endless light. That particular function of the gems seems to be as important as their financial value. They are the focal point of action in the tales and are places of refuge both for the owners and those who visit them. The heroes and heroines who wander through the impressive hallways gaze in wonder at the overwhelming décor that covers the walls, and seem drawn in by the light and warmth emitting from the palace.

Lewis Seifert noted that, "La Chatte blanche is first and foremost about the power of female storytelling" (Seifert, "Female Empowerment" 24). In d'Aulnoy's story, there are times when the primary action recedes as she emphasizes the cat's world. Chatte blanche's castle mirrors her power and intelligence, and is a utopian model of good government and artistic pursuits. At the same time it is also a realm of explicitly feminine power. For example, when the prince first arrives, he is greeted by mysterious hands which quickly push him inside. The hands are insistent, even dominating, causing the prince to reach for his sword, but they also appear rather feminine, described as "fort belles, blanches, petites, grassettes et proportionnées." The hands promptly undress the prince and then provide him with fine new clothes (Harries, *Twice Upon a Time* 43). The

hands also prepare the prince by combing his hair with “une légèreté et une adresse dont il fut fort content.” In d’Aulnoy’s tale, these details as well as the feminine qualities of the hands establish the castle not only as a realm of the marvelous, but also as a space dominated a feminine force. Although the hands are seemingly playing a woman’s traditional domestic role, they also reflect the cat’s ability to create a mysterious order in the domain under her control.

NEGATIVE WEALTH

Castles also figure predominantly in “Gracieuse and Percinet.” The first castle to be described belongs to the wicked Duchess Grognon. While out hunting, a recently widowed (and therefore vulnerable) king stops at her castle to rest for a while. With an evil plan in mind, Grognon takes the king into her cellar where she rattles off an extensive list of wines that are (supposedly) available to him: “...je serai bien aise de vous en faire goûter: voilà du Canarie³⁴, du Saint-Laurent³⁵, du Champagne, de l’Hermitage³⁶, du Rivesaltes³⁷, du Rossolis³⁸, Persicot³⁹, Fenouillet: duquel voulez-vous? - Franchement, dit le roi, je liens que le vin de Champagne vaut mieux que tous les

³⁴ Sweet white wine from the Canary Islands

³⁵ A fine wine grown on the hills of the Rhône Valley.

³⁶ One of the most famous northern Rhône Valley wines, producing limited quantities of long-lived reds and whites. Hermitage was one of France’s most famous wines in the 18th and 19th centuries when the name alone was sufficient to justify prices higher than any wine other than a first growth Bordeaux.

³⁷ A wine named after the important and imposing medieval fortified town of the same name.

³⁸ The *rossolis* (related to rose) was a liqueur made of burned brandy, sugar and cinnamon. It is likely related to the Italian liqueur rosolio.

³⁹ A cordial made of the kernels of apricots, nectarines, etc., with refined spirit.

autres.” Oddly, instead of wine pouring out of the tap, coins fall out instead: “Aussitôt Grognon prit un petit marteau, et frappa: toc, toc. Il sort du tonneau un millier de pistoles⁴⁰. “Qu'est-ce que cela signifie? ” dit-elle, en souriant. Elle cogne l'autre tonneau: toc, toc. Il en sort un boisseau de doubles louis d'or.”⁴¹

In this short paragraph, d’Aulnoy mentions legitimate wines and liqueurs, as well as authentic currency. The spirits are a particularly interesting choice in that d’Aulnoy selects several unique liqueurs which would likely only be found in the most elegant of settings, such as Versailles. D’Aulnoy mentions similar liqueurs in “Le Mouton”: “Une grosse rivière d'eau de fleurs d'oranges coulait autour, des fontaines de vin d'Espagne, de rossolis, d'hypocras⁴² et de mille autres sortes de liqueurs formaient des cascades et de petits ruisseaux charmants.”

Rossolis was particularly favored by the king and it is certainly possible that d’Aulnoy specifically mentions this item in order to alert her readers to a subtext of the presence of Versailles and the Sun King. When Louis XIV ascended to the throne, he enjoyed the rossolis du Roy, made of Spanish wine, brandy and other products as advised by his doctors. The king’s blend consisted of orange flowers, musk roses, lilies, jasmine, cinnamon and cloves (Dias 266).

Hypocras was a special drink to enjoy with the fruits and wafers of a banquet. After steeping the spices in the sweetened wine for a day, the spices were strained out

⁴⁰ **Pistole** is the French name given to a Spanish gold coin in use in 1537. The name was also given to other European gold coins.

⁴¹ The *Louis d'or* is any number of French coins first introduced by Louis XIII in 1640. The name derives from the depiction of the portrait of King Louis on one side of the coin; the French royal coat of arms is on the reverse. The coin was replaced by the French franc at the time of the revolution.

⁴² Hypocras is a drink made from wine mixed with sugar and spices, mostly with cinnamon and possibly served hot or mulled.

through a conical cloth filter bag called a *manicum hippocraticum* or Hippocratic sleeve (originally devised by the 5th century Greek physician Hippocrates to filter water). Thus the origin of the name hypocras, as the father of humoral medicine wished to underline the idea that the banquet course was an indulgence to be enjoyed for good medicinal purposes and not just because it was full of things that taste good (Richardson 140).

Since its inception, Champagne has always been well-regarded, fashionable and expensive. Following the death of Louis XIV in 1715, his nephew Philippe II, Duke of Orléans became the Regent of France. The Duke of Orléans enjoyed the sparkling version of Champagne and featured it at his nightly petits soupers at the Palais-Royal. This sparked a craze in Paris as restaurants and fashionable society sought to emulate the Duke's tastes for the bubbling wine. Champenois winemakers began to switch their business from making still wines to sparkling in order to capitalize on this craze (Johnson 210-219).

The transformation of the wine changing into the gold coins is reminiscent of the classical mythology of King Midas. As the result of an ill-chosen wish, the king turns everything he touches into gold. While at first this seems like a perfectly wonderful talent to have, it eventually becomes a curse. Not only do all inanimate objects turn to gold, but anything he tries to eat or drink as well. The final blow comes when his daughter come to him for an embrace, and the moment Midas touches her, she turns into a golden statue.

The detailed description in this section is also an interesting play on gender. Instead of portraying Grognon as a nurturing, kind hostess, which would be typical for women of the time, she is just the opposite. The nasty Grognon is an accumulator of

wealth and also a controller of currency. By freely spreading it around she devalues the value of the coins and also potentially has the power to ruin the economy. She is showing herself to be an economic power, and not in a positive way but rather a destructive one. Her apparent abundant wealth has ominous undertones, and she is not using it in a positive way. She uses it to manipulate the king, someone for whom the endless funds is an insurmountable temptation.

ENTERTAINMENT

Upon meeting Percinet in front of the palace, Gracieuse is guided through the forest by the resourceful prince. Just as there was entertainment and festivities in the Court of Versailles, so too were there similar festivities in Percinet's fairy tale court: "On voyait clair partout; il y avait des bergers et des bergères vêtus galamment, qui dansaient au son des flûtes et des musettes. Elle voyait en d'autres lieux, sur le bord des fontaines, des villageois avec leurs maîtresses, qui mangeaient et qui chantaient gaiement." Clearly there is a carefree air of happiness and joy, with Percinet's loyal followers enjoying an afternoon of leisure in his palace.

The pagodes who serve Laideronnette in "Le Serpentin vert" are happy to entertain her when they return from their travels:

Mais que cependant la plupart ne pouvaient s'en empêcher, qu'ils couraient ainsi l'univers, et que lorsqu'ils étaient de retour, ils réjouissaient leur roi par le récit de tout ce qui se passait de plus secret dans les différentes Cours où ils étaient reçus.

“C'est, madame, ajoutèrent ces députés, un plaisir que nous vous donnerons quelquefois, car nous avons ordre de ne rien oublier pour vous désennuyer: au lieu de vous apporter des présents, nous venons vous divertir par nos chansons et par nos danses.” Ils se mirent aussitôt à chanter ces paroles, en dansant en danse ronde, avec des tambours de basque et des castagnettes:

Les plaisirs sont charmants,
Lorsqu'ils suivent les peines,
Les plaisirs sont charmants
Après de longs tourments:
Ne brisez point vos chaînes
Jeunes amants.
Les plaisirs sont charmants.

Shortly after her introduction to the pagodes, Laideronnette is entertained by the unique little creatures and their equally unique instruments:

Aussitôt pagodes et pagodines se mirent à chanter et à jouer des instruments; tels avaient des théorbes, faits d'une coquille de noix, tels avaient des violes, faites d'une coquille d'amande, car il fallait bien proportionner les instruments à leurs tailles: mais tout cela était si juste et s'accordait si bien, que rien ne réjouissait davantage que ces sortes de concerts.

The troupes of shepherds who dance, play music and sing appear in tales like “Gracieuse et Percinet”, and “Le Serpentin vert” provide diversion for the lonely heroines. The singing and dancing *pagodes* who entertain Laideronnette are like a carnivalesque version of opera’s choruses and troupes. D’Aulnoy celebrates the fantastic extravagance of opera and of the royal fête. Rather than sing of the glories of the monarch, however, choruses tend to glorify princes and princesses who embody the aristocratic ideal of *mondanité*. It is important to note that sixteen out of d’Aulnoy’s twenty-five tales contain scenes where characters sing, and most of her tales include references to music in general, or opera in particular (Duggan, *Salonnières* 226-227).

“Le Nain jaune” also includes several descriptive sections which paint elaborate pictures of fine living. In one of the opening paragraphs, d’Aulnoy describes the scene at the court of Toute-Belle, a beautiful princess who has dozens of kings eager to please her. The author explains the rituals that must be followed in vying for the attention of such an exquisite creature:

Il n'a jamais été une cour plus galante et plus polie. Vingt rois, à l'envi, essayaient de lui plaire ; et après avoir dépensé trois ou quatre cents millions à lui donner seulement une fête, lorsqu'ils en avaient tiré un “cela est joli”, ils se trouvaient trop récompensés. Les adorations qu'on avait pour elle ravissaient la reine ; il n'y avait point de jour qu'on ne reçût à sa cour sept ou huit mille sonnets, autant d'élégies, de madrigaux et de chansons, qui étaient envoyés par tous les poètes de l'univers. Toute-Belle était l'unique objet de la prose et de la poésie des auteurs de

son temps: l'on ne faisait jamais de feux de joie qu'avec ces vers, qui pétillaient et brûlaient mieux qu'aucune sorte de bois.

Thus the story begins with a rather elaborate way for a king to go about wooing a beautiful princess. Of particular interest is the process of attracting the princess' attention by way of poetry and sonnets. Later in the narrative, once she has chosen the King of the Gold Mines as her husband, he continues to woo her in this way, with d'Aulnoy actually including the king's poem for her readers:

Quels heureux moments pour l'un et pour l'autre, lorsque dans les plus beaux jardins du monde, ils se trouvaient en liberté de se découvrir toute leur tendresse: ces plaisirs étaient souvent secondés par ceux de la musique. Le roi, toujours galant et amoureux, faisait des vers et des chansons pour la princesse : en voici une qu'elle trouva fort agréable -

Ces bois, en vous voyant, sont parés de feuillages,
 Et ces prés font briller leurs charmantes couleurs.
 Le zéphire sous vos pas fait éclore les fleurs;
 Les oiseaux amoureux redoublent leurs ramages;
 Dans ce charmant séjour
 Tout rit, tout reconnaît la fille de l'amour.

The entire description of their private time together gives a very refined and quiet picture of what a courtship could be between two members of the court.

A final mention of an elaborate fête is mentioned before Toute-Belle is cruelly whisked away by the titular character. It is the princess' wedding day, and the king has spared nothing in order to create a royal spectacle:

Enfin, ce jour tant attendu et tant souhaité arriva: tout étant prêt pour les noces de Toute-Belle, les instruments et les trompettes annoncèrent par toute la ville cette grande fête; l'on tapissa les rues, elles furent jonchées de fleurs, le peuple en foule accourut dans la grande place du palais...Personne n'abordait le roi des mines d'or qui ne s'en retournât chargé de ses libéralités, car il avait fait arranger autour de sa salle des festins, mille tonneaux remplis d'or, et de grands sacs de velours en broderie de perles, que l'on remplissait de pistolet; chacun en pouvait tenir cent mille : on les donnait indifféremment à ceux qui tendaient la main ; de sorte que cette petite cérémonie, qui n'était pas une des moins utiles et des moins agréables de la noce, y attira beaucoup de personnes qui étaient peu sensibles à tous les autres plaisirs.

The final line of this paragraph seems almost like an afterthought, but actually says a great deal about how d'Aulnoy (and therefore her readers) viewed those individuals who were not privy to court life on a regular basis. The peasant is generally depicted as lacking intelligence and having a rather unpleasing appearance (Thelander 482). The author is essentially saying that members of society who were not regularly exposed to refined forms of entertainment such as music and theater, could not possibly hope to understand or appreciate these divertissements, and therefore were presented with

money (gold), which is something that they, the lower class, would always appreciate. Status is first a function of birth, which is often combined with certain moral and physical characteristics.

It has often been pointed out that Mme d'Auloy's tales were not written for children excluding perhaps the children who were privy to court life. It seems rather weak to insinuate that only those who were familiar with court affairs could appreciate her fairy tales. On the contrary, with such a great interest by the people in the happenings at Louis XIV's court, it seems that there would be an even stronger interest in the tales from those who could only possibly hope to experience court life through these literary fairy tales (Mitchell 43).

Culinary delights are frequently described when discussing the fine living that fairy tale royalty experienced. One of the most elaborate descriptions is found in "Le Mouton", when the ram leads the princess to his kingdom:

Cette plaine était couverte d'arbres singuliers ; il y avait des avenues tout entières de perdreaux, mieux piqués et mieux cuits que chez la Guerbois, et qui pendaient aux branches ; il y avait d'autres allées de cailles et de lapereaux, de dindons, de poulets, de faisans et d'ortolans⁴³; en de certains endroits où l'air paraissait plus obscur, il y pleuvait des bisques d'écrevisses, des soupes de santé, des foies gras, des ris de veau mis en ragoûts, des boudins blancs, des saucissons, des tourtes, des pâtés, des confitures sèches et liquides, des louis d'or, des écus, des perles et des diamants.

⁴³ The ortolan is a bird in the bunting family.

In addition to some of the more popular game animals of the time – d’Aulnoy mentions the unique ortolan. The ortolan is a small bird, and a regular dish of French country cuisine. For centuries, a rite of passage for French gourmets has been to dine on the ortolan. The birds are captured alive, drowned in Armagnac, roasted whole and then eaten that way. The diner draped his head with a linen napkin both to preserve the delicate aroma and, it was believed, to hide from God (Allen 73).

In this inventory, everything that is best among these domains is accumulated, giving the impression of a tremendous overabundance. La Guerbois was the name of a famous traiteur (caterer) and rôtisseur (seller of roast meat). He owned a cook-shop in the Rue St. Honoré and sold his fine products to Parisians (Buczowski 64).

Upon her first glance at the Ram in “Le Mouton”, Merveilleuse notes the following activity taking place in the magnificent court-like forest setting:

Une centaine de moutons parés étaient autour de lui, qui ne paissaient point l'herbe, mais les uns prenaient du café, du sorbet, des glaces, de la limonade, les autres des fraises, de la crème et des confitures les uns jouaient à la bassette, d'autres au lansquenet; plusieurs avaient des colliers d'or enrichis de devises galantes, les oreilles percées, des rubans et des fleurs en mille endroits.

All of the items mentioned evoke a luxurious ambiance, but of particular interest are the sorbets and ices. Both ice and snow were used for centuries to cool food, but “ice” in its contemporary form has only appeared over the last several hundred years. In France at

all events, such ices did not become at all well known until the reign of Louis XIV, when a Florentine introduced them into Paris around 1660 (though in Italy they had already existed for some time). The sorbet, or semi-fluid ice which was heavily flavored with alcohol, and was a descendant of sherbet, which was a mixture of sweetened fruit juice or pulp, lemon juice, and then chilled with snow (Beaty-Pownall 2).

In his study on life during the reign of Louis XIV, Georges Mongrédien mentions many of these items as being in vogue during the 17th century, therefore it was highly appropriate to include these elements in the fairy tales, and is yet another example of using items based in current culture to give the stories a more realistic tint:

A la fin du repas, il est d'usage de servir des vins très forts d'Italie et d'Espagne, et on en boit hardiment, ainsi que des liqueurs alcoolisées: le ratafia, (espèce de kirsch fait avec des noyaux de pêche et d'abricots, très fort et d'un gout très agréable; le rossolis, la fenouillette de l'île de Ré, assez semblable à notre anisette... (Mongrédien 93)

Opera, theater and dance were three forms of art that made numerous appearances within French fairy tales. In the opening sentences of “La Bonne petite Souris”, the king and queen partake in a myriad of these social activities, even including hunting and fishing:

...ils allaient tous les jours à la chasse tuer des lièvres et des cerfs; ils allaient à la pêche prendre des soles et des carpes; au bal, danser la bourrée⁴⁴ et la pavane⁴⁵; à de grands festins, manger du rôti et des dragées ; à la comédie et à l'opéra. Ils riaient, ils chantaient, ils se faisaient mille pièces pour se divertir; enfin c'était le plus heureux de tous les temps. Leurs sujets suivaient l'exemple du roi et de la reine ; ils se divertissaient à l'envi l'un de l'autre.

The fact that several dances are given names suggests that d'Aulnoy participated in this particular type of entertainment and perhaps enjoyed it more than some of the other *divertissements* since she names them so specifically (Mitchell 39).

The king and queen clearly know how to partake in the amusements made available to them by their positions in society. Members of their court as well as their subjects follow the example set by the royal couple, and in this way the kingdom is a happy one. This says a great deal about how d'Aulnoy viewed these various forms of entertainment. That not only was it a highly common practice in the upper echelons of society, but an accepted one, and also one that it provided happiness in the lives of those who participated.

In “La Chatte blanche”, the prince is entertained by theater, ballet, feasts and a hunt – the court over which the white cat presides is a transformation of the royal court of

⁴⁴ *Bourée* was a court dance (related to the polka) popular in the 16th century. The Dance Encyclopedia, Compiled and ed. By Anatole Chujoy and P.W. Manchester (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p 152.

⁴⁵ Pavane was a 17th century dance whose name was possibly derived from the city of Padua or from the word Pavo meaning peacock. It is considered probably the latter as the ladies who were dancing would sweep their trains in the manner of a peacock. *The Dance Encyclopedia* (p712).

d'Aulnoy's own day, with cats everywhere playing the role of human beings. Perhaps its most extraordinary feature is the cats' orchestra and the prince's reaction to it:

Le prince ne savait pour qui ces deux couverts étaient mis, lorsqu'il vit des chats qui se placèrent dans un petit orchestre ménagé exprès, l'un tenait un livre avec des notes les plus extraordinaires du monde, l'autre un rouleau de papier dont il battait la mesure, et les autres avaient de petits guitares; tout d'un coup chacun d'eux se mit à miauler sur différents tons et à gratter les cordes des guitares avec leurs ongles: c'était la plus étrange musique que l'on ait jamais entendue. Le prince se serait cru en enfer, s'il n'avait pas trouvé ce palais trop merveilleux pour donner dans une pensée si peu vraisemblable: mais il se bouchait les oreilles et riait de toute sa force, de voir les différentes postures et les grimaces de ces nouveaux musiciens.

Opera was a specific form of entertainment with which the average person had little to no experience. This was a privileged form of entertainment that allowed aristocrats to openly display leisure (Duggan, *Salonnières* 223). When Gracieuse comes upon Percinet's crystal palace, she is entertained by the opera *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*: "Quoiqu'elle fût bien lasse, il l'engagea de passer dans un salon tout brillant d'or et de peintures, où l'on représenta un opéra. C'était les amours de Psyché et de Cupidon, mêlés de danses et de petites chansons."

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period where the art of conversation was of great interest, and the events that took place at the court were often

the subject of these conversations. One of d'Aulnoy's best examples of seventeenth century living can be found in "Le Serpentin vert." When Laideronnette finds herself in the kingdom of Pagodie, she spends her time watching plays by Corneille and Moliere and generally being amused by the pagodes, who dance and sing for her. In order to keep Laideronnette from becoming bored, they visit all the courts and bring back news from the outside world:

Il n'y avait point d'heures où quelques pagodes n'arrivassent, et ne lui rendissent compte des choses les plus secrètes et les plus curieuses qui se passaient dans le monde, des traités de paix, des ligues pour faire la guerre, trahisons et ruptures d'amants, infidélités de maîtresses, désespoirs, raccommodevements, héritiers déçus, mariages rompus, vieilles veuves qui se remariaient fort mal à propos, trésors découverts, banqueroutes, fortunes faites en un moment, favoris tombés, sièges de places, maris jaloux, femmes coquettes, mauvais enfants, villes abîmées: enfin que ne venaient-ils pas dire à la princesse pour la réjouir ou pour l'occuper?

This was an age interested in the art of conversation, and everything that took place at the court became the focal point of many of these conversations. The account given by the pagodes provides readers with a good idea of the types of topics discussed in the salons when people were not reading literary works or telling fairy tales (Mitchell 40).

The many levels of the *habitus* that are scattered throughout the tales are perhaps the richest of all the motifs found in the conteuses' corpus. They give excellent insight

into life during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and reinforce the fact that the *conteuses* were quite familiar with contemporary elements. By inserting familiar names, places and material items into their tales, the women created a world where fantasy and reality seamlessly blend into an enchanting world. There is a level of familiarity that touches readers and draws them into the tale, and at the same time they are entertained and enchanted by the *merveilleux* aspects that are standard in the fairy tale genre.

Conclusion

Despite the continual efforts of women to make their voices heard in the formation and diffusion of the Western fairy tale, the fairy tale canon was largely overshadowed by the works of male writers. As the fairy tale became firmly installed as a genre in the eighteenth century and as certain tales became emblematic of the genre, women played an active role in disseminating, challenging and appropriating the tales (Zipes, "Relentless progress" 125-126).

Many scholars have devoted studies to evaluating women's contribution to a genre that they in fact dominated by their sheer numbers and the volume of their production, as well as by its incorporation in structures of women's culture, such as the salons. Scholars have addressed the question as to why this particular literary production marked late seventeenth century France. Mary Storer stated that the conteurs and conteuses, most of whom were at one time or another in disfavor with the monarchy, created through their tales an imaginary court that compensated for their real displeasure with the actual world they lived in (Storer 253). For Jacques Barchilon, who refers to the troubled economy, famines, peasant revolts and curtailing of personal expenditures of the period, the tales responded to an increasingly materialist society by expressing yearning for an idealized past (Barchilon, *Le conte merveilleux* xii-xiv). Raymonde Robert analyzed fairy tale production not as escapism, but rather as a reflection of aristocratic values which she views as in complete harmony with those of absolutism. According to her research, aristocrats appropriated the folktales of the time in order to affirm their own superior class identity (Robert, *Le Conte de Fées* 228, 231, 327, 384). Most recently,

Lewis Seifert proposed that the tales created “a discursive counter-reality, one that compensated for the increasing pressures in elite culture.” Focusing on the issues of sexuality and gender, Seifert studied the tensions between nostalgic and utopic tendencies that are the trademark of those tales (Seifert *Fairy Tales, Sexuality* 11). Jack Zipes, one of the most prolific scholars of the tale, noted the subversive and utopic thrust that he designates as the “salon fairy tale,” which disseminated alternative models of behavior while simultaneously voicing critical opposition to the court of Louis XIV (Zipes, *Beauties* 5-9).

On the other hand, the fairy tale could convey standard notions of propriety and morality that reinforced the socialization process in France. What might have been somewhat subversive in the salon fairy tale was often conventionalized to suit the taste and values of the dominant classes and the regime by the middle of the eighteenth century. This was the period when there was a great debate about the meaning of civilité, and literature was regarded as a means of socialization through which norms, mores, and manners were to be diffused. Therefore it is not by chance that the literary fairy tale for children was actually established by Mme. De Beaumont, not by Mme. D’Aulnoy or Perrault. Both the debate about civility and the acceptance of the fairy tale as a proper literary genre had to reach a certain stage before the tale could be conventionalized as children’s literature (Zipes - Classical 47).

Fairy tales have also elicited readings that rely on psychoanalysis to reveal its inner workings, in particular, within the Jungian school of interpretation, which sees symbolic clusters and motifs in the tale as archetypal elements that remove the narratives from of the immediacy of a specific cultural context and anchor it in foundational shared

human experience that transcends history. In this view, the tales are connected to such notions as the Dionysian, in particular through episodes that involve motifs of mutilation, dismemberment and rebirth, or to the meanings of dreams and psychic flight, to the fractures of the soul or the quest for immortality. In this perspective, tales and their motifs allow the most hidden, secret, and even forbidden facets of the self to emerge and find their articulation. This approach is exemplified by the writings in particular of Marie-Louise von Frantz and Bettina Knapp, while in the general corpus of the folk and fairy tale, Alan Dundes' interventions have been both historical and steeped in Freudian psychoanalysis. While some of these explorations have illuminated the interpretation of the literary fairy tale written by women, on the whole, recent scholarship on this corpus has tended to shy away from generalizing interpretative models that transcend the historical, and sought to reconnect the corpus to its time and to understand its meanings in a sociological and historical vein.

The fairy tale naturally lends itself to interpretation, and thus no one single model is exclusively valid. The deceptive simplicity of the tales permits them to be enjoyed and interpreted in dozens of ways, although over-interpretation can lead to a loss of the magic and creative forces behind these tales. Without a doubt, the language used in fairy tales is symbolic. Maria Tatar points out that this constitutes one of the main differences between folklore and literature. The symbolic code of literature is private and arbitrary, whereas that of folklore is public and set down by custom (Tatar, *Hard Facts* 81).

My point of departure in this thesis was to build on the conclusions of scholars using gender theory to read the early modern women's fairy tale, but to view the narratives through motif accumulation and transmission. My interest was in the symbolic

and mythical aspects of the tales that were not so evidently read within a gendered perspective. The symbolic networks of the tales and their uses of the imaginary led me to want to revisit the function of traditional fairy tale motifs in allowing the creative processes of imagination to unfurl, while being still subject to the tensions deriving from gendered constraints and norms. During my research into this complex and even divisive genre, specifically into the tales of the conteuses, my attention remained drawn to the use of language that seems so uniquely a part of the art of d'Aulnoy and her contemporaries. Their choice of words, their highly descriptive paragraphs, and their distinctive usage of specific categories of motifs combine together to create an art of transformation that both alludes to broader societal and political concerns, and brings out the visual, aesthetic and emotional charge of the imaginary. This art of transformation creates a unique mode of representation within the fairy tale genre that was neither seen before nor replicated since.

As my work progressed, I thus increasingly turned away from general, universalizing, explications founded in myth and from the a-historical implications of wide-ranging networks of the symbolic. Instead, I sought to show that, while women tale-writers formulated a complex narrative art that translated a clearly gendered perspective grounded in the specific cultural, political and economic realities of their time, they were, just as importantly, making free and bold use of ancient and traditional motifs to forge a distinctive artistic tool, their very own version of the merveilleux, indispensable to the articulation of their views of the contemporary world and their experiences as women. A clear illustration of this is the way Madame d'Aulnoy focused, in her version of tale-type 425B, 'Le Serpentin vert,' among many available motifs as building blocks for the tale,

on the spinning motif, both for its ominous mythical associations and for its potential as commentary on the work of women. In another tale, “La Chatte blanche,” d’Aulnoy selects weaving as the sole human activity still engaged on by the feline court: she thus selects a craft activity both linked by myth to the work of women and to representations of time.

The fairy tales of the *conteuses* thus demonstrated the growing importance of women in the literary fields of the late early modern period. Despite the differences seen in their stories, the tales of the *conteuses* as a whole tend to glorify female power (particularly with the character of the fairy), defend a woman’s right to education, celebrate women’s language, challenge marriage arrangements, and deflate hyperbolic conceptions of male heroism (Seifert, “Feminist Tales” 338). As products of their time, French fairy tales of the seventeenth century are a witness to a unique period of philosophical, political and social change in which women writers played a prominent role (Seifert, “Fairy Tales, Subversion” 68).

The tales that the *conteuses* chose to preserve for posterity are more likely than others to have a female protagonist. Their heroines take on roles that are active rather than passive; they take it upon themselves to solve problems rather than wait for others to rescue them. They use a combination of intelligence and strength to complete their quest and further their personal development (DeJean, *Marquise-Marquis* ix). Since women’s magic is a metaphor for natural growth, fairy tales about heroines differ intrinsically from those about heroes. In stories where the hero dominates, he has a single choice: conquer or die. But a heroine has no choice at all. She has to survive; while patriarchal culture suggests that nature’s mandate for her is to survive and reproduce, and to do that, she

must transform herself into whatever the moment demands (Gould xxiv), the *conteuses* went well beyond such goals for their heroines, who variably sought to define happiness for themselves, hold power and rule over imaginary polities, and shape culture. For all these reasons, the corpus of tale-writing by the women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will continue to demand attention and encourage new interpretations.

In the final analysis, these tales will also continue to draw attention because scholars have long realized that fairy tales were originally not children's stories but rather traditional narratives for adults, discussing basic human problems and aspirations by using symbolic and poetic language. Even though they present an unreal world with miraculous, magical, and numinous aspects, fairy tales nevertheless contain realistic problems and concerns that are familiar to humanity (Mieder 3).

With its constant presence in both literary and technological media (television, movies, etc.), the tale continues to evolve and increase its influence throughout the world. Even in their traditional forms, fairy tales appeal to a wide range of readers because they focus on the idea of transformation and growth. The draw of fairy tales has much to do with the longing for a better life, a dream to which many readers can relate. The *conteuses* gave concrete and material form to that longing through their artful use of motifs connected to adornment and embellishment, conjuring a fantasy world of boundless riches and aesthetic beauty. While the precise contours of such imaginations are very different today, we do long for and strive toward the happy end so vividly expressed in fairy tales. Even though there might be moments of regression or deviation from this path, people will always to escape the status quo of social reality in their longing for happiness (Mieder 5).

Fifty years ago the great German philosopher of hope, Ernst Bloch, insisted that the fairy tale would always address what is lacking in society and would illuminate a better future (Zipes, *Relentless Progress* 128). I believe that one of the simplest yet profound messages found in many fairy tales is one of hope. Hope that a hero will complete his long journey safely, hope that a heroine will find true love and authentic fulfillment. It is this emotion that guides not only characters in fairy tales but real-life characters as well, thus making fairy tales a magic mirror into the minds and hearts of generations past, present and future, beyond the historical and cultural specificities of the narrative's details.

Appendix A

List of Analyzed Fairy Tales**Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baronne d'Aulnoy, (1650 – 1705)***Les Contes des fées (1697)*

- “La Belle aux cheveux d’or”
- “La Bonne petite souris”
- “Finette Cendron”
- “Fortunée”
- “Graceiuse et Percinet”
- “La Grenouille bienfaisante”
- “Le Nain jaune”
- “L’Oiseau bleu”
- “L’Oranger et l’abeille”
- “La Princesse Printanière”
- “Le Rameau”

Contes Nouveaux ou Les Fées à la Mode (1698)

- “La Chatte blanche”
- “Le Serpentin vert”

Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711-1780)*Le Magasin des Enfants (1757)*

- “La Belle et la bête”

Charlotte-Rose Caumont de la Force (1650–1724)*Les Contes Des Contes (1698)*

- “La Bonne femme”
- “Persinette”

Marie-Jeanne de Villandon L'Héritier (1664-1734)

Les Oeuvres meslées (1696)
“L'Adroite princesse”

Les bigarrures ingénieuses (1696)
“Ricdin-Ricdon”

Henriette Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat (1670-1716)

Contes de fées (1698)
Le Palais de vengeance

Les Lutins Du Château De Kernosy (1710)
“Etoilette”
“La Peau d'ours”

Appendix B

Aarne Thompson Folktales Classification System**ANIMAL TALES**

Wild Animals	1-99
The Clever Fox or other animal	1-69
The theft of fish	1
How the bear lost his tail	2
Biting the foot	5
The calling of three tree names	7
The unjust partner	9
Over the edge	10
Stealing the Partner's Butter	15
The animals flee in fear of the end of the world	20C
Eating his own entrails	21
The fox climbs from the pit on the wolf's back	31
Wolf drinks water to get cheese	34B
The fox as shepherd	37
Claw in split tree	38
The wolf overeats in the cellar	41
The fox (bear, etc) hangs by his teeth to the horse's tail, hare's lip	47A
The bear and the honey	49
Curing a sick lion	50
Fox plays dead and catches bird	56A
Raven with cheese in his mouth	57
Fox and crane invite each other	60
The fox persuades the cock to crow with closed eyes	61
Peace among the animals - the fox and the cook	62
Mrs. Fox's Suitors	65
Greed	68A
Other Wild Animals	70-99
More cowardly than the hare	70
Too cold for hare to build house in winter	81
The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage	85
The Heart of a Monkey	91
When the hare was married	96
Wild Animals and Domestic Animals	100-149
The old dog rescues the child	101
The cat's only trick	105
Animals' conversation	106
The cat and the mouse converse	111

Town Mouse and Country Mouse	112
The cat's funeral	113
The bear on the hay-wagon	116
The first to see the sunrise	120
Eat Me When I'm Fatter	122E
The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids	123
The Three Little Pigs	124
Outcast Animals Find a New Home	130
Goat admires his horns in the water	132
Wild Animals and Humans	150-199
Music lessons for wild animals	151
The gelding of the bear and the fetching of salve	153
Bear-food	154
The ungrateful serpent returned to captivity	155
Androcles and the Lion	156
Learning to fear men	157
Old woman and wolf fall into pit together	168A
The Three Bears	171
The Brahmin and the Mongoose	178A
What the bear whispered in his ear - Man and bear	179
Domestic Animals	200-219
Sheep, duck and cock in peril at sea	204
The Traveling Animals and the Wicked Man	210
The hog who was so tired of his daily food	211
Other Animals and Objects	220-299
The election of bird-king - Test: Who can fly highest?	221
War of birds and quadrupeds	222
The Geese's Eternal Prayer	227
The race of the cock, the birch cock and the birch-hen	230
Imitating Bird Sounds,	236
Each likes his own children best	247
The race of the fox and the crab	275
Hare and tortoise race: sleeping	275A
The ant and the lazy cricket	280A
The Child and the Snake	285
The hops and the turnips quarrel	293D
The Straw, the Coal, and the Bean	295
Wind and Sun	298

FAIRY TALES

Supernatural Opponents	300-399
The Dragon-Slayer	300
The Three Kidnapped Princesses	301
The Giant Without A Heart,	302
The Twin Brothers,	303
Seven Sisters, Seven Brothers	303A
The Trained Hunter	304
The Twelve Dancing Princesses	306
The Princess in the Coffin	307
Rapunzel	310
Killed by a Giant	311
The Bluebeard	312
The Girl as Helper in Hero's Flight	313
The youth transformed to a horse	314
The Treacherous Sister	315
The Mermaid in the Pond	316
The Princess and the Sky-tree	317
The Batamärchen	318
The Magician and his Apprentice	325
The Youth Who Wanted to Learn What Fear Is	326
The Children With the Witch	327A
The Small Boy Defeats the Ogre	327B
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Plowing	1003
Hogs in the mud; sheep in the air	1004
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The woman as cuckoo in the tree	1029
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Man and ogre share the harvest	1030
Granary roof used as threshing flail	1031
The heavy axe	1049
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Throwing contest with the golden club	1063
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The man without a head in the bear's den	1225
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Sunlight carried in a bag into the windowless house	1245
A hole to throw the earth in	1255
The porridge in the ice hole	1260
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Numskull strikes all the matches in order to try them	1260B
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Burning the Barn to Destroy an Unknown Animal	1281
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Contest in lying	1920
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The three lazy ones	1950
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Chains Based on Numbers, Objects, Animals, or Names	2000-2020
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The house is burned down	2014A
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Fair Katrinelje and Pif-Paf-Poltrie	2019
Chains Involving Death	2021-2024
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An Animal Mourns the Death of a Spouse	2022
Chains Involving Eating	2025-2028
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