

ELEVATED INCEPTIONS AND POPULAR OUTCOMES:
THE *CONTES* OF MARIE-CATHERINE D'AULNOY AND CHARLES PERRAULT

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INTRODUCTION

Between 1690 and 1700 fairytales and tales about fairies flowed freely from the pens of one Parisian author after another (Storer; Barchilon 1975; Olalla; DiScanno; Piqué). Of the many who wrote about fairies, two authors remain lastingly significant: Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness d'Aulnoy (ca. 1650-1705) and Charles Perrault (1628-1703). When Abbé Dubos gossiped by mail to his friend, the expatriate French encyclopedist Pierre Bayle, about the Paris publishing scene in early March 1697, he linked the two: "Madame Daunoy (sic) adjointe un second volume aux contes de ma mère l'oye de monsieur Perrault" (Bayle in Barchilon 1956 45, Morgan 1985 9-10).¹

Madame d'Aulnoy's tales about fairies, which embodied an elite tradition with literary roots extending back into medieval and Renaissance Italy, was the last flowering of a tale collection tradition common to western and southern Europe, whose most famous exemplars were Boccaccio, Chaucer, Straparola, Basile, and Marguerite de Navarre. In historical terms her tales represented a tradition at its apogee but moving steadily toward its end. In terms of subject matter Mme d'Aulnoy's contes de fées treated the unpredictable intersections between human beings' lives and a magical fairy world. As physical artifacts, her two four-volume sets of contes de fées incarnated narratives so lengthy that they both presupposed and required a leisured and elite reading public. In contrast Perrault's fairytales offered values and style parallel to those in *Bibliothèque bleue* publications for a broad-based readership. Perrault's fairytales with their simplified style and content eventually initiated a literary genre that has survived into the modern world.

This article explores both authors' content, style, and publishing history in an effort to situate their differing relationships to the seventeenth-century French culture from which they emerged, to unravel the processes which fostered the entry of Perrault's tales into the mass market of the *Bibliothèque bleue*, and to understand the reasons why his tales, rather than Mme d'Aulnoy's, would eventually penetrate oral and written cultures of all social classes throughout the world.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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¹ Quoted from Emile Gigas, *Choix de la correspondance inédite de Pierre Bayle (1670-1706)* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1890), 293.

In a historico-biographical sense, Mme d'Aulnoy's tales may be seen as a pale reflection of her own flamboyant life. Married at fifteen to a forty-six year old with a murky past, she bore four children in three years before conspiring with her mother to achieve a speedy widowhood by conspiring to implicate him (falsely) in treason, a capital crime. Her husband survived her efforts, the false witnesses were executed, her mother fled to Spain, and she herself was banished from Paris. After a twenty-year absence, she was desperate to return.

When she returned to Paris in her forties, Mme d'Aulnoy lived in a modest dwelling in the muddy and narrow rue St. Benoit near the abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés! From there Mme d'Aulnoy pursued a carefully crafted policy of ingratiating herself with socially powerful and politically influential figures. She aimed high, complimenting Louis XIV himself in "La Princess Rosette" (Robert 1991 45).² Her book dedications, published professions of piety, and devotional compositions led to her inclusion by 1692 in salon gatherings with guests such as Catherine Bernard, Charlotte Rose de Caumont de la Force, Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat, the Abbé de Choisy, and the Abbé Fénelon at Mme de Lambert's elegant salon. Her luxurious mansion (now owned by Rothschilds) in the fashionable rue de Richelieu on the Île St. Louis had been designed by Le Vau, decorated by Le Sueur and Lebrun, and was richly hung with Gobelin tapestries. From these glittering salons Mme d'Aulnoy gained examples for her writings and reconstructed a fragile respectability.

Perrault had passed the twenty-year period during which Mme d'Aulnoy had been banished from Paris serving his king and the glory of France. As architectural adviser to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's chief minister, Perrault was responsible for conceptualizing public monuments, for publicizing Louis XIV's art collection (Burke 54, 56), and for commissioning commemorative medals. He also participated in and sometimes directed meetings of the Académie Française in the Louvre and may well have designed the east flank of the Louvre himself (Perrault 1989 41ff.). He was a bureaucratically competent and socially adroit insider, a "Royal flatterer" as the English diarist John Evelyn unkindly called him (Burke 169).

In 1683, a widower in his fifties with three young children, Perrault was edged out of office in favor of Colbert's own son. No longer a court functionary, Perrault attended regular meetings of the Académie Française, passed occasional afternoons and evenings in the apartments of the Abbé de Choisy, where he and a small group of friends, the "Assemblée de Luxembourg," discussed literature (Roche-Mazon 33), or went himself to Mme Lambert's gatherings. At home he received friends such as M. de Fontenelle and the poet Santeuil (Lacroix in Perrault 1878 vii). No longer an

² On the subject of commemorative medals see Jeanne Morgan Zarruchi, "Charles Perrault et l'Éloquence de la devise" in *Merveilles et Contes* V,2 (1991):167-177.

official glorifying his king in marble, mortar, and metal, he re-directed his energies towards eulogizing Louis XIV in literature, one piece of which precipitated the Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns in France.

In the 1680s and 1690s Perrault continued to craft competent verse to express his conviction that the modern world was scientifically and literarily superior to the ancient world. It was in this context that Perrault began experimenting with popular literary forms. The first was *Griselidis, Nouvelle* (1691), a story invented by Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, reworked and translated into Latin by Petrarch, and by Perrault's day repeatedly published in French in the *Bibliothèque bleue*. Perrault produced two more versified popular tales, "Les Souhairs ridicules" (1693) and "Peau d'Âne" (1694). Beginning in 1695, he used prose, first for "La Belle au bois dormant," and then for his other now-familiar tales. Perrault's contes de fées, some of which he read before the Académie Française and published in the *Mercure Galante*, were roundly ridiculed by Nicolas Boileau and fondly appreciated by others (Morgan 1985 9, 27).

CONTENT AND STYLE

Both Mme d'Aulnoy and Charles Perrault knew Europe's fairytale narrative conventions, and both included obligatory characters like genuinely wicked stepmothers and fifteen-year old maidens being courted by fictive eighteen-year old admirers. Mme d'Aulnoy's "Belle au Cheveux d'or" coyly indicated that young ladies shouldn't accept gifts from men, and, similarly worldly, Perrault's "Chaperon rouge" drily noted that not all wolves walk on four paws.³ One critic, Jayne Reseign, has claimed *préciosité* for both authors. Multiple similarities like these emphasize the fact that both authors operated at the same time within a single Parisian literary milieu and responded to many of the same social and literary cues.

Mme d'Aulnoy and Perrault were both thoroughly familiar with ancient Greek mythology, yet each treated it differently. Anne Defrance understands Mme d'Aulnoy's tales as a reinscription (*reécriture*) of myth (209-255), and it is certainly true that the ancient world's gods and goddesses are an unquestioned component of her tales. Although the ancient world was also central to Perrault's life and writings, one recent scholar, Yvette Saupé, has noted that there is not yet a meaningful consensus about the extent to which Perrault rejected that world, its gods, and its mythology in his enthusiasm for the Moderns. It is therefore worth exploring the differing ways in which the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology figured in the two fairytale oeuvres.

³ Moralité, "Le Petit Chaperon Rouge" from Jacques Barchilon, ed., *Contes de Perrault. Fac-similé de l'édition originale de 1695-1697* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1980) 56:
... hélas! qui ne savait que ces Loup doucereux,
De tous les Loups sont les plus dangereux.

In Mme d'Aulnoy's "L'abeille et l'oranger," "L'Ile de la felicité," and "Le Rameau d'or" her characters shared their world with gods and mythical figures like Eolus, Boreas, Zephir, Aurora, Diana, and Cyclops-like ogres. Powerful narrative consequences accompanied the admission of Olympians to Mme d'Aulnoy's stories, the most significant of which was god-driven tragedy, always poised to irrupt violently into princes' and princesses' stories. For instance, "L'Ile de la Felicité" ended after Father Time had strangled its hero Prince Adolph to death.

Perrault, on the other hand, had inserted Greek gods into only his early tales: Jupiter in "Les Souhairs ridicules" and Apollo and Céphale in "Peau d'Âne." In 1695 Perrault criticized Greek gods for the problematic morals of their stories: "Je prétends même que mes Fables méritent mieux d'être racontées que la plupart des Contes anciens, et particulièrement celui de la Matrone d'Ephèse et celui de Psyché, si l'on les regarde du côté de la Morale, chose principale dans toute sorte de Fables, et pour laquelle elles doivent avoir été faites" (Perrault 1980 Preface). Neither did Perrault's niece Mlle Lhéritier see any reason for preferring Greek gods over French fairies, because, as she wrote, French fairies were equally capable of performing "des prodiges" (cited by Rouger in Perrault 1987 64).

In terms of style, the tales of Mme d'Aulnoy far exceeded those of Perrault in length, because she explored ancillary narrative questions. How had a struggle between heroes and their enemies come about? How had an ancient rivalry formed? What accounted for a competitor's jealousy or a helper's sympathy? Mme d'Aulnoy's stories supplied shape, color, emotion, and as Patricia Hannon ably demonstrates, motivation and plausibility (1988), including lengthy accountings for their actions by her characters themselves. In terms of plot, Mme d'Aulnoy regularly increased narrative complexity by having her fairies and enchanters manipulate heroines and heroes for their own purposes. Her style exemplified "les jeux d'écriture" (Welch 1989) and incorporated "tous les techniques de composition... tiroirs, enchâssements et simultanité" (Thirard 187).

In contrast, Perrault became more brief over time: *Griselidis* had approximately 5300 words, "Peau d'âne" about 3500. The longest of his prose fairy tales, "Le Petit poucet" and "La Belle au bois dormant" had about 3000 words, but "La Barbe bleue" weighed in with only about 1600 words, "Le Maître chat" with about 1350, "Les Fées" with approximately 700, and "Le Petit chaperon rouge" with fewer than 600.

Mme d'Aulnoy's elaborated plots required an elaborated vocabulary, if only not to be boringly repetitive. As a result her descriptors are both specific and specifying. A golden door set with semi-precious gems whose brilliance illuminated everything around it opened through walls of transparent and multicolored porcelain in "La chatte blanche" (Aulnoy 1988 21). Mme d'Aulnoy delineated ugliness in equally great detail when she described the homely Princess Troutface of "L'oiseau bleu": "Le visage

de Princess Tritonne avait autant de taches de rousseur qu'une truite; ses cheveux noirs étaient si gras et si crasseux, que l'on n'y pouvait toucher, et sa peau jaune distillait de l'huile" (Aulnoy 1988 106). Altogether Mme d'Aulnoy's style reflected the sensibilities and the artifacts of the privileged milieu (Robert 1982 327-380) to which she aspired and in which she participated. The German scholar Renate Baader characterized her writing aesthetically as "bagatelle," "broderie," and "badinage" characteristic of women's fairy tales (Baader 233-236), but in a form so extreme that one critic, Marcelle Welch, has concluded that her intent was parodic (Welch 1993 77). Whether or not she meant to do so, Mme d'Aulnoy bequeathed to posterity some of the best examples of rococo taste in literature, according to the same critic (84).

STORY ENDINGS AND MORALITIES

When in Mme D'Aulnoy's "L'Ile de Félicité" the hapless princess finds her beloved's lifeless body, she retires behind the closed doors of her palace and descends into perpetual mourning. Rather than promising glory, the story's grave morality predicts a saddening mortality, in which perfect happiness (félicité parfaite) is impossible.⁴ One might just as well say that happiness is as arbitrary as are the fairies themselves (Defrance 101).

"La bonne petite souris" presented a different though equally problematic ethic. There Mme d'Aulnoy claimed that a good deed never went unrewarded, but in her story the nature of "a good deed" was as complicated as her promise was plain. The tale tells of an imprisoned and starving queen who gave a mouse some of her tiny allotment of food in return for copious amounts of delicacies. Mme d'Aulnoy presents the queen's gift more as a beneficial exchange than as a good deed. This is a pragmatically self-serving magic, but pragmatism, as biographical details suggest, was a quality that Mme d'Aulnoy had learned to cultivate.

The ethically unclear relationship between the queen's good deed (helping an animal) and her subsequent reward was a continuing one in "La bonne petite souris." The imprisoned queen was concerned that if the mouse stopped visiting her, she herself might starve to death; and she further worried that her jailer would kill her soon-to-be-born baby, unless she found a way to save it. Schooled in modern fairy tales, we expect the little mouse to find a solution. But before that could happen in Mme d'Aulnoy's fairytale, an old woman appeared and asked the queen to kill the little mouse in return for which she (the old woman) would save the

⁴ Ibid., 115-116: "elle ordonna que l'on fermât pour toujours les portes de son palais et en effet, depuis ce jour funeste, personne n'a pu dire qu'il l'ait bien vue. Sa douleur est cause qu'elle ne se montre que rarement et l'on ne trouve point cette princesse sans qu'elle soit précédée de quelques inquiétudes, accompagnée de chagrins ou suivie de déplaisirs..." Ibid. 116: "... tout le monde a dit depuis cette déplorable aventure:

Que le tempt vient à bout de tout,
et qu'il n'est point de félicité parfaite."

queen's baby. Loyal to the mouse, the queen refused. Because her loyalty effectively condemned her baby to death, the moral consequences of the queen's loyal refusal were enormous. Mme D'Aulnoy did not keep her readers in moral suspense for very long, because the old woman soon quickly revealed her disguise: she was actually the mouse, her strange request simply a test of the Queen's loyalty.

For his part Perrault appended to his brief prose tales versified morals, which were much longer than Mme d'Aulnoy's lapidary statements. In content Perrault's morals expressed elevated sentiments, but in formal terms, his *moralités* were prefigured by Basile, who had ended his tales with hardnosed social observations. It was a skillful pilot, he wrote, that kept a ship from being wrecked on the rocks (I, 4); or, he noted, those who sow thorns had better wear shoes (V,9); or, the third party to a dispute comes off best (V, 7). Even those of Basile's story summations that addressed the traditional seven deadly sins (such as envy and pride) were founded on their social and economic consequences. Envy destroys itself (I,10), he wrote, and pride engenders ruin (IV, 10).

Many of Mme d'Aulnoy's "moralités" continued the non-moral tradition of Straparola and Basile. The fairy of "La bonne petite souris" knew how to guide the queen safely to port past menacing dangers (Hourcade 1997 292)⁵. Although only a fable, its readers would find there *une morale véritable*. The *moralité*, tacked onto a tale packed with unkindness, ingratitude, force majeure, insurrection, and assassination, told its reader to be grateful to those who have done you a favor, because gratitude is the most powerful force to reach and win a heart (Hourcade 1997 292).⁶ Similarly, the "vengeurs secrets" of "Finette Cendron" were "prudence," "bienfaits," "présents," and "services" ("Finette Cendron," Aulnoy 1988 75). Finette had secured her godmother's esteem not by being good, but by making her a delectable gateau in order to be favorably received ("Finette Cendron", Aulnoy 1988 158). These notions fit well in a fairy tale world in which it was not evil that led to a king and queen's downfall, but the fact that they had managed their affairs badly ([Aulnoy] 1711 156). Nor was wickedness always punished in Mme d'Aulnoy's fairy tales. In "La Belle au Cheveux d'Or," for example, good and evil both exist, but evil could be *apparent* or *real*. The story's *apparently* wicked king is in actuality the tool of his wicked courtiers. According to a modern morality, it is they, not the king, who should be punished, and yet, the king dies and the wicked courtiers both survive and thrive (Aulnoy 1988 273-274). Similarly, in "L'Oiseau Bleu" goodness triumphs only because an effective alliance

⁵ "Cette prudente & sage fée/ ...Quand du plus grand péril la reine est menacée,/ Sait la conduire dans le port."

⁶ "A qui t'a fait une faveur,/ Montre une âme reconnaissante,/ C'est la vertu la plus puissante/ Pour toucher & gagner le coeur."

between a sorcerer and a fairy outweighs the powers of their wicked fairy opponent Soussio (Aulnoy 1988 138).

Occasional untruths are yet another aspect of the amoral world in which Mme d'Aulnoy's characters live. The Princess in "L'Abeille et L'Oranger" lie to an ogre to deceive him about her whereabouts. If caught in a lie, Mme d'Aulnoy's heroines are, of course, mortified, as is the Queen in "La Princess Rosette," who admits how disgraceful lying is. On the other hand, lying *per se* is not treated as an inadmissible infraction.

It took a while for Perrault to find the voice now so familiar from his 1697 Contes. Although he claimed that Mademoiselle de Lac would love his "fable" ("Les Souhais ridicules") as well as its "moralité" ("Vous aimerez ma fable & sa moralité,/ J'en ay, j'ose le dire, une assurance entiere ..."), most contemporary readers would not find much to love about the tale's *moralité*: it urges those who are miserable to pull up their socks and appreciate the gifts Heaven has given them. More than any other tale, "Les Souhais ridicules" taken as a whole points toward an impassable social chasm between tale audience (a princess) and tale subject (a poor woodcutter and his wife). Instead of fitting into the schema for the wish-fulfillment of a modern fairytale, the protagonists' folktale obtuseness subverts a happy ending.

Perrault recognized that his works were not "de pures bagatelles" (Perrault 1980 Preface), because they enclosed "une morale utile" (ibid.). The psychological insights in the *moralité* at the conclusion of "Les Souhais ridicules" had been sophisticated, and so they remained. Perrault's *moralités* for the tales of *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé. Avec des Moralitez* were knowing commentaries on French society. Beauty and virtue are helpful, but a wellplaced godfather or godmother can accomplish a lot more, he told readers of "Cendrillon," Youth, good looks, and good clothes inspire love effectively, they learned from the *moralité* to "Le Chat botté." Perrault provided a useful--and usable--morality.

Even with their customary twelve lines of verse, Perrault's *moralités* were simpler and more straightforward than those of Mme d'Aulnoy. Take, for example, her confessional verse summation of "Le Dauphin":

Qu'eût fait ce prince déplorable,/ Que persécutait le destin,/ Sans le secours
du bon Dauphin/ Qui lui fut toujours favorable? / Le plus riche trésor q'on
puisse posséder,/ C'est un ami tendre et fidèle,/ Qui sait à propos nous aider,
Lorsqu'à la fortune cruelle/ On se trouve près de céder./ On voit fuir les amis
quant le bonheur nous quitte;/ Il en est peu de vrais, et ce sage eut raison;/
Voyant condamner sa maison,/ Que chacun trouvait trop petite,/ Hélas!
s'écria-t-il, dans ce petit logis,/ Que je serais digne d'envie!/ Rien ne
manquerait plus au bonheur de ma vie,/ Si je pouvais l'emplier de sincères
amis. (d'Aulnoy 1996 I,3,261)

Her worldly summations did not necessarily contribute to "bonnes Moeurs" (Morgan 1985 30).

Language offers another entry point into the two authors' works. The colorful language of Perrault's *Griselidis* painted a lively picture of Prince and his kingdom: "des celebres montagnes," "ses naissantes eaux," "un jeune & vaillant Prince ... robuste, adroit," "par l'instinct secret d'une divine flame." He sketched Griselidis vividly ("une jeune Bergere...qui conduisant son troupeau, D'une main sage & menagere Tounoit son agile fuseau") and then colored her further ("D'un brillant incarnat la prompte & vive ardeur, De son beau teint redoubla la splendeur, Et sur son visage épanduë ..."). A chance meeting between the marquis and the "timide" and "tremblante" shepherdess, at which she slaked his burning thirst ("la soif ardente"), began the fateful courtship.

A few years later, with the publication of "Les Souhairs ridicules," Perrault altered his narrative style. Although he ornamented nouns with vivid adjectives in his address to the reader, Mlle de Lac ("la folle & peu galante fable," "tousjours tendre & serieuse," "si naïve," "une asurance entiere"), his style changed abruptly in the "fable" itself. Most adjectives became stereotypical ("un pauvre Bucheron," "sa douleur profonde," "te rendre heureux," "grand," "riches," "bon / bonne") with a few exceptions (for example, "sa penible vie," "le gay Bucheron," "imprudent"). It is clear that "Les Souhairs ridicules" marked intentional simplification in Perrault's stylistic development towards the lexical simplicity of 1697.

Perrault made word choices consciously, with a varied lexical inventory in the earlier tales ("Griselidis", "Les Souhairs ridicules", and "Peau d'Ane") and a thematization of style ("la maniere/ Dont quelque chose est inventé") in his dedication to "Mademoiselle de Lac***": "[Vous] sçavez que c'est la maniere/ Dont quelque chose est inventé,/ Qui beaucoup plus que la matiere / De tout Recit fait la beauté ..." (Perrault 1980 4). He didn't write, he said, like a *Precieuse*, who, "tousjours tendre & serieuse,/ Ne veut ouïr parler que d'affaires de coeur." He assured the Princess de Lac that she would love "ma fable." (It will not escape readers' notice that I accept Perrault's own assessment of the tale as "his" and that I assume him, and not his son, to be these tales' author. Perrault did not attribute his tale's naive expression to a folk source, but instead stressed its production as a response to the habits and preferences of its highborn and refined listener: "Mais vous qui mieux qu'Ame qui vive/ Sçavez charmer en racontant,/ Et dont l'expression est tousjours si naive,/ Que l'on croit voir ce qu'on entend ..." (Perrault 1980 4).

Perrault's style, even at his most florid, separated his tales from Mme d'Aulnoy's "bagatelles." In "deliberately simple language" (Morgan 1982 4) he described the colors of his Sleeping Beauty's face as simply and naturally "rosy" (incarnat) and "coral" (corail).

[Elle] "n'avoit pas osté les couleurs vives de son teint: ses jouës estoient incarnates, & ses lèvres comme du corail". ("La Belle au Bois dormant", Perrault 1980 13)

Significantly, Perrault's vocabulary generally connoted rather than denoted and typified rather than specified, as is clearly documented by Jacques Barchilon's *Concordance*: admirable 1; affreux 2; agreable 3; aimable 5; amoureuse 6; beau(x) / bel / belle(s) 74; brillants 1; orgueilleuse(s) 2; petit 73; spirituel(le) 5; stupide 3; tendre 3; terrible 3. "Beau / beaux / bel / belle(s)" and "petit" overwhelm all other adjectives. To see his descriptors in action, "La belle au bois dormant" provides excellent examples. There, for example, his "beau Baptême" (Perrault 1980 2) connotes regality while leaving details to the reader's imagination. Perrault's self-imposed vocabulary limitation emerged even more clearly from his ubiquitous use of intensifiers: bien 111; fort 47; plus 135; and peu 27, with which he modulated his recurring adjectives.

The differences in Mme D'Aulnoy's and Perrault's assemblage and treatment of narrative luxury goods paralleled their respective differences in describing characters. Mme d'Aulnoy's were extravagant in the extreme.⁷ In the fantastic garden of "Le rameau d'or," visitors trod on pearl-strewn paths, gazed at flowers with petals of diamonds, garnets, topazes, sapphires, turquoise, amethysts, and opals with leaves of emeralds. When Perrault composed "Griselidis," on the other hand, he went out of his way to affirm simplicity and to reject magnificence. He praised the clay pitcher ("vase d'argile") in which the shepherdess Griselidis fetched water, by contrasting it with precious vessels of useless display ("pompe inutile"): "Les vases précieux de cristal & d'agate/ Où l'or en mille endroits éclate,/ Et qu'un Art curieux avec soin façonna,/ N'eurent jamais pour luy, dans leur pompe inutile ..." ("Griselidis", Perrault 1980 18). Perrault's "pompe inutile" was less a generalized rejection of courtly arts and crafts than a specific repudiation of the précieuses' literary style.

Like Madame d'Aulnoy, Perrault occasionally needed to suggest great wealth, but he characteristically did so, for instance in "La Belle au bois dormant," by using categorical indicators of opulence like diamonds and rubies (Perrault 1980 4) rather than by endless listings of precious and semiprecious stones, as did Mme d'Aulnoy. Mme d'Aulnoy denoted luxury with rivers of elixir of orange blossoms, streams of Spanish wine, and cascades of a thousand kinds of liqueurs, not to mention an astonishing range of wild and domestic flesh and fowl--quail, rabbits, turkey, pullets, pheasants and ortolans, or a veritable catalog of fragrant bibelots and edible dainties in "Le Mouton":

Enfin elle découvrit tout d'un coup une vaste plaine émaillée de mille fleurs différentes, dont la bonne odeur surpassait toutes celles qu'elle avait jamais senties; une grosse rivière d'eau de fleurs d'oranges coulait autour, des fontaines de vin d'Espagne, de rossolis, d'hippocras et de mille autres sortes de liqueurs formaient des cascades et de petits ruisseaux charmants. Cette

⁷ Judd D. Hubert has also noted this phenomenon, which he understands as a form of humor. See "From Folklore to Hyperbole in the French Fairy Tale" in *Merveilles et Contes* 10,2 (1996):185-206.

plaine était couverte d'arbres singuliers; il y avait des avenues tout entières de perdreaux, mieux piqués et mieux cuits que chez la Guérbois, et qui pendaient aux branches; il y avait d'autres allées de cailles et de lapereaux, de dindons, de poulets, de faisans et d'ortolans; en de certains endroits où l'air parassait 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.

No listing like this exists anywhere in Perrault's literary oeuvre.

All authors craft their narratives so that they can make sense to their readers, a creative process that is especially true of fanciful narratives like fairy tales. Mme d'Aulnoy's characters lived in a world of unknown and unknowable forces, and her explanations therefore tended to account for the world of magic itself. If Princess Aimée could miraculously cure Prince Aimé in "L'Abeille et l'oranger," it was because, as Mme d'Aulnoy assured her readers, the princess was always prepared with powerfully fragrant herbs capable of reviving even the semi-comatose. If readers wondered how Prince Adolph could wander about unseen in "L'Ile de la Félicité" Mme d'Aulnoy quickly supplied an answer: the prince's green vestments made him invisible (Aulnoy 1996 102). When Prince Adolph again strayed beyond the world of reason and proof, Mme d'Aulnoy invoked the *necessity* to believe the incredible: "Il faut croire que le manteau vert qui le rendait invisible pouvait aussi le rendre fort léger" (Aulnoy 1996 102). Mme d'Aulnoy's characters often seem to live in a world that they themselves literally do not understand: occasionally they have to master alien languages and unknown fairy arts. Mme d'Aulnoy's own readers fared little better than her characters. How were they to distinguish between a sorcerer and a fairy, especially when the distinctions were so minor? In "L'oiseau bleu" she admitted as much: "D'un enchanteur à une fée il n'y que la main" (Aulnoy 1988 129).⁸

Perrault's explanations, on the other hand, rarely involved magic, which his tales accepted without question. Perrault inserted no authorial asides to account for the fact that his booted puss could speak and who, against all real-world probability, demanded an audience with the king, bowed courteously to his sovereign, and delivered a fine leveret from the Marquis of Carabas ("Le Chat botté", Perrault 1980 88). Mme d'Aulnoy, on the other hand, repeatedly acknowledged the friction that existed between her fictional magic and everyday reality.

Mme d'Aulnoy's fairies themselves behaved like ancient Olympians when they championed one human against another. Serious consequences also followed upon Mme d'Aulnoy's setting fairytales within a polytheistic universe, even when the "divine" figures are fairies, Father Time, or

⁸ Note that an "enchanteur" here functions as a male complement to female fairies. Catherine Marin discusses "sorcieres" and "sorcellerie" as hellishly opposed to "féerie" and posits a *féerie* / *sorcellerie* parallel to angels and devils and to heavenly and hellish forces. See Marin 1992 45-58.

sorcerers. For instance, when Mme d'Aulnoy's fairy tale heroes and heroines achieved happiness, they often did so because *their* fairy outmaneuvered their opponent's fairy. The conclusion of "Le Rameau d'Or" provides a good example of this kind of plot. There a fairy queen and king who had pitted their wits and powers against a perfidious sorcerer and had finally triumphed over him, were able to reward the love between Princess Brilliante and Prince Sanspareil as well as to return to each other and to celebrate their own happiness.

Perrault, in contrast, chose a monotheistic literary environment, despite the concurrent and paradoxical co-existence of fairies in his tales. Monotheistic religion meant "religion Chrestienne" (Perrault 1980 64) as opposed to a polytheism that Perrault identified with the ancient world. In addition, Perrault's sense of "modern" had immediately recognizable consequences for his stories, because his characters lived within moral boundaries set by a monotheistic cosmogony and by social rules promulgated by a centralized and absolute monarchy, just as in the absolutist France of Louis XIV.

The perception that Christianity and Christian sentiments were elemental components of Perrault's tales,⁹ both the early moral verse tales such as "Griselidis" as well as his subsequent prose fairytales, accords well with Yvan Loskoutoff's understanding of the relationship between devotion to the Infant Jesus and the emergence of a fashion for tales of the marvellous during the reign of Louis XIV (Loskoutoff 1987 145 ff.).¹⁰ In his 1695 letter "à Monsieur *** en luy envoyant Griselidis", Perrault discussed his intentional introduction of Griselidis's Christian reflections. "[Les reflexions chrestiennes]", he said, "y sont absolument necessaires." Only if you understand her unendingly patient acceptance of her husband's ill treatment as coming from the hand of God can you render her behaviour credible (Perrault 1980 64).¹¹ If Griselidis hadn't believed that her torments came from the hand of God in order to achieve some divinely inscrutable purpose, then her willing acceptance of her husband's injustices would have marked her as "la plus stupide de toutes les femmes" (Perrault 1980 67). There is in Perrault's formulation a strong suggestion that he believed a moralité had to be valid within a religious framework in order for it to be socially valid.

⁹ The *Pensées chretiennes de Charles Perrault*, Barchilon and Velay-Vallantin, eds. demonstrate the centrality of Christian thought in the years 1694-1703, the years of its composition. See especially Velay-Vallantin's introductory discussion about "Perrault et le merveilleux 'surnaturel'" 19-25.

¹⁰ Loskoutoff also wrote, however: "Probablement ni Mme d'Aulnoy, ni Mlle. de La Force, ni même Perrault n'avaient conscience de faire oeuvre pieuse en rédigeant leurs enfantillages. Quoi qu'ils en aient pu penser, néanmoins, leur oeuvre en tant qu'oeuvre littéraire devait se situer par rapport au domaine religieux et, plus particulièrement, par rapport à la devotion enfantine" (197-198).

¹¹ "... les reflexions Chrestiennes de la Princesse, qui dit que c'est Dieu qui la veut éprouver. ... "Vous aviez besoin de rendre croyable la Patience de vostre Heroïne, & quel autre moyen aviez-vous que de luy faire regarder les mauvais traitemens de son Epoux comme venans de la main de Dieu..."

It is perhaps unexpected, though nonetheless reasonable, to turn to the literary sources used by Mme d'Aulnoy and Perrault to try to account for their differing styles. Madame de Murat, for one, admitted taking some of her tales from Straparola in her "Avertissement" for *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* (1699): "Les Dames qui ont écrit jusques icy en ce genre, ont puisé dans la même source au moins pour la plus grande partie" (cited in Perrault 1956 55n21). And Mme D'Aulnoy was one of the "Dames qui ont écrit jusques icy en ce genre". The content of many of Mme d'Aulnoy's fairy tales derived from Straparola, but her style was closer to Basile's florid model. This is abundantly clear from even a brief comparison of stories by Mme d'Aulnoy such as "Le Dauphin" with its precursor form in Straparola's "Pietro Pazzo" and Basile's "Pervonto" (Bottigheimer 1993).¹² As befitted the polite society for whom she intended her work, Mme D'Aulnoy softened her sources' harsh details: In "Le Dauphin" she changed Straparola's and Basile's ugly, repulsive, stupid, and impoverished Pietro Pazzo into the still ugly, but refined, sensitive, and princely Alidor. But although she modified surface details, her versions of these tales nonetheless retained the illicit impregnation familiar from Straparola's and Basile's stories.¹³

Perrault's tales, on the other hand, resembled models offered in the *Bibliothèque bleue*,¹⁴ where abbreviated versions of popular *contes* favored simple plot over elaborate style, chiefly because there wasn't space in the little gray-blue volumes for lengthy descriptions. Hence, detailed gallantry faded away. Those were Perrault's textual models, perhaps even his sources.¹⁵ When Perrault wrote that he was going to tell Mademoiselle de Lac*** une "folle & peu galante fable" ("Les Souhairs ridicules", Perrault 1980 3), he added immediately that it had a base origin. A common sausage, "[u]ne aune de Boudin", furnished the fable's material (Perrault 1980 3). But the story was already well-known in oriental tales, in a medieval tale, "Les quatre souhaits saint Martin," and in fable No. 24 of Marie de France: "Dou vilain qui prist un folet." In the seventeenth century, Jean de la Fontaine had written VII,6: "Les souhaits."¹⁶ It hasn't been documented in any seventeenth-century *Bibliothèque bleue* printing, but Mlle L'Heritier's little madrigal about a nurse telling her the story before the fire (Perrault 1980 Preface) suggests that it could have been there as well.

¹² I differ here from Soriano's position in his article, "Aulnoy", *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 1: cols. 1020-1024, esp. 1020.

¹³ I do not hold, as does Louskotoff, that Mme d'Aulnoy wrote for children or that her tales embody a "style mignotant". See Louskotoff 1987 170, 179.

¹⁴ Others see the "folk" origins of Perrault's tales in oral terms, for example, Francillon 1995 205-217, esp. 213-217

¹⁵ For a parallel line of reasoning see Louskotoff, *La sainte et la fée* (1987) with its citation of "contes de nourrice" found in Mme Guyon's possession when she was arrested 27 December 1695 (150). For a brief statement of the book's argument, see Louskotoff, "Repuerascentia. Un idéal commun à la mystique et aux contes de fée littéraires à la fin du grand siècle" (1988).

¹⁶ I wish to thank Marie-Dominique LeClerc, Troyes, for kindly providing the preceding information.

The *Bibliothèque bleue* was required to censor and to moralize its stories for a socially broad buying public by Louis XIV's censors (Myer and Harris; Roche 78). In contrast, the same censors entrusted a narrow reading public, like that which could afford Mme d'Aulnoy's four-volume collections, *Contes des fées* and *Nouveaux contes des fées*, with dystopic story endings or even with stories that included politically subversive events, such as a populace murdering its king in "La bonne petite souris."

Mme d'Aulnoy's and Perrault's use of different genre models -- Italian Baroque *frametales* collections on the one hand and French *Bibliothèque bleue* productions of the *grande siècle* on the other -- produced immediately perceptible consequences: story length vs. brevity, plot complexity vs. simplicity, lexical virtuosity vs. restraint, and story amorality or non-morality vs. moralization.

Perrault's tales, despite their worldliness, observed a far stricter moral code. Their essentially moral nature so impressed eighteenth-century librarians, that in the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal in Paris, for example, his tales were catalogued not with Madame d'Aulnoy's as "contes des fées" but separately, as "contes moraux."¹⁷ Perrault's eighteenth-century English translator likewise noted that in his tales "virtue is ever rewarded, and vice ever punished ..."¹⁸

The way in which Perrault crafted virtuous character is well demonstrated in the manner in which he distanced his heroes from lying. The *plot* of "Le Maître Chat" rested on a clever lie. The story's happy ending depended on a king's believing the falsehood that the (poor) hero was actually a marquis who owned a magnificent castle and extensive lands. In earlier tale collections, a hero himself would have talked his way smoothly into a king's confidence with little concern for truth and less for the moral consequences of lying, but Perrault avoided that possibility by neatly transferring all lying, deception, extortion, and murder to a cat. In his dialogues Perrault carefully formulated his hero's words to avoid overt lying:

Vous avez là un bel heritage, dit le Roy, au Marquis de Carabas. Vous voyez, Sire, répondit le Marquis, c'est un pré qui ne manque point de rapporter abondamment toutes les années (Perrault 1980 95).

¹⁷ See *Belles Lettres catalog 13595-18457* and especially a marginal handwritten communication, p. 115: "Les contes de Perrault, que l'on pourra s'étonner de ne pas voir figurer dans la section des *Contes de fées* et dont en bibliothèques de l'arsenal possède deux exemplaires sous leur titre primitif "Histoires, ou contes du Temps passe avec des moralites" ont été classés l'un dans la section des *Contes moraux* sous le N° 14230, et l'autre dans la section des *contes divers* sous le N° 14282."

¹⁸ Perrault 1729 A4^r. Velay-Vallantin and Barchilon (1991 158) remind us that the eighteenth century's concern for morality has been replaced by altogether new issues such as "les conditions de production, les circonstances et les motivations de la transmission, enfin les effets de la réception et, partant, les effets de sens produits au moment de la réception du texte."

Perrault's "Le Petit Poucet," which with its hero cruelly deceiving an ogre's grieving wife in order to steal his wealth, would seem to contradict my conclusion:

Vostre mari, lui dit le petit Poucet, est en grand danger, car il a esté pris par une troupe de Voleurs qui ont juré de le tuër s'il ne leur donne tout son or & tout son argent. Dans le moment qu'ils tenoient le poignard sur la gorge, il m'a aperceu & m'a prié de vous venir avertir de l'estat où il est, & de vous dire de me donner tout ce qu'il a vaillant sans en rien retenir, parcequ'autrement il le tuëront sans misericorde (Perrault 1980 222-223).

However, although Perrault initially let Tom Thumb lie to the wicked ogre's wife, he offered a second conclusion that diminished, indeed, banished, the hero's lying:

Il y a bien des gens qui ne demeurent pas d'acord de cette derniere circonstance, & qui prétendent que le petit Poucet n'a jamais fait ce vol à l'Ogre; au'à la verité, il n'avoit pas fait conscience de luy prendre sees bottes de sept lieües, parce qu'il ne s'en servoit que pout courir après les petits enfans (Perrault 1988 224-225).

CONCLUSION

The frame tale tradition of the late middle ages, Renaissance, and Baroque that included the mid-sixteenth-century magic tales of Straparola's *Piacevoli Notte* and the early seventeenth-century tales of Basile's *Pentamerone* with their slippery morality and unformed ethics continued in Mme d'Aulnoy's oeuvre. Her narratives shared not only the elaborated structure of medieval and Renaissance tale collections but also their moral system. They met popular approval: buyers in both England and France required repeated publications in differing formats, at different prices, and for noble, bourgeois, artisanal, and eventually, child readerships. Perrault's fairy tales, however, the first in what came to be the modern style of fairytales, had stylistic analogues in already existing abbreviated narratives of the *bibliothèque bleue*. His tales were freestanding rather than embedded, brief instead of expansive, stylized rather than particularized. They expressed modern rather than ancient morals and were stylistically new. Although each author's tales were created within a circle of common acquaintances, their gendered experiences of matrimony, the trajectories of their respective lives, their differing relationships to court culture, and their respective acceptance and rejection of France's adherence to Baroque formulations of classic antiquity led to the apogee of one tradition--that of Mme d'Aulnoy--and the initiation of its successor --that of Charles Perrault--ithin the same year.

Perrault's tales were suited to the requirements of the Bibliothèque bleue, because the author himself had already performed the editing work that printer-publishers normally had to undertake themselves to adapt a work for their world of simplified print. Their preference was, in the words of France's book historian Roger Chartier, for "histoires, romans ou contes, qui obéissent à certaines structures narratives, à la fois discontinues et répétitives, qui juxtaposent les fragments, emploient plusieurs fois les mêmes motifs, ignorent les intrigues touffues nécessitant une exacte mémorisation des événements ou des personnages" (Chartier 2:505). Less than twenty-five years after their original publication, the prolific *Bibliothèque bleue* publishing house of the Oudots (Leclerc 55) embraced Perrault's tales and began the process of making them the people's storybook. Perrault himself had been their most effective editor in preparing the tales for publication!

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RESUMO