The Fairies by Charles Perrault: sources, historical evolution, and signification

Bernard Montoneri

Department of English Language, Literature, and Linguistics
Providence University, Republic of China (Taiwan)
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Abstract:

Charles Perrault's tale Les Fées (The Fairies) appeared for the first time in 1695 in the Contes de ma mère l'Oye (Tales of Mother Goose). This short prose tale belongs to the "kind and the unkind girls" type (Aarne-Thompson 480). An early version of Les Fées occurs in Ovid's Metamorphoses. In Latona and the Lycians, Leto (or Latona) was wandering the earth after giving birth to Apollo and Artemis. She attempted to drink water from a pond in Lycia, but the peasants refused to allow her to do so. They were turned into frogs for their inhospitality. Perrault was familiar with the famous Bassin de Latone, designed by André Le Nôtre in 1668, in the garden terrace of Versailles. The story of Leto was chosen as an allegory, a clear allusion to the revolts of the Fronde (1648–1653) during Louis XIV’s minority. The Fairies was very influenced by Italy. It resembles at least three Italian tales: Straparola’s Biancabella and the Snake and Basile’s Le Tre Fate (The Three Fairies), and Le Due Pizzette (The Two Cakes). Perrault’s tale portrays a younger daughter mistreated by her mother who prefers her elder daughter. A fairy will decide their fate: the young and beautiful girl will be rewarded for her courtesy and will marry a prince; the rude sister will be punished and will die alone in the woods. Even though The Fairies and Cinderella (1697) have much in common, the former is probably too dry and not enough developed to enjoy the success of the latter.

Keywords: Fairy tale, hospitality, myth, Perrault, The Fairies.
Introduction

In his famous essay "On Fairy-Stories", J. R. R. Tolkien discussed the fairy-story as a literary form and said about Charles Perrault:

At any rate, so powerful has been the influence of Charles Perrault, since his Contes de ma Mère l'Oye were first Englished in the eighteenth century, and of such other excerpts from the vast storehouse of the Cabinet des Fées as have become well known, that still, I suppose, if you asked a man to name at random a typical 'fairy-story', he would be most likely to name one of these French things: such as Puss-in-Boots, Cinderella, or Little Red Riding Hood. With some people Grimm's Fairy Tales might come first to mind. (Tolkien 1969, 11-12).

Among the fairy tales published by Charles Perrault at the end of the seventeenth century, Les Fées is one of the less studied by scholars. Perrault, a member of the French Academy, published eleven tales between 1691 and 1697: three verse tales and eight prose tales. Les Fées (The Fairies; also translated as Diamonds and Toads) is one of the five prose tales published in 1695 in Contes de ma mère l'Oye (Tales of Mother Goose). This paper will first present Charles Perrault and his collection of fairy tales. Then, it will introduce The Fairies and its puzzling title, the sources used by the author, the way he adapted this tale to the 17th century, and its signification.

1. Perrault and his Collection of Fairy Tales

1.1. Charles Perrault’s career

Charles Perrault was born in 1628. He was the seventh child of Pierre Perrault, a member of the Paris Parliament. He studied law and chose a career in government service. Perrault became rapidly an influential figure at the court, under his patron Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the powerful finance minister to King Louis XIV. For twenty years, Perrault served the king and Colbert and contributed to the strengthening of absolute royal power: he took part in the creation of the Academy of Sciences and set up the Academies of painting, sculpture, music, and architecture. He was also made secretary for life of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres (1663). Having only written a few poems, such as Dialogue de l’Amour et de l’Amitié (The Dialogue of Love and Friendship, 1657) and Le Miroir ou la Métamorphose d’Orante (The Mirror or the Metamorphosis of Orante, 1661), he was elected to the French Academy in 1671. One year later, he married Marie Guichon, but she died of childbirth complications in 1678. Perrault raised his three sons and his daughter alone. After the death of Colbert in 1683, his successor took away Perrault’s pension as a writer. In 1695, Perrault lost his post as secretary. He spent the rest of his life writing fairy tales and working on his memoirs. He died in 1703.
1.2. Historical Evolution of Perrault’s Collection of Fairy Tales

Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim said:

At the end of the seventeenth century Charles Perrault published a number of French tales, and so did Mme D’Aulnoy in her Contes nouvelles ou les fées à la mode. Both authors, while basing their stories on well-known French tales, did indeed rework them à la mode. They moralized and prettified them and in doing so did tort to their true spirit. (Brackert and Sander 1985, foreword by Bettelheim, n. 16)

The expression "fairy tale" was first ascribed to them by Madame d’Aulnoy. She termed her four volumes published between 1696 and 1698 Les Contes des Fées (Tales of Fairies). In 1698, she also published four new volumes entitled Contes Nouveaux, ou Les Fées à la Mode (New Tales, or Fairies in Fashion). Her stories were told in literary salons in a conversational style and were quite suitable for children. According to Jack Zipes (1997): "More than Charles Perrault, it was Mme d’Aulnoy who was responsible for the extraordinary vogue of French fairy tales that swept the Parisian literary circles" (195). According to Lydie (2007), "fairy tales made in the salons were usually not popular among the lower classes" (278-279). However, when Perrault’s fairy tales were published, they appealed to all classes of the French society. His Contes became a surprising sensation. Perrault published a total of eleven tales. Three in verse and eight in prose:

Verse tales

They were first published separately, with a preface and a dedication. Contrary to the prose tales, these three stories were signed by Charles Perrault himself. In 1691, he published La Marquise de Salusses ou la Patience de Griselidis (The Marquise of Salusses, or the Patience of Griselidis). This novel is imitated from Boccaccio (Decameron, X, 10; 1353). Griselda marries Gualtieri, the Marquis of Saluzzo; her name is eponymous for patience and obedience. The French version is read at the Académie française and then published in Le Mercure Galant, a famous gazette and literary magazine.

In 1693, Les Souhaits ridicules (The Ridiculous Wishes) appeared in Le Mercure Galant. The tale is dedicated to "Mademoiselle de la C.": Philis de la Charce (1645-1703), heroine of the Dauphiné, was honored by Louis XIV in Paris. He gave her a large sum of money, weapons, and...Perrault’s books.

In 1694, Perrault published a collection of the two previous verse tales plus a new one: Peau d’Âne, (Donkey Skin). Peau d’Âne is dedicated to "Madame la marquise de L.": la marquise de Lambert (1647-1733), who was in charge of a famous literary salon frequented by Perrault.
Prose tales

In 1695, a manuscript of the *Contes de ma mère l'Oye* is offered to Mademoiselle, the niece of Louis XIV. The dedication signed "P.P.". It is attributed to the son of Charles Perrault, Pierre Perrault Darmancour, (Armancour was the name of a property he bought for him). The custom in bourgeois circles was to buy a title of nobility for the youngest son of the family. It seems obvious that Perrault used his son’s name to publish his tales: Pierre Perrault was only 17 and had published nothing yet. The manuscript contains *La Belle au bois dormant* (Sleeping Beauty in the Woods), *Le Petit chaperon rouge* (Little Red Riding Hood), *La Barbe bleue* (Bluebeard), *Le Maître chat ou le chat botté* (The Master Cat, or Puss in Boots), and *Les Fées* (The Fairies)\(^1\).

In February 1696, Perrault had a prose version of *La Belle au bois dormant* printed in the journal *Mercure Galant*. In 1697, the publication of *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Stories or Tales of Times Past) was a success. This work was subtitled: *Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oie* (Tales of Mother Goose). The tales were once again dedicated to Mademoiselle and signed "Pierre (Perrault) Darmancour", then 19 years old. By using the name of his son, Perrault favored his own interests: he did not want to be blamed for re-igniting the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns (Perrault and Boileau were publicly reconciled in 1694). It was also a way for Perrault to help his son’s career by introducing him to the Royal Court. Pierre Perrault Darmancour, the cadet, could certainly not long for a royal wedding, but at least he could be protected by a princess. This work contains illustrations and three new prose tales: *Cendrillon ou La Petite pantoufle de verre* (Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper), *Riquet à la Houppe* (Riquet with the Tuft), *Le Petit Poucet* (Little Tom Thumb).

When Louis XIV died in 1715, the literary fairy tales were already out of fashion. *Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* continued to enjoy some popular success, but the writers of the eighteenth century, especially the philosophers, did not particularly like fairy tales, notably because they seemed to reinforce royal absolutism. Moreover, the publication of the first translation in French of the *One Thousand and One Nights* by Antoine Galland (twelve volumes between 1704 and 1717) was a popular success throughout Europe. These tales resembled the French fairy tales, but also differed from them because of their exotic background that inspired renowned writers such as Montesquieu (*Les Lettres persanes*, 1721) and Voltaire (*Zadig*, 1747).

Perrault’s *Contes* were à la mode again at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Grimms made his fairy tales famous again by including them in their compendium, *Kinder und Hausmaerchen*, published in 1812. Thanks to the two brothers, "between 1842 and 1913, there were not less than 233 editions of his fairy tales, by over sixty different publishers"\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Since 1953, the manuscript belongs to the Pierpont Morgan Library Dept. of Literary and Historical Manuscripts. Written in a scribal hand, it contains 59 unnumbered leaves and is decorated with seven gouache illustrations. Cf. http://www.themorgan.org/collections/collections.asp?id=358. Barchilon (1956) presents the manuscript reproduced in collotype facsimile with introduction and critical text.
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(Lydie 2007, 281). The Grimms were not only inspired by Perrault’s tales, but also by the Italian writers of the Renaissance, who began to define a genre of tales.

2. Les Fées: the Story and the Sources

2.1. The story

Les Fées (The Fairies; also translated as Diamonds and Toads) is a prose tale with a moral at the end published for the first time in 1695. It is the shortest of the eleven tales after Little Red Riding Hood. Les Fées is also included in the Histoires ou contes du temps passé (Stories or Tales of Times Past) published in 1697. Soriano (1968, 136) showed that the 1697 version is a little shorter: "Les corrections apportées par l'auteur [...] vont dans le sens d’une condensation, d’une élimination des détails inutiles."

In the 1695 version, a widower marries a widow for his second wife. In the 1697 version, there is no stepmother and the father is dead: a bad-tempered old widow has two daughters. The younger daughter is exactly like her father, nice and good-looking, and the elder daughter is disagreeable and proud like her mother. This major change in the plot is probably due to the fact that Perrault published Cinderella the same year. He did not want his readers to confuse the two stories, in which the younger sister is unfairly mistreated and marries a prince in the end. Perrault tries hard to justify why the mother treats the younger daughter so badly. His explanation is not very convincing: "Comme on aime naturellement son semblable, cette mère était folle de sa fille ainée, et en même temps avait une aversion effroyable pour la cadette" (Perrault 2006, 147). The mother hates her daughter because she does not look and behave like her? Or she hates her because she looks like her father? This does not make any sense, except if she deeply hated her husband.

The best way to mistreat the younger daughter is to send her twice a day to draw water from the spring a good half mile away ("à une grande demi-lieue du logis"). One day, she gives water to an old woman who begs for a drink. She is a fairy in disguise and she rewards the young girl for her kindness: precious stones and flowers will fall from her mouth whenever she speaks. When the girl goes home, the mother asks the elder sister to go to the spring too. But she is unable to be polite with the fairy who has taken the appearance of a beautiful lady. She is punished for her rudeness: a toad or a snake will fall from her mouth whenever she speaks. Then, the mother drives the younger daughter out of the house. The poor girl goes to the forest and cries until a prince finds her and decides to marry her. The elder daughter is also forced to leave the house, but nobody wants her and she dies alone in the forest.

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2 Perrault 2006, 146-147. Une "demi-lieue" represents 2 kilometers, from the house to the spring. It means that she has to walk eight kilometers per day just to find water.
2.2. A puzzling title

_The Fairies_ is the only tale in Perrault’s collection to have a puzzling title. There is only one fairy in this tale. Is it a mistake? It is difficult to know why Perrault chose to call his story _The Fairies_. In fact, a fairy appears two times in the tale: the first time, when she begs the younger daughter for a drink, she looks like an old village woman; the second time, when she asks the elder daughter for a drink, she is a magnificently dressed lady. Soriano (1968, 139-140) says that Deulin was the first one to notice this detail; Soriano quotes him, but does not give his own interpretation. Deulin (1879, 230) is quite severe with Perrault and says about _The Fairies_: "celle-ci est bien banale et d’ailleurs elle manque de justesse." Soriano (1968, 140, n.1) quotes _l’Ovide Bouffon_, in which the tale is entitled _La Fée_. The number of fairies varies from one to three in Aarne-Thompson type 480 (the kind and the unkind girls). For example, two of Basile’s tales are very close to _The Fairies_: one is entitled _Le Tre Fate_ (The Three Fairies), the other _Le Due Pizzette_ (The Two Cakes). In _The Two Cakes_, there is only one fairy and she appears two times as an old woman. In Straparola’s _Biancabella and the Snake_, there is only one fairy, the snake. In fact, in many ancient tales, there is only one fairy, but Perrault’s tale is the only story with a problematic title.

2.3. Perrault’s sources

_The Fairies_ obviously shares the same plot with _Cinderella_: the pretty and nice daughter of a widow is mistreated and exploited until a prince falls in love with her. _Les Fées_ was published two years before _Cendrillon_ (1697). However, the sources used by Perrault to write these two tales are completely different.

2.3.1. The Greco-Roman source

An early version of _Les Fées_ occurs in Ovid’s _Metamorphoses_. Ovid (43 BC-17 AD) completed his epic poem _Metamorphoses_ in AD 8, before being banished by Augustus for political reasons. In the story of _Latona and the Lycians_ (Book VI: 313-381), Leto (or Latona) was wandering the earth after giving birth to Apollo and Artemis. She attempted to drink water from a pond in Lycia, but the peasants refused to allow her to do so. They were turned into frogs for their inhospitality. Perrault was familiar with the famous Bassin de Latone, designed by André Le Nôtre in 1668, in the garden terrace of Versailles. The story of Leto was chosen as an allegory, a clear allusion to the revolts of the Fronde (1648-1653) during Louis XIV’s minority (Berger, 1992).

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3 Deulin’s _Les Contes de ma Mère l’Oye avant Perrault_ (Mother Goose Tales before Perrault, 1878) was published posthumously; it documents the possible sources of Perrault’s tales.
4 Tenèze (1964, 614): “Sachant par cœur de mot à mot La Soury, Peau-d’Ane et La Fée”.
6 In both the 1695 manuscript and the 1697 collection, the tale is entitled _Les Fées_. In the English translation by Charles Welsh (see Perrault, 1901, 75), the story is entitled _The Fairy_.

2.3.2. The Italian sources

*The Fairies* resembles at least three Italian tales: Straparola’s *Biancabella and the Snake* and Basile’s *Le Tre Fate* (*The Three Fairies*) and *Le Due Pizette* (*The Two Cakes*). According to Zipes (2001, 852-853), Straparola was born around 1480 in Caravaggio. His name is probably a pseudonym (it means "the loquacious one"). His collection of tales entitled *Le Piacevoli notti* (*The Pleasant Nights*) was published in two volumes between 1550 and 1553. Straparola’s *Biancabella and the Snake* belongs to the type "The Maiden who laughs roses and weeps pearls". In this tale, a girl called Biancabella ("beautiful blond girl" in Italian) is protected by a snake. She receives three gifts: she can weep pearls and silver, laugh pomegranate seeds, and wash her hands to get fish.

Giambattista Basile (1575–1632) was born outside Naples and became famous for his poetic works. His fairy-tale collection in Neapolitan dialect *Lo cunto de li cunti overo lo trattenemiento de peccerille* (*The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*; 1634–6)9 was also known as the *Pentamerone*. Basile’s *Le Tre Fate* (*The Three Fairies*; third day, tale 10)10 belongs to the "Rewards and punishments for good and bad girls" type. Cicella, the lovely daughter of a rich landowner, is mistreated by her stepsister. She is rewarded for answering politely to three beautiful fairies. Grannizia, her stepsister, goes to the same place and is rude. She comes home with a donkey’s testicle on her forehead. Cicella escapes with a nobleman and Grannizia dies.

*Le Due Pizette* (*The Two Cakes*; fourth day, tale 7)12 belongs to the "Good at heart and ugly as sin" type. It is similar to the two previous types. Two sisters, Luceta and Troccoli, have two daughters, Marziella and Puccia. Marziella is pretty and virtuous. Puccia is mean and ugly. Marziella goes to the well to fill a pitcher. She is nice to a hump-backed old woman and gives her a cake. She is rewarded: "When you breathe, roses and jessamine will come out of your mouth, when you comb your hair, pearls and rubies will fall from your head, and when you put your feet on the ground, violets and lilies will spring up." (Zipes 2001, 633). Puccia goes to the same place and sees the same woman, but speaks rudely to her and refuses to give her a cake. As a result, she is punished. In the end, Marziella marries a king and her mother Luceta is honored. Puccia is banished and becomes a beggar; her mother Troccoli is thrown into the flames.

Soriano, in his famous book *Les Contes de Perrault, Culture savante et traditions populaires*, seems a little annoyed by scholars who argue that Perrault borrowed most of his tales from

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7 English translation by Waters (1898).
9 English translation by Canepa (2007).
10 French translation of this tale by Decroisette (1995).
Italy: "A intervalles réguliers, un critique s’offre ainsi le plaisir de réduire Perrault en fine poussière, et de le ceder sous cette forme à une puissance étrangère, généralement l’Italie." (1968, 76). On the same page, Soriano disagrees with François Genin who declares that "Perrault doit à Basile ses meilleurs histoires: Cendrillon, La Belle au bois dormant, Le Chat botté, et…L’Adroite Princesse (sic)". François Genin visibly made a mistake about L’Adroite Princesse, but he was not the only scholar to believe that the Italian influence on Perrault was significant. In the same paragraph, Soriano also says that, according to Marie Raymondt, Cendrillon, La Belle au bois dormant, Le Chat botté and Les Fées were borrowed from the Italian storytellers. Even if he seems to acknowledge the existence of translations of Straparola and Basile in France, Soriano (1968, 76) gives two arguments to reduce the Italian influence: first, he says that Perrault himself never wrote about having used Italian sources: "dans les nombreux avant-propos et post-faces de ses contes en vers où il s’explique volontiers sur la provenance des sujets qu’il traite, Perrault ne mentionne pas les sources italiennes." Second, he adds that Perrault could have known about Basile’s collection of tales, but, as they were written in the Neapolitan dialect, he could not have been able to decipher it.

In fact, Perrault insists on his French sources and tries to occult the Italian origin of most of his tales. According to Bernard Gicquel:


Bottigheimer (2003, 63) says:

In France, it was translated, printed in Lyons, Paris and Rouen, and distributed to French readers from the 1550s until 1615, providing a ready source for France’s later authors of tales about fairies, as Mme de Murat readily admitted in the ‘Avertissement’ of Histoires sublimes et allégoriques (1699).

Zipes (2006a, 18) acknowledges Basile’s influence in France:

Remarkable as it may seem, Basile’s tales were, in fact, reprinted several times in the seventeenth century, despite the difficulty people might have had reading the Neapolitan dialect, and, through translations into Italian and then into French, they became fairly well-known in Italy and France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

He adds that "the Italian influence in France during the 1690s was much more profound than scholars have suspected." (ibid. 19) If Perrault did not acknowledge the use of Italian
sources, other storytellers such as Mme de Murat did\textsuperscript{13}.

As a matter of fact, in 1694 (three years before the publication of Histoires ou contes du temps passé), she published her first work, Histoire de la courtisane Rhodope, one of the oldest known versions of Cinderella (the story was recorded by the Greek geographer Strabo who died around AD 24). It is impossible that Perrault did not know about this publication because Mme de Murat’s tale was considered a libel against the court of Versailles. As a result, she was exiled to Loches until 1715. She died one year later in 1716.

The fact that Perrault did not understand Italian or the Neapolitan dialect does not matter at all because Straparola and Basile’s tales had already been translated into French numerous times. Even Soriano recognizes that there were "onze éditions avant 1615" (1968, 76) of Straparola’s collection. Zipes (2006b, 67) says: "As it was, Basile’s tales were – remarkable to say – reprinted several times in the seventeenth century despite the difficult of the Neapolitan dialect and, through translations into Italian and then French, became fairly well known in Italy and France."

Why should Perrault, the champion of the Moderns, have acknowledged the use of Italian sources? The quarrel was initiated by Perrault’s reading of his poem Le Siècle de Louis le Grand (The Age of Louis the Great) at the French Academy in January 1687. He attempted to prove the superiority of the culture of the century of the Sun King, but he was violently criticized, notably by Boileau. Perrault’s fairy tales are associated with this defense and illustration of modern culture. The Ancients, led by Racine, Bossuet, La Fontaine, La Bruyère, Fénelon, and Boileau, were critical of his tales, and questioned the literary worth of its humble subject matter. Among the Moderns were all the young members of the French Academy, philosophers such as Bayle and Fontenelle, Le Mercure Galant and all the Précieuses, such as L’Héritier, Catherine d’Aulnoy, and Catherine Bernard. However, in 1697, Louis XIV decided to end the quarrel in favor of the Ancients. Clearly, it would have been difficult for Perrault to write that he heavily borrowed his tales from the country at the origin of the quarrel.

Pierre Perrault, Charles’ brother, made a French translation of La Secchia rapita by the Italian poet and writer Alessandro Tassoni (1565-1635) in 1678. La secchia rapita (The Stolen Pail; Le Seau enlevé in French) was written by Tassoni around 1615 and first published in Paris in 1622. Moreover, Perrault’s niece, Mlle Lhéritier, was named a member of the Academy of the Ricovrati of Padua in 1692. Mlle de la Force too was a member of this Academy. She

\textsuperscript{13} Perrin (2006), in his book review of Marc Escola commente-Contes de Charles Perrault, regrets that the author "expédie au coin d’une note les antécédents littéraires des Contes de Perrault, répertoriés par J-P. Collinet dans ses notices. Ainsi, concernant les recueils de contes antérieurs, il n’aura jamais été question ni des Nuits facétieuses de Straparole, ni du Pentamerone de Basile (1636)." In note 1, Perrin writes about the French translations by Jean Louveau (1560) et Pierre de Larivey (1576) of Straparola’s tales and notes that "Madame de Murat désigne nommément Straparole comme source pour elle-même et ses confrères, dans la préface de ses Histoires sublimes et allégoriques (1699)." Defrance (2004) adds about Madame de Murat: "Notons que Perrault, curieusement, est mis hors de portée de ses réflexions, alors qu’il s’est lui aussi inspiré de Straparole."
published in 1697 (it is a small world) a corpus entitled *Les contes des contes* (*The Tales of the Tales*), an obvious reference to Basile’s collection. As to Charles Perrault, he was fluent in Latin, and made a French translation of the *Fables* of Gabriello Faerno in 1699 (*Fabulae centum*; 1561).

### 2.3.3. The French sources

Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon, (1664–1734) was the niece of Charles Perrault. She received an exceptional education and became well-known in literary salons of the 1690s. She inherited Madeleine de Scudéry’s salon. Mlle Lhéritier cites phrases from *Peau D’Ane*\(^{14}\) in *Les Enchantements de L’Eloquence ou les Effets de la Douceur* (*The Enchantments of Eloquence or the Effects of Sweetness*)\(^{15}\). This tale is part of her collection entitled *Œuvres meslées* (*Assorted Works*, 1695), which also contains *L’Adroite Princesse* (*The Discreet Princess*) and *Marmoisan ou l’innocente tromperie* (*Marmoisan or the Innocent Deception*). According to Peter and Iona Opie (Opie 1974), there are more than 1,000 variants of Aarne-Thompson type 480. The Opies believe that Mlle Lhéritier heard the story of *The Fairies* from her uncle and adapted it according to her own muse. However, the example of *Marmoisan* shows that it is Mlle Lhéritier who suggested tales to Perrault:

> L’auteur, complice de la mystification entretenue par Perrault sur la paternité de ses contes, prétendus composés par « un enfant », son fils (qui a 19 ans à la date de publication des contes en prose), suggérait à sa dédicataire de transmettre Marmoisan à son frère : « vous jugerez ensemble si cette fable est digne d’être placée dans son agréable recueil de contes ». (Defrance 2004, paragraph 43)

Perrault preferred the theme of *The Fairies*, a story he already knew\(^{16}\). It seems that there was a friendly competition between the writer and his niece (Perrault 2006, 150). The two authors were supposed to write their own version of the story. Magnien (2006, 246-248) explains the puzzling title of Perrault’s tale by showing that Mlle Lhéritier had already written a similar story in which there are two fairies (Dulcicula and Eloquentia nativa). Magnien writes about "une émulation dialoguée entre les deux écrivains aux génies si différents" (248).

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14 Perrault 2006, 74-75. Mlle Lhéritier is quoting the last verses of *Donkey Skin* in her dedication to Mme la duchesse d’Epernon.

15 Deulin (1878, chapitre 8) is very critical with this tale: "Dans ce conte, aussi long qu’insipide, l’auteur met en scène deux fées dont l’une s’appelle Dulcicula et l’autre, plus gracieusement encore, Eloquentia nativa."

16 Magnien 2006, 247-248: ‘Perrault, dès 1694, avait écrit dans la préface de ses Contes en vers: « Tantôt ce sont des fées qui donnent pour don à une jeune fille qui leur aura répondu avec civilité qu’à chaque parole qu’elle dira, il lui sortira de la bouche un diamant ou une perle; et à une autre fille qui leur aura répondu brutalement, qu’à chaque parole il lui sortira de la bouche une grenouille ou un carpaud. »"
In Perrault’s tale, *Les Fées*, the first moral insists on the persuasive power of eloquence. This moral is a clear reference to La Fontaine’s fable *Le Cygne et le cuisinier* (II, 12)\(^7\): "Le doux parler ne nuit de rien". It addresses adult readers, especially the readers of French salon society. The second moral is targeting young people of the aristocracy. It emphasizes the rewards of courtesy.

Mainil (2004, paragraph 57) has made a comparison between the two stories:

Chez Perrault, l’Eloquentia natia [sic] de l’héroïne ne se manifeste jamais et rien dans le conte ne nous autorise même à supposer qu’elle existe, pas plus que la douceur, l’honnêteté, ou encore la politesse, perles et rubis ayant été donnés en échange d’un banal «Oui-dà». Le don merveilleux n’est pas celui de produire une éloquence enchanteuse, mais quelques bijoux qui lui serviront de dot.

More precisely, the young girl says: "Oui-dà, ma bonne mère." (yes, of course, my good woman; Perrault 2006, 145). Clearly, "le doux parler", in Perrault’s tale, is very limited. She is probably rewarded for her good behaviour and compassion. Some details show that she is full of consideration: she takes water from the clearest part of the spring and she keeps the jug raised so that the old woman can drink more easily.

3. The Fairies and its signification

3.1. The sanitizing and re-writing of fairy tales

Walt Disney has often been criticized for offering sanitized versions of older fairy tales. "Zipes points out that many fairy tales become far more sanitized when they meet the children’s literature industry - which is increasingly dependent on sequels and product tie-ins, and calibrated to appeal to the lowest common denominator." (Weiss 2008). According to Bruno Bettelheim (1976), who considered that the cruelty of ancient tales was an indication of psychological conflicts, the expurgation of the dark elements weakened their usefulness to both children and adults. Dickens was very critical of writers who sanitized and re-wrote traditional fairy tales in a moral manner: "In a utilitarian age, of all other times, it is a matter of grave importance that Fairy tales should be respected." (Dickens 1853)

However, during the seventeenth century, old tales had already been sanitized. French fairy tales were already less violent than the Italian tales of the Renaissance. Most of the sexual content had been eliminated. For example, in Basile’s version of *Sleeping Beauty*, entitled *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, while princess Talia is sleeping, she is raped by a prince who is hunting in the woods. During her sleep, she gives birth to twins, Sun and Moon (Zipes 2001, 684-688). In *The Fairies*, Perrault expurgated some elements which would have shocked the

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\(^7\) Perrault 2006, 152.
Précieuses, such as the donkey's testicle on the forehead of Grannizia in Basile's *Le Tre Fate*.

According to Magnien (2006), "Jamais Perrault n'imiter sa source avec servilité, jamais il ne compile" (35-36). In fact, Perrault adapted his tales to the taste of the nobles. He transformed the stories to address as the manners and mores of the upper classes: "Almost all of those tales have their origins in traditional folklore, but they have been modified by Perrault to fit the audience he was aiming at: the aristocracy." (Lydie 2007, 277)

### 3.2. Socio-historical references

#### The problem of drinking water

Perrault’s tales, in a very subtle way, often make references to events and people of the seventeenth century. In the 1690s, water supply was a major concern. Drinking water was a luxury. Moreover, the weather was everything but friendly: very hot summers, terribly cold winters; droughts ruining the crops, floods, and the plague almost every year. Pouring rain during the summer of 1693 and freezing temperatures during the winter of 1694 caused the death of 1.4 million people in France, one year before the publication of *The Fairies* (Perrault 2006, 194). The fate of the younger sister in *The Fairies* is not exceptional: in almost every family, people had to walk for kilometers to find drinking water. In the tale, the difference is that this common act becomes a vexation: the daughter is treated like a slave. It seems that the mother and the elder sister never go to the spring. The gift of water is important and symbolic, not only in every day life, but also in literature. The old woman is asking for a simple service, the sharing of water from a spring or a well. In the *Bible*, there are two famous stories connected with this theme: one in the Old Testament, "Rebecca at the Well" and one in the New Testament, "The Woman at the Well". In French literature, there are two very famous stories written by Victor Hugo (1802-1885): in *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831), Esmeralda pities Quasimodo and offers him water. In doing so, she, who will be charged with witchcraft, is the only true Christian: all the inhabitants of the city reject him and despise him because of his looks. Esmeralda is the only one who should be afraid of Quasimodo and hate him. After all, he tried to abduct her, but she forgave him and showed compassion. As a result, Quasimodo fell in love with his victim. In *Les Misérables* (1862), Cosette, who is badly treated by her adoptive parents, the Thénardiers, goes to the river to draw water, just like the younger sister in *The Fairies*. In Hugo’s novel, Cosette is saved by her own fairy...Jean Valjean.

#### Royal weddings for commoners?

In almost all of Perrault’s tales, there is a wedding. The hero (*Puss in Boots*) or the heroine (*Cinderella*) is saved from poverty by being welcomed into a royal family. During Perrault’s time, there was certainly no such thing. A commoner would never marry a member of the royal family. As a matter of fact, kings used to marry their relatives from other European families. Louis XIII was Anne of Austria’s third degree cousin. The sister of Louis XIII, Elizabeth, married Anne’s brother, destined to become King Philip IV of Spain.
Louis XIV and his wife Maria Theresa of Spain were double first-cousins. Many Habsburgs were the product of generations of royal intermarriage between cousins. In fairy tales, royal weddings between a commoner and a prince or princess happen, not in France, but in a magic kingdom accessible by saying "Il était une fois" (Once upon a time). Concerning marriage in Italy at the time of Straparola, Bottigheimer (2003, 63) says:

In each of Straparola’s rise tales, a desperately poor girl or boy, through magic, married royally and became rich, a plot that was impossible in Venice, where some two decades before, new legislation forbade marriages between nobles and non-nobles. Straparola’s authorial response was to set his rise tales in lands as distant as those in which his restoration tales took place, making it clear that a poor boy or girl’s marrying into a noble family was a stroke of fortune that was not to be expected in Venice.

In the real world, poor people were destined to remain poor. The dream of having a better life by marrying a member of the upper class remained a dream.

Fate/education

One of the major differences between Mlle Lhéritier’s The Enchantments of Eloquence and Perrault’s The Fairies is the origin of the two daughter’s attitude and character. According to Sermain (2005, 219-220):

"L’éloquence attribuée à la cadette présente la même ambiguïté: elle manifeste un souci de l’autre, et donc une socialisation réussie, mais elle ne renvoie ni à une spécificité sociale (à un milieu ou à une origine) ni à une éducation mais tient à une nature heureuse (Lhéritier y voit un effet de la lecture de romans)."

Mlle Lhéritier explains the good nature of the younger daughter by the fact that her father was a nobleman who let his daughter read novels. Her fate is therefore connected to her belonging to the aristocracy and to her better education. The elder daughter is rude because her father is a businessman and because the mother is materialistic and hates books. Is the rude daughter responsible for her bad character? Should the fairy punish her? Is it her fate? Perrault’s only explanation concerning the good nature of the younger girl is that the father was a good man. There is no mention of his social status. The author says nothing about education. It is quite surprising coming from a man who had a successful career because of his education. In Perrault’s tales, women succeed because of their good looks, their obedience, and their virtue, never because of their education and intelligence. This too is surprising, coming from a man who frequented so regularly the literary salons of so many well-educated women.

3.3. The Fairies: motifs and symbolism
The names in Perrault’s tales

Around 80% of the characters in the eleven tales written by Perrault don’t have a given name or a family name (Perrault 2006, 156). They are named in relation with their condition, their title, their place in the family or work (the prince, the young girl, the daughter, the ogre...). Perrault has without doubt been influenced by La Fontaine’s Fables. The fact that the characters have no name is supposed to make them universal. The reader, no matter where he comes from, can identify to fairy tale characters. In The Fairies, only the elder daughter has a name: Fanchon (a name also used in The Ridiculous Wishes). The younger daughter is often called "la cadette", "pauvre enfant" or "cette belle fille". On the contrary, in the Italian tales, most of the protagonists are named. For example, in The Three Fairies, even the village is named: "In the village of Marcianise there was a widow called Caradonia" (Zipes 2001, 544). This village is now in the district of Caserta.

The elder/the youngest

Among the most popular fairy tale motifs: the mean elder sibling versus the youngest one (Cinderella). The Eldest sister is often favored by their parents in fairy tales. It is most of the time the mother who favors the elder daughter who looks and behaves like her. It is certainly connected to the right of inheritance. The first son or daughter is supposed to inherited the best portion from their parents; the youngest siblings receive very little or nothing (Puss in Boots). Perrault was the youngest son of his family. Is it by chance that he was the seventh son, like in Little Tom Thumb? In fact, his son, Pierre Perrault Darmancour was also the youngest son of the family. However, he was not as lucky as Little Tom Thumb: he killed a man in a duel in 1697 and died in 1700 during the war (he was lieutenant in the Dauphin's Regiment, Cavalry). He was only 22 years old.

Numbers: "two"

"Two" is obviously a symbolic number in The Fairies: in the original French text, "deux" appears eight times. For example, there are two sisters; two roses, two pearls, and two large diamonds fall from the mouth of the younger sister; two vipers and two toads fall from the mouth of the elder sister. Perrault solves his title problem by having one fairy appearing two times under a different disguise. As a result, there are two women, an old village woman and a magnificently dressed lady. Unhappiness in this tale comes from the fact that some relations are odd-numbered: there are three in the family (no father), there is only one prince. There is only one fairy, she represents Justice, but she is splitting in two in order to reward kindness and punish rudeness. This double appearance of the fairy could explain the title of Perrault’s tale.

The forest

Woods appear in almost all of Perrault’s fairy tales. They symbolize the female principle and the unconscious. The forest is a place of opportunity, but also a place of danger,
mistakes, and problems. All kind of creatures live in the woods: outlaws, poor people, wood cutters, children, but also fairies, ogres, wolves, and if one is getting lucky, a prince looking for a bride. The younger daughter is certainly luckier than Little Red. She could have met a wolf instead of a good looking and single prince. The drama of the elder sister is that she meets…nobody. She dies alone. It almost never happens in fairy tales.

The silver tankard

The silver tankard (la cruche d’argent in French) symbolizes hypocrisy. It shows that the elder sister goes to the river in order to meet the fairy and expects to be rewarded. However, she is unable to hide her true nature, even for a few minutes. Her behavior is quite disturbing because she does not want to go to the river. She is almost forced by her mother: "You’ll never get me walking to the spring! The rude girl responded.”18 Perhaps, she is not as greedy as her mother, but she is certainly ruder and less sociable.

The Fairy

Fairies are legendary creatures with magical powers. The word “fée” in French comes from Latin "fatum" (fate). Therefore, their role, like the Greek Moirae and the Roman Parcae, is to influence or to decide people’s destiny. In Perrault’s tales, there is a total of ten fairies. Each one of them has a special power. In The Fairies, she can transform and choose the appearance she wishes, she can also bless or curse. The problem is that she is quick to decide who deserves to be punished or not and the victim has no second chance. She is implacable and her judgement is irremediable.

The poor old woman

In most civilizations, charity towards the poor, the elderly and destitute is a virtue. Filial piety is the respect that children are supposed to show to their parents, but also to all the people who are older. The Fairies is also related to the notion of hospitality, very important in the ancient world (such as in the story of Latona and the Lycians, in which the Lycians are severely punished for their inhospitality). By being polite, the younger daughter shows both hospitality and filial piety. That is why she is so generously rewarded. In Mlle Lhérinitier’s tale, the fairy takes the appearance of a beautiful lady when she meets the younger daughter and she looks like an old peasant woman when she meets the rude elder daughter.

The beautiful lady

The elder daughter is not punished for her lack of filial piety, but for her inhospitality, her hypocrisy and above all, for her lack of respect towards a lady (probably a noble woman).

18 Zipes 2001, 566.
As a matter of fact, the fairy gave the girl an easy test: it is probably easier to be polite with a beautiful, young and rich lady than with an old and poor woman. But the elder daughter is just rude, she cannot help it. She is disagreeable with everybody, the rich, the poor, the noble, the peasants, the old, the young, and her own mother.

Rewards/punishment

The younger daughter is rewarded with roses, pearls and diamonds coming out of her mouth whenever she speaks. One can wonder if it is a blessing or a curse: she is unable to control her new gift. It can become annoying after a while. The Italian storyteller Straparola in Biancabella and the Snake thought about a more practical gift: Biancabella can have fish each time she washes her hands. But this kind of gift is useless for a girl who is about to marry a prince. She will never have to worry about food again. Perrault makes it clear that the prince falls in love with her for her beauty first (because in French fairy tales, most of the protagonists fall in love at first sight): "la voyant si belle" (Perrault 2006, 151). He is intrigued because she is crying. Then, she speaks. He is moved by her story and amazed to see precious stones coming out of her mouth. What is interesting in Perrault’s tale is the place of "le fils du roi en devint amoureux": after "elle lui conta toute son aventure" and before "considérant qu’un tel don..." (ibid.) He falls in love with her because she is beautiful. He also feels sad for her, but at the same time, he understands that she is unique. She has been blessed by a fairy. After falling in love with her, he considers that, even if she is a common girl, she will be the best bride a man can hope for. No other woman can have such an extraordinary dowry. The roses symbolize perfection, beauty, and paradise, the pearls innocence and health, the diamonds perfection, purity and intelligence.

The elder daughter: she is often called "la brutale" by Perrault. It means that she has no respect for others. At the end of the story, she is called "la malheureuse" because everybody is rejecting her, even her own mother who favored her so much. The snakes coming out of her mouth symbolize sin, the devil, and ingratitude. Clearly, she is a spoiled child, unsociable and without passion. She seems to be interested in nothing. It is difficult not to pity her and her punishment seems too severe. Perrault does not say anything about the mother. She is the one who should be punished, or perhaps her punishment is that she has lost her two daughters. However, among the many inconsistencies of this short tale, the most disturbing is that Perrault says nothing about what happened to all the roses, pearls and diamonds that the younger daughter left in the mother’s house...
Conclusion

Soriano (1968, 140) says that *The Fairies* is an adaptation "à la fois fidèle et savante." He also adds that "le conte reste toutefois un peu sec." This tale is certainly too short and too dry to enjoy the success of its successor *Cinderella*. The two stories have much in common, even if the sources used by Perrault differ greatly. Deulin (1878, chapitre 8) summarizes in two paragraphs the weaknesses of this tale:

*Après Riquet à la Houpe, le conte que Perrault a intitulé les Fées est, à commencer par son titre, le moins heureux de ses contes en prose. À côté des autres étiquettes si caractéristiques et qui s’imposent si franchement à la mémoire, celle-ci est bien banale, et d’ailleurs elle manque de justesse. Pourquoi les Fées, quand une seule figure dans le récit ? Les faits sont mal disposés, comme du reste chez presque tous les conteurs qui ont traité le même sujet; ils pèchent contre cette loi de la logique que, pour faire croire au merveilleux, il faut observer dans le fantastique plus strictement que partout ailleurs.*

*The Fairies* is among the least famous of Perrault’s eleven tales. It has been translated many times, but academic studies on it are scarce. Few scholars, such as Soriano, have dedicated more than a few lines or a few notes to this version of the "toads and diamonds" type. It contains many important themes, such as filial piety and hospitality, courtesy and eloquence, and is worth commenting and analyzing.
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夏爾．佩羅的童話故事：來源、歷史沿革、及意義

孟丞書

摘要

夏爾．佩羅的仙女於 1695 年第一次出現於童話故事集《鵝媽媽的故事》。此簡短散文故事屬於阿爾 - 湯普森 (480 年) 的“友善和不友善女孩”類型。早期版本的仙女源自於奧維德的變形記。在拉托娜和利比亞人二文中，拉托娜自生下阿波羅和阿爾特彌斯後即徘徊於人間。她試圖從位於利比亞的一個池塘裡取水喝，但卻被當地農民制止，因此將冷漠的居民變成了青蛙。佩羅熟悉在凡爾賽宮花園露台的著名勒托噴泉，它由安德烈・勒諾特於 1668 年所設計。拉托娜的故事被選為是一則寓言，明確針對路易十四期間少數投石起義 (1648 至 1653 年) 事件。仙女一文受到義大利很大的影響，它至少與三則義大利故事相似：斯特拉帕羅拉的比安卡貝拉與蛇，和巴西萊的命運 (三仙女) 和二塊糕餅。佩羅的故事描繪一位母親較喜歡大女兒卻虐待小女兒，一位仙女將決定二個女孩的命運：年輕又美貌的女孩會因為她的善良得到回報並嫁給一個王子；而粗魯的姊姊將受到處罰並在樹林裡孤獨地死去。即使仙女與灰姑娘 (1697 年) 有許多共同之處，但前文可能太簡短闡述不以致不似後文著名。

關鍵詞：童話故事、熱情好客、神話、佩羅、仙女。