

Avatars of Gendered Societal Constructs in Seventeenth-Century *Contes de fées*

By

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Abstract

This dissertation considers the *contes de fées* written towards the end of the seventeenth century. These tales have been the focus of research and interest for the last thirty years, but much of the research has been concentrated on the work on Madame d'Aulnoy. By widening the selection of works considered, the writer argues that the attitudes expressed about the roles assigned to women and men find an echo in many other fairy tales written during this period. By using close textual analysis, the study considers the depiction of women and their lives in a patriarchal society. It further shows that the tales' challenge to the hierarchical society was broader, and a concern not only of women writers, but also of the males. The world that the authors depict is sumptuous, a regal world in which aristocrats rule and govern. However, although the stories usually end in a 'happy ever after', the princes and princesses, and their parents, often go through life-changing experiences. The authors use metamorphosis and cross-dressing, to move their heroes and heroines into situations that challenge them. Shape-shifting becomes a didactic tool, and the story-tellers use an amazing variety of symbols to reflect the changes and discoveries that were being made at the end of the century. The adoption of the persona of the opposite gender, a trope in seventeenth-century literature, questions the assumptions of what gender implies in society. The depiction of women who can fight and be brave is unsurprising, particularly since there is the historical example of the *frondeuses*, but women are often shown as being necessary for the functioning of good government and are not confined to the purely domestic sphere. Man dressed as woman sets different parameters. Such disguise may be used as a means to access a woman in her private space and attempt seduction or suggest emasculation, or a desire for egalitarianism. Both male and female authors contend that equal status provides better governance, and argue for freedom from a paternalistic and authoritarian society.

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Introduction

Fairy tales have long been a source of entertainment and pleasure; Disney and others have reworked classic tales into film, and their most recent twenty-first century interpretations reflect contemporary attitudes to gender roles, to race, and to physical appearance.¹ The writers of fairy tales in France, towards the end of the seventeenth century, were no different; they depict the society in which they live, and also on occasion subtly question its construct. This dissertation considers the different ways in which writers of fairy stories at the end of the seventeenth-century viewed the role of women in society. By examining and contrasting these representations, I will draw out how these tales illustrate the contemporary conditions of an aristocrat. Many of the tales resulted from a salon game: for amusement members of a salon took folk tales or themes from ancient Greek and Latin texts and fashioned their own.² This resulted in tales which are of the same type, but which have differing outcomes and plot twists, as each author imprinted the tale with his or her own perspective and view of society. Though many critics have examined the works of Madame d'Aulnoy in depth, many other fairy-tale writers have not received much critical attention. The works by the women writers were overshadowed by d'Aulnoy's success and popularity; as Jean Mainil notes: "elle fut la conteuse la plus adulée du règne de Louis XIV" and he details the importance of the number of publications and re-publications of her works (*Le Rire des fées* 19). The other writers may have escaped notice because they had written shorter tales, not as richly detailed, or as complex. Since it was a fashionable pastime, they may have been overlooked in the plethora of works that existed. I

¹ The princesses in *Tangled*, *Brave*, and *Frozen* are independent, feisty women. As Tom Shone writes in his review of *Frozen*: "The Disney princess is such a tired trope that even the much-vaunted revisionism feels *de trop*, these days – find me a heroine who isn't spunky, feisty, etc. – but where the film scores points for originality is the tender acuity with which the relationship between the two sisters is observed". Shone, Tom "Frozen's celebration of sisterhood guaranteed to melt the coldest heart". Theguardian.com. 29 Nov 2013. Web. 15 Jan 2014.

² Seifert asserts that there is proof that such games were part of salon life (*Fairy Tales* 230, n. 25).

contend that many fairy stories contain a discernible critique of the restrictions placed on women's choices in relationships and their place in society. Although the narratives may be distinct in tone and emphasis, the contrasting treatment of the same subject emphasizes the author's own viewpoint, while also revealing a concordant world view. This is particularly evident in tales that treat the Cinderella story (*Cendrillon*, *Finette Cendron* and *L'Adroite princesse*) or Prince born as a pig (*Le Roi Porc* and *Marcassin*).³

Gender Constructs

Recent research in the past decade has been interested in male relationships with other males. In the introduction to a series of treatises examining male and homosocial relationships in French literature, Reeser and Seifert note that many of the essays “confront one or more ways in which masculinity situates itself with respect to femininity” (32). I contend that looking at the opposite point of view, namely that of femininity in the *contes*, as well as the way in which masculinity is portrayed, gives a picture of how these particular writers viewed women. It is clear that the writers invest their characters with traits that may be considered as belonging to the opposite gender, and in this way the societal construct of gender is subtly challenged. The first chapter considers the depiction of women in the tales, and examines their relationships with those with whom they interact. Although many of these women are much-desired babies, the treatment which is meted out to them and the trials they undergo reveal a society which undervalues female skills and intelligence. The second chapter looks at the use of metamorphosis, tracing its use in Ovid, and the different ways the seventeenth-century writers use this trope. I examine how shape-shifting affects the female characters' psyche and how this affects their societal position. The third chapter deals with the metamorphosis of males, and what

³ A list of all the tales used in this dissertation is in Appendix A

this reveals about the authors' views of the patriarchal society. The depiction of males is, on the whole, not flattering; those who are changed are either powerful and rapacious, or fragile and inadequate. The fourth and final chapter examines what happens when characters assume the dress and persona of the opposite sex. As well as the woman who puts on men's garb, and is more successful and competent than many of her male counterparts, the authors deal with men disguising themselves as women. The transgressive subject of cross-dressing might have been treated in a prurient manner, and indeed indicate that such disguise might have the goal of seduction. Some authors do take this stance, while others go further and question what gender should mean in society. An introduction to and exploration of the meaning and use of metamorphosis and cross-dressing is made at the beginning of the chapters dealing in depth with these topics.

A brief overview of the critical treatments on seventeenth-century fairy tales will provide a basis for this study. Mary-Elizabeth Storer was the first critic to analyze all the authors of the first wave of tales. While it is clear from her work that she considers the output of the male writers to be superior to the women authors, the biographies that she gives of all of them are relevant, even while her occasionally dismissive attitude to women writers, reflecting perhaps the social climate of her own time (1928), is surprising. Her analysis of d'Aulnoy is especially interesting since she acknowledges her importance as a writer of fairy tales, while at the same time overtly denigrating her work because she is a woman. "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" (41). Raymonde Robert in *Le Conte de fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVII^e à la fin du XVIII^e siècle* examines works from both waves of tales, the first from 1690–1715 and the second from

1730 –1748. She provides relevant definitions of the elements that are necessary for a story to be classified as a fairy tale, as well as examining differing authors' themes and the oral traditions on which some are based. Some of the elements which she considers necessary, for example, that the narratives always allow the wrongdoing inflicted on the hero or heroine to be redressed, are not always present in the narrative. I will show that there is a dark side to the tales, in which some authors clearly demonstrate their cynicism and unhappiness regarding the possibility of a happy outcome. Robert also argues that d'Aulnoy's narrations are a mirror of society. While that is certainly the case, I find that the reflection shown of society is distorted. While there are elements that clearly show seventeenth-century court life, there is also a representation which is nuanced and suggests shadows.

Lewis Seifert is a major scholar whose research focuses on the French *contes de fées*. His seminal work, *Fairy Tales, Sexuality, and Gender in France, 1690 –1715: Nostalgic Utopias*, examines writers of the first wave, because he considers that 'both thematically and structurally' they "are more cohesive" (5). He also examines their use of the *merveilleux*. Instead of confining his study to d'Aulnoy as many writers have done, his work examines many authors, and is valuable because of the breadth of study. He does, however, concentrate his work on the *conteuses*, arguing that their work "has strategic meaning in the quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns" (*Fairy Tales* 61), stating that the women writers found the genre a means for determining and championing their own position. He does not sustain this argument and concludes that the fairy tale writers demonstrate a desire to return to a courtly past. He considers that "the marvelous powers accorded to or used against male and female characters most readily reinforce patriarchal gender stereotypes" (11). I find that instead of reinforcing these patriarchal values, the writers are rather attacking these values and showing that this hierarchical world-view

is damaging to society. I examine this argument of stereotypes in greater depth, for although the writers are very careful not to attack the societal hierarchy overtly, by the use of metamorphosis and cross-dressing, they are challenging societal constructs of gender. Domna Stanton and Lewis Seifert's recent translations into English of some fairy tales, written by five women authors, four of whom are in my corpus, *Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers*, has brought these tales to a wider audience. They consider the work of the writers, and the place of the fairy story in French literature, as well as carefully surveying the canon of research on these writers in their introduction. By concentrating their valuable scholarship on the women, they contend that the genre "allowed women to promote individual and collective interests" (11). There is clear evidence that the men who wrote *contes de fées* shared these interests, and were critiquing the same things as the women, and advocating change.

Whereas Seifert has considered the tales of many authors, other researchers have concentrated on the work of d'Aulnoy. Jean de Mainil's *Madame d'Aulnoy et le rire des fées* examines her writing, and considers her depiction of fairy tale characters. Mainil considers that she did not write stories that project a stereotypical view, as we would understand it, of the trapped princess waiting for rescue by her prince (26). He sees, rather, an element of dissension that stops the tales from being euphoric. For him the narratives express sedition against patriarchal dominance, by using parody and laughter (27). Nadine Jasmin's *Naissance du conte féminin: mots et merveilles: Les Contes de fées de Madame d'Aulnoy, 1690 –1698* considers the sources of d'Aulnoy's stories, how she creates her literary world, and the devices and themes utilized. These two seminal works have provided a starting point for my exploration of other authors whose work was not as prolific as that of d'Aulnoy, and which have not received as much critical scrutiny because their works were not as widely disseminated or as well known.

A study of societal constructs necessitates an understanding of the differing attitudes to gender, several works that consider the role of gender roles in seventeenth-century France have been key to my understanding and exploration of this topic. Francis Assaf has examined the role of a king, considering King Louis XIV in *La Mort du roi: Une Thanatographie de Louis XIV* and the depiction of kingship in the tales in “L’impossible souveraineté: le roi-prétexte dans les contes de madame d’Aulnoy (1690 –1698).” His insights into the patriarchal monarchy explicate very clearly the power held by the king, and the manner in which it influenced the functioning of society. Louis XIV and his government aspired to an autonomous and powerful nation; this desire resulted in many wars, particularly against Spain and the Dutch. As a result of these wars, the citizens suffered economically and the country was impoverished. Certainly the general populace found themselves in a society which could be considered to be in turmoil; lives lost in war, famine, and unrest. Socially too, the aristocratic population was undergoing a change. Independence, to live freely in one’s own lands, was undermined by Louis XIV’s desire that many aristocrats live at Versailles. In addition only a few men, close to the throne, had real power in the realm.

Works which examine the situation of women in society have also been central to my understanding of themes and depictions in the literature. Joan DeJean’s *Tender Geographies* examines the role of women in society, the *frondeuses* and their significance in the seventeenth century and in particular the importance of their membership of salons. Her study of how women put on male clothing in order to fight in skirmishes during this civil war is particularly valuable in understanding the cultural and historical significance of cross-dressing. Other writers have also examined women’s situation in society. Marina Warner’s *From the Beast to the Blonde: on Fairy Tales and their Tellers* examines the reality of characterization in the tales, grounding the

fantastic in the reality of life. Of particular interest to this study is her work on the theme of assuming another identity through change of garb. As may be deduced from the title, Warner's central theme is the blond princess, and she looks at the contrast between light and dark in tales. She traces the depiction of women through tales, taking Perrault as her starting point for the seventeenth French *contes*, and also looking at world-wide popularity of fairy stories. She considers that Perrault the fore-runner of the genre, and that the women followed him.⁴ Her insightful work examines the depiction of women from hagiography to Disney and she considers several tales which are featured in this dissertation. As she herself states, "any study which attempts it [the story of fairy tales] must stumble and fall before any kind of ending can be made" (Introduction xxv) suggesting that the breadth of study does not and cannot encompass everything.

Patricia Hannon's *Fabulous Identities: Women's Fairy Tales in Seventeenth-Century France* examines in detail the tales written by women, demonstrating how through writing women strove to break free of the restraints placed on them. Her consideration of the use of metamorphosis as a tool for empowerment provided a springboard for my own study. Her comment on the slipper's significance in d'Aulnoy's *Finette Cendron*, was also thought-provoking. She states that because of the "profound social changes marking seventeenth-century France, the sexual identity of the upper-class male was in crisis"(145), which led me to consider if this occurred uniquely in one tale by one author or was evinced in a more widespread pattern in the genre. Hannon also posits that d'Aulnoy's ending her tales with marriage shows "this resolution is in all instances related to the heroine's assertion of her right to determine her own destiny" (213). In considering this, Anne Defrance's examination of this *conteuse's* framing tales in *Les Contes de fées et les nouvelles de Madame d'Aulnoy (1690–1698). L'Imaginaire féminin*

⁴ In this she differs from much modern criticism that accords d'Aulnoy the honor of being first.

à rebours de la tradition was enlightening. She also examines her use of mythology, and in particular metamorphosis, and shows how her work was both traditional and innovative. These two works suggest concepts and ideas which should not be limited to d'Aulnoy alone, and by applying Hannon's and Defrance's theses to other works, it is possible to see a wider expression of a critique of society.

Sophie Raynard's *La Seconde Préciosité: floraison des conteuses de 1690 à 1756* examines in detail the *conteuses* from both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She contends that they formed part of the *précieuse* movement. She defines this concept as a "recherche de la singularité, de la supériorité" (55) and notes that writing in this literary genre contains elements of subversion and a questioning of the patriarchal system. Raynard compares the *conteuses'* body of work to Perrault's to show the differences between their writing, but she does not look at other male writers of *contes de fées*. Some male writers, although they could be considered to be a part of the hierarchical structure because of their gender also question women's status and suggest that they might be able to hold a different place in the world.

Cross-dressing as a way of examining gender constructs is the final part of this dissertation. In addition to stereotypical roles assigned to gender – as a result of the Church's teaching – there were also sharply defined attributes assigned to gender which came from their contemporaneous medical knowledge and understanding of physiology. This may be seen in the work of Sylvie Steinberg, *La Confusion des sexes: le travestissement de la Renaissance à la Révolution*, which examines attitudes and presumptions about gender, as well as the characteristics assigned to both. In particular, her work is illuminating because she examines cross-dressing from its roots as a historical phenomenon, where women dressed as men to protect themselves, or to go off to war. Her explication of the real-life phenomena suggests the

basis for the writers who use this theme. In her examination of cross-dressed males, she details the different foods that they would have been encouraged to consume, an element echoed in the stories. Women have to modify their ways of behaving into more ‘male’ practices in order to conform to the societal prescriptions of the masculine paradigm. Steinberg does not however consider the transgressive nature of cross-dressing or what such an act reveals about the author’s understanding and critique of seventeenth-century attitudes to gender. Joseph Harris’s work, *Hidden Agendas: Cross-Dressing in 17th-Century France*, examines the use and interpretation of cross-dressing. This seminal work looks at the ambivalent attitudes to cross-dressing in the seventeenth century, and the reactions of sections of the Church and the Court to it. He proposes that cross-dressing was seen as symptomatic of a disorder. He then looks at how this topic is addressed in contemporary literature, and shows that literary works frequently rely on a moment of *anagnorisis*, or revelation, to restore the transvestite person to their “authentic” sexual identity. He also explores the scenes of mistaken identity and misplaced desire that such cross-dressing can cause. He looks particularly at women’s cross-dressing as a means of obtaining equality with men, in various genres including the fairy tales. His work also examines the Abbé de Choisy, who as well as being a published member of the *Académie française*, also became famous, posthumously, through the publication of his *Mémoires* (1737), in which he recounts periods of his life when he dressed, and was accepted, as a woman. Harris looks at how Choisy’s writings reflect the general concerns of the period. The question of why men cross dress as women, and the question of legitimizing same-sex desires is addressed by Harris, but will be widened out in this dissertation to include other writer’s use of this trope.

Fairy Tales and Short Stories

Since some of the writers of *contes* did not confine themselves to only this particular genre, and also wrote *nouvelles* and *contes de fées*. The start of the century had been the era of long, multi-volume, epic works such as Honoré d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1607–10) followed by Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artamène ou Le Grand Cyrus* (1649–53). These narratives were immensely popular, but in the later part of the century tastes had changed and they were replaced by shorter stories. At the same time, the fairy tale makes use of many of these known themes and settings, and adapts the pastoral and anthropomorphic animals from *Les Fables* (1668–1694). Instead of the world of *L'Astrée* which is entirely bucolic, the fairy tales contrast the world of the shepherd to that of the aristocrat. The exploits of the heroic warrior, Artamène, his exploits as a soldier, and his love story also find an echo in some stories but the *conteuses* treat this epic theme differently, giving the hero's role to a cross-dressed woman. At the beginning of the popularity of the fairy tale, there was a fluidity and variation in the forms that were used. As Domna Stanton and Lewis Seifert point out “at the height of the vogue's first wave (1690–1709), the few critics who bothered to comment on this fashionable phenomenon were convinced it would rapidly disappear” (*Enchanted Eloquence* 34).

I am going to begin by distinguishing between these different forms as this dissertation considers differing examples of the genre. The *nouvelle* was short fiction that omitted the supernatural. It was longer than the *conte* and a more literary narrative, often of real and contemporary life.⁵ Shorter novels in the seventeenth century were known as *nouvelles*. For example, *La Princesse de Clèves* was originally known as a *nouvelle historique*. In the seventeenth century, the term *conte* would have been understood to be a folk tale, an oral genre,

⁵ “Un conte plaisant un peu étendu, soit qu'elle soit feinte ou véritable” Furetière (I, sig: N2n^r)

passed from teller to teller. Each *conteur* re-told and may have renewed the traditional stock. Many of the folk tales were pastoral and dealt with rural lives. These stories were eventually written down, in the early part of the seventeenth century, and the word came to mean a short story. Furetière defines a *conte* as “histoire, recit plaisant” and remarks “la breveté est l’âme du conte”.⁶ Allan Pasco has worked on defining a short story and notes “for a short story to succeed, the author must overcome the restraint of limited length and communicate not only a segment, a tattered fragment, but a world” (127). This need to draw the reader into a universe, and involve him or her in the lives and adventures of the characters has to be done in such a way that the reader can bring his prior knowledge to bear, and recognize the setting of the tale, and also the type of character it will involve. Thus the seemingly repetitive “il y avait une fois un roi et une reine” (or variations of this), immediately engages the reader, who has these expectations (which may or may not be met) of how the story will unfold, and chooses to read the tale because he or she recognizes the genre. It would be a mistake to assume however, that all fairy stories are linear and follow one character through a series of trials that end in a happy marriage. The tales are complicated, and may involve more than one story within the overarching tale. As Stanton and Seifert remark: “With the notable exception of Perrault’s prose tales, all seventeenth-century *contes de fées* are closer to the novel than to the ‘simple form’ of the tale studied by André Jolles” (*Enchanted Eloquence* 21).⁷ Some of the writers of *contes de fées* or *contes merveilleux*, made their tales more intricate by setting them into a framework. In this they follow the tradition of writers such as Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decamerone* (fourteenth century), Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (fourteenth century), and Marguerite de Navarre’s *L’Heptaméron* (1558–59).

⁶ Antoine Furetière. *Dictionnaire Universel*. 2 vols. (The Hague: Arnoud et Renier Leers, 1702). Furetière published a section of his dictionary before the Académie, and his dictionary is considered by many scholars to provide definitions which are contemporaneous and universal. In addition, as well as giving derivations and etymologies of words, he shows their history and their current usage in seventeenth-century society.

⁷ They explain in a footnote that for Jolles a ‘simple form’ is one of many oral genres from which more complex literary forms may develop (21, n. 68).

These narratives involve travelers on a pilgrimage or an enforced stay in an inn who entertain themselves by telling stories. By using a framing tale, authors can give a structure to their narrative. It permits different protagonists to recount their story, which may take a diametrically opposite point of view to the previous tale, and may be expressed by a member of the opposite sex, as in *L'Heptaméron*. The fairy tales also imitate the examples of the earlier longer novels like *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* in which stories of lovers and soldiers are recounted to the hero. D'Aulnoy in particular, gives a framing story, for example in *Le Nouveau gentilhomme bourgeois* (1698) the ostensible hero is told six tales to amuse him. Much critical attention has been paid to the six stories because they can stand alone with their rich detail, extensive narrative, and complexity. The framing tale in itself is comedic, telling of a nouveau riche man who is educated through the telling of the tales. If, however, the six tales and the framing tale are regarded as a whole, then the work would be considered the length of a novel. In the Jasmin edition it is 350 pages long. The over-arching linking of several tales seems to be a feminine strategy, enabling madame d'Aulnoy to provide a "favorable critical reception" (*Fabulous Identities* 188) for the narratives. "The predominantly female narrators are commended for embellishing the ordinary (*Fortunée*), for displaying their fine wit and delicate style (*Babiole*), and for exercising their sublime intelligence (*La Chatte [B]lanche*)" (188).

Madame d'Auneuil also uses the framing tale to have characters meet others who are suffering in the same way and who recount their adventures to them (*La Tyrannie des fées détruite*). Whereas d'Aulnoy's fairy tales can be, and frequently are, separated from the framing tale, d'Auneuil has the three tales woven together and includes the fate of all the characters in the denouement. Having tales in which the characters' stories are intertwined with others permits the authors not only to develop a theme in a greater depth than a true short story, but also to add

nuances to the adventures that befall the hero/ heroine as he or she encounters different protagonists. The variety and interest of the writers is that there are examples of short tales, where the author has a single point to make, and ones embedded in a framing tale that give an additional didactic element to the writing. This attribute is twofold: the listener in the overarching tale learns from what is recounted, and is able to make choices based on his or her new knowledge. The reader also learns and can be led to question his or her own assumptions. The value of the genre and literature in general is also underlined; both the listener and the reader learn to appreciate its worth. Anne Birberick points out that by the end of *Le Nouveau gentilhomme bourgeois* the hero has “not only accepted Virginie’s ability to write tales as a valuable commodity, but he has also sought to acquire some of the intellectual capital for himself” (“Changing Places” 287).

As well as considering the length of these tales, it is essential to consider what elements constitute a fairy story. To have a story classified as a fairy tale, currently the expectation might be of fairies, monstrous creatures and a struggle of good versus evil, at the end of which good triumphs. This would be a gross simplification of the seventeenth-century genre, where the whole ambiance of the tales, including descriptions of the places, the food, the people, even the animals combine to create a universe which is exceptional and other-worldly. At the same time the improvements of the age and of the court of Louis XIV are also displayed, grounding the sense of wonder for the seventeenth-century reader in the discoveries and developments of the time. Joan DeJean considers “the genre [of fairy tales] included many types of tales. Many so-called fairy tales featured neither fairies nor ogres nor any kind of supernatural presence, but only the atmosphere of ‘enchanted’ perfection” (*L’Histoire de la Marquise/ Marquis de Banneville*, 49, n.24). In this fairy-tale world, the protagonists who inhabit it are aristocratic

figures, who live and marry within their own class (the exception to this being those of Perrault). On the surface, these are privileged beings, endowed with great riches and power, who want materially for nothing, supposedly inhabiting a world of utopian happiness. It is only through their interaction with other characters, in a world away from the court, that we perceive that this aristocratic world is not perfect, and that a subtle critique of the aristocracy is a sub-text to these tales. In these stories, unlike the earlier short stories, the world of the peasant or the shepherdess has more or less vanished, and although the princes and princesses may need the help of the a lowlier, simpler, pastoral world before they are returned to their rightful place in society.

The Choice of Tales

Charles Perrault was considered for many years to be the main writer, and even the creator, of the fairy-tale genre. He was part of the first *vague* of sixteen fairy-tale writers and his stories are well-known. He was not, as Seifert points out, the first of these writers in this first group to publish prose; d'Aulnoy, Bernard and L'Héritier preceded him (*Fairy Tales* 8).

Ostensibly the fairy tales were created for children, becoming a written form of the oral folk tales, told by the “lowly” nursemaids.⁸ These folk tales are regarded differently from the literary fairy tales, which were written for the amusement of adults. As critics have evaluated these works, many have investigated their sources, and how the writers changed the stories which were circulating. Some of the authors reveal they learned the stories from the women who cared for them, as L'Héritier does at the end of *L'Adroite princesse*.⁹ This oral tradition of folk tales to amuse and teach children is detailed as a source by Raymonde Robert. Other critics have

⁸ Stanton and Seifert describe the differences between this folk form and the aristocratic writing (*Enchanted Eloquence* 14).

⁹ “Cent et cent fois ma gouvernante, /au lieu de fables d’animaux, /M’a raconté les traits moraux/ de cette histoire surprenante”. *La princesse adroite. Contes*. Ed. Raymonde Robert. Bibliothèque des génies et des fées 2. (Paris : Champion, 2005.)144.

identified other starting points for this genre. Defrance traces the use of fables and myths; Bottigheimer demonstrates that the stories originate in the works of the Italian writers Straparola and Basile.¹⁰ Taking these simple tales was a salon game, in which a theme based on tale or oral story was chosen, and salon members produced their version of it. Differing analyses of d'Aulnoy's tales, among others, feminist interpretations (such as Anne Defrance), humor (Jean Mainil), and psychological interpretation (Amy Vanderlyn DeGraff) have been made. These viewpoints are all well-argued and valid, but confine their discussion to d'Aulnoy. Many other tales written at the same time as those by d'Aulnoy have not been explored. By examining the ways in which female characters are depicted in these fairy tales and by looking at how the authors portray their heroines, a picture of the role of women in society may be extrapolated. In addition, by contrasting how men are portrayed by these same authors, a picture of the roles that the genders play in society emerges that controverts the patriarchy. A critique of the construct of gender can be seen throughout these works that is revealed by examining the representations of male and female characters, and their metamorphosed or cross-dressed bodies. In the fantastic world the authors created, the loss of their characters' human identity, whether through shape-shifting into another life form, or by the taking on the persona of the opposite gender, allows the princes and princesses to meet situations outside their courtly environment, and to mature and develop.

The authors who are included in my corpus are Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, comtesse d'Aulnoy (1650/51–1706), Louise de Bossigny, comtesse d'Auneuil (?–1700), Charlotte-Rose de Caumont La Force (1650–1724), Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon

¹⁰ Raymonde Robert. *Le conte de fées littéraire en France de la fin du XVIIe à la fin du XVIIIe siècle*. (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1982).
 Anne Defrance. *Les Contes de fées et les nouvelles de Madame d'Aulnoy (1690–1698). L'imaginaire féminin à rebours de la tradition*. (Geneva: Droz, 1998).
 Ruth Bottigheimer *Fairy Tales: A New History* (Albany: Excelsior, 2009).

(1664–1694), Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, comtesse de Murat, (1670–1716), the Chevalier de Mailly (1656–1724), Jean de Préchac (1647–1720), and François Timoléon de Choisy (1644–1724). These authors have been included in my corpus because they frequented the same salons and came from respectable aristocratic families. They all were part of the first *vogue*, being eight of the sixteen identified by Seifert (*Fairy Tales* 5-6), and all use either metamorphosis or cross-dressing to place their characters in situations that their gender could not allow them to experience freely.¹¹ The work of the male writers is important because they played a pioneering and significant part in supporting and encouraging women writers, primarily because they possessed the necessary contacts and credentials to distribute and, in some cases, publish the stories that circulated in manuscript form across the capital’s literary networks. Their male world-view on the same tropes provides an obvious counterpoint to that of the women, but does not, as might be expected, demonstrate an oppositional point of view.

I have chosen the period 1677–1709 for the following reasons. Received critical wisdom assigns the start date of the first wave of fairy tales as 1690, the publication date of Madame d’Aulnoy’s first tale, *Histoire d’Hypolite, comte de Douglas*, which contains *L’Île de Felicité*, a fairy tale recounted by Hypolite within the novel. Allison Stedman remarks that d’Aulnoy introduces “the fairy-tale as a sophisticated literary genre by literally interpolating it into the French novelistic tradition” (131). 1715 is often selected as the end date of this wave, as it marks the end of the Louis XIV’s reign and the fairy tales are “part of the cultural crisis that marked [its] final years” (*Fairy Tales* 6). I have chosen the end date of 1709 as this is the date on which the one of the authors in my corpus, Madame d’Auneuil, published a final collection of tales.¹²

¹¹ Seifert’s *Fairy Tales* lists all the authors (5-6) .

¹² *Les Chevaliers errants ou le génie familial*. See Raymonde Robert’s *Le conte de fées littéraire* 75-77 for a tabulation of the dates of the *contes*.

One of the authors in my corpus, Jean de Préchac, published fairy stories in 1698, during the period generally accepted by critics as falling within the *première vague*. It is my contention that there was a pre-wave of this writing, initiated by him in the period from 1677 to 1681, when he published his *contes galants*. The *conte galant* was a specific genre of *contes* which dealt with heroic exploits of warriors who are motivated by love. The themes of searching for love, a person's place and rank in society, and treatment of children by authoritarian fathers are features of this genre. Critics have also found echoes of this genre in the fairy tales. Patricia Hannon finds that Mailly's fairy tale *Blanche Belle* is "a cynically gallant version" of the princess finding true love with a king (*Fabulous Identities* 155). Catherine Sevestre shows that the literary and stylistic devices of Madame d'Aulnoy's *contes de fées* have many characteristics in common with these stories.¹³ Préchac's *contes galants* also feature female characters who dress as males in order to fight, which some of the female fairy-tale writers employ to allow their heroines to defend their country, as well as featuring exploits of male warriors. It would appear that although the female writers "distance themselves from the contemporaneous *nouvelle*" (*Enchanted Eloquence* 23), the male authors continue to use it. Therefore it can be argued that Préchac's earlier stories are a fore-runner to the *contes de fées*. In addition, these stories are relevant to the central themes of cross-dressing and female empowerment of this study. In addition to Préchac's stories I will examine the narratives written by the abbé de Choisy. One of the stories that I shall study is the *Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville*. This story was first published anonymously in the *Mercure de France* – first in February 1695, with a subsequent, revised edition in August and September 1696. The exploration and further study of these widely differing authors, comparing their work with narratives published at the same time, will provide insights into the late seventeenth-century view of gender, sexuality, and societal roles.

¹³ See the chart (241) in Catherine Sevestre "Madame d'Aulnoy, ou le jeu des miroirs."

Methodology

The methodology that I shall use is a largely new historicist approach; a critical method exemplified in the work of Stephen Greenblatt. His initial hypothesis theorizes that symbols, objects, and words are essential in revealing not only what the author wished to say, but also in the understanding of the significance of these things for that period of history in other works of the time. He comments that these “*textual* relics[...]enable us to glimpse the social process through which objects, gestures, rituals and phrases are fashioned and moved from one zone of display [i.e. books] to another.” (162) This process of looking at the layers of a text, and discerning artifacts and symbols in different texts will enable me to consider the political and social culture of the seventeenth century and whether the differing writers have the same view and usage of these, or whether there are perceptible differences. By close re-readings of texts, and the placing of these stories in their historical context, and by analyzing themes and displays of the body inter-textually, I shall explore how the genre of the fairy tale reveals a complex view of society and the sexes’ role in it. In “Resonance and Wonder”, Greenblatt clarifies what his influential theory means in essence. Of particular interest to me is his explanation of his use of ‘resonance’ and ‘wonder’. He defines resonance as “the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it had emerged and for which as metaphor, or more simply as metonymy it may be taken by a viewer to stand.” (170). Wonder is “the power of the object to stop the viewer in his tracks, to display an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke exalted attention” (170). In his preface to *The Swerve* Greenblatt sets out how he discovered a poem *On the Nature of Things*, a translation of a two-thousand-year-old work by Lucretius (?96 BC–?50 BC). Greenblatt was struck by the “scientific vision of the world – a vision of atoms randomly moving in an infinite universe – was in its origins imbued with a poet’s sense of wonder”(8).

The scientific facts of the world, for example the movements of the planets are described in “thrilling language”, in terms of a love story (1-2). The work resonated with his personal experiences, he appreciated the richness of language and imagery that is employed, and he marveled at the insights into the scientific world, which functioned without the aid of gods (6-7). Greenblatt characterizes this work as a ‘swerve’ describing it as the expected path in a work which is veered away from and a new, unexpected direction is taken. He applies his theory to great writers – Shakespeare, Montaigne and Cervantes – as well as artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. This thesis can also be applied to the sumptuous, regal world of the fairy tale. Beneath the apparent simplistic world of a love story, the realities of seventeenth-century life for men and women are detailed and critiqued and a new direction is taken regarding the paternalistic society and gender stereotypes. By modeling my work on Greenblatt’s I examine how the tale writers in my corpus produced cultural resonances, challenged the status quo, and had metaphors and metonymies which were understood by each other, and also how their writing produced and still produces a sense of amazement and emotional response in the witness. To enable me to understand as much as possible the symbolism of these artifacts to the seventeenth-century mind, I will rely on definitions in the first edition of the dictionary published by Furetière (1690), and the cross-referencing of symbols through the works. The differing uses of these symbols by the authors will allow an exploration of common themes, and those artefacts which are unique, and therefore draw attention to their use.

Notes on Citations to the Texts

The majority of the texts I have used have been published in modern French. In the case of the Choisy manuscript, *Madame de Guercheville*, I have resolved i/j and u/v to modern usage, and replaced the ampersand with ‘et’ but have retained the spelling and use of upper- and lower-

case exactly as is found in the original. Other original texts have been treated similarly. The first edition of Antoine Furetière's *Dictionnaire Universel* does not have pagination, and so references to the definitions are given according to the printer's signatures.

Chapter 1

Women: Domestic Goddesses or Equal Players

It would seem clear that men and women undertake particular familial roles because of their gender. The female mammal is, in the main, the one who becomes pregnant and carries its offspring in the womb. Generally once a woman gives birth, she is responsible for the feeding and care of the infant, a role designated because of her gender and ability to feed the child. Historically, wet nurses have also been employed to remove this duty from aristocrats, but this was not, as Leslie Tuttle explains, to free the woman from the domestic sphere. In Judeo-Christian societies where men are designated as the head of the household, women were frequently put into a subservient place; they were not equal with men. This does not mean that women did not strive, in subtle ways, to have a say in matters pertaining to their own lives, and in subjects that affected society in general. Ian Maclean's *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French literature, 1610-1652* has examined the status of women in mid seventeenth-century French society through many writings, from legal and medical treatises to different literatures. In considering ways in which feminist and anti-feminist viewpoints were expressed, he notes that: "the topics dealt with fall broadly into three classes: marital and societal freedoms; the right to be educated and to pursue learning [...] and finally the question of public office and Salic law" (53). In the last decade of the seventeenth century in France, although women were being restricted to the domestic sphere: "there was an increasing pressure on women [...] to retreat from the public sphere" (*Fairy Tales* 9). They sometimes needed to protect themselves "as they had been the most compromised in political conspiracies" (*Tender Geographies* 76):

so they sought ways to express their views, most often in the collective writing of the salon. The writers of the *contes* give a picture of women differentiated by age, familial relationships and sometimes by social status. The depiction of their distinct relationships, together with the different obligations that these familial links entail, demonstrates and critiques their condition. Women's relationships, in particular with their parents, are a key element. Very often, their mother's difficulty in conceiving, and the subsequent pregnancy, defines the mother / daughter dynamic, and also highlights one of the most significant markers of femininity, that of reproduction and procreation. Women's connections to their fathers form an integral part of the depiction of domestic life. Fathers ultimately decide the status and life of their daughter, particularly when they are of marriageable age. Their attitudes to their daughters' happiness show an entire range of emotions from a cruel indifference, through what might be deemed a wholesome respect and care for their offspring's future, to relationships which appear to indicate an unhealthy attachment to them. The father / daughter relationship is an important element because it reveals attitudes to the patriarchal society, but mothers, and stepmothers are also represented. Stereotypical depictions of malevolent stepmothers, such as that found in Perrault's *Cendrillon* give an immediate idea of their evilness and self-serving attitudes. Whether the story writers treated in this dissertation have the same view of them, or paint different aspects of step-parenting will also be studied, together with the heroines' relationships with their natural or step-siblings. Finally, how the tales reveal women as wives will form part of this study, and what this reveals about the *conteurs'* and *conteuses'* possible differing attitudes to this role because of their own gender will be analyzed.

Women used the fairy-tale genre more than men – writing approximately three times the tales considered in this dissertation – to examine and subtly critique the society in their particular

aristocratic domain.¹⁴ Although there were as many men as women writing in the first *vague* (*Fairy tales* 5-6), the women were “[prominent] ... as initiators and writers of fairy tales” (8). However, in addition to the women writers’ scrutiny of assumptions based on gender, the male writers also examine the roles and identities of men, and of women. All these authors question and challenge the accepted norms through the situations in which they place their characters. This chapter will consider which roles were established for women, as in the patriarchal society of seventeenth-century France, women could not experience as much freedom as the men with whom they interacted. Power was invested in a “pyramid of paternal authority” (Seifert, *Fairy Tales* 157), at the top of which was God, then the king, then fathers. The fairy tale writers often feature a male who either commands or prohibits something (*Fairy Tales* 158) – most frequently concerning the woman’s marriage – and the resultant tale shows how the woman reacts to this oppressive authority. As well as considering how male authoritarian figures affect women, I will investigate the representation of fairies. These female figures are often the enforcers of authority, and are frequently either painted as good, or as the embodiment of one malevolent characteristic. This enables the writer to show how such an all-consuming personality trait affects and sometimes dominates the character, and how power can adversely affect the subordinate person.

I will now briefly survey what critics have written about the portrayal of women in their differing relationships. The role of procreation and midwives is examined in detail in Holly Tucker’s *Pregnant Fictions*. She looks at the role of midwives and birth practices contemporaneous to the writers of the fairy stories and suggests that women writers, particularly d’Aulnoy, are showing through the birth rituals that women “affirm the power of the womb” (118). By demonstrating the difficulties of getting pregnant, that many women in the tales experience, and featuring the birth of daughters, the writers reflect the realities of Anne of

¹⁴ There are fifty tales authored by women and fifteen by men.

Austria's childlessness and explain the consequences if she had produced a female heir (97).

This presentation of both the medical practices, and historical events of the time, suggesting that the *conteuses* are using these facts as a way to challenge, and question society's rules, is illuminating and well argued. Tucker, however, concentrates, as many critics do, on the work of d'Aulnoy, with some references to L'Héritier and La Force. This chapter will consider these views and examine how other writers view women's reproduction, and if they too envisage this different role for women. The examination of women's place in society was not just the concern of a few female writers. I contend that there was a substantial movement against the patriarchal society and its subjugation of women.

Joan DeJean has traced the history and evolution of women's writing, throughout the seventeenth century. She examines in depth the role of what she calls "salon writers" and how women developed the taste for writing together, not just as a way of amusing themselves, but with the goal of publication (*Tender Geographies* 96-97). She goes on to consider the female writers at the end of the seventeenth century who moved from being purely salon writers to becoming part of 'the Republic of Letters'. In considering and listing these women, she includes d'Aulnoy, La Force, and L'Héritier. DeJean concludes that "these women were far more radical in their attack on marriage and the family plot" (128), and "they did not shy away from controversy, in their lives and in their work" (129). As Catherine Marin demonstrates, the *conteuses* knew each other and some were related to each other ("Une Lecture des contes de fées" 478). This relationship can be seen in the prefaces to their stories, where they acknowledge each other's work and remark on their use of the same sources. Moreover, Marin notes they shared the same philosophy of enjoyment and freedom (480-81), illustrating that the fairy tale had its infancy in salon society. In his recent study on the fairy tale, Jack Zipes considers

d'Aulnoy as the instigator of the spread of the popularity of the phenomenon, which continued into the subsequent century:

In d'Aulnoy's case, she inherited information that she wanted to share discretely with her conspecifics (salonnières, male and female readers and writers of her social class, and eventually readers in the other languages into which her tales were translated). Once prompted by d'Aulnoy, they all shared in re-creating tales about fairies that informed the narrative tradition in unusual, extraordinary ways that expanded the meaning of fairy tale so that it grew and became more encompassing in the eighteenth century. (*The Irresistible Fairy Tale* 39)

In expressing their ideas together, the women writers also considered and gave voice to their subordinate position in society, critiquing and suggesting through their stories ways in which life could be different. By the use of the *merveilleux*, they could let their characters enjoy freedoms in a fantastic setting. Male writers also engaged in these stories, and their view of women, and how their characters behave, provide an insight into their attitude to women from the standpoint of the dominant gender in early modern society.

Whereas DeJean's *Tender Geographies* explores the work of women writers throughout the century, Marina Warner looks in more detail at the work of the *conteuses*. In her book on fairy tales and their tellers, *From the Beast to the Blonde*, she explains both the reasons for writing these tales, and also what they can reveal about the women of the time:

These tales are wrapped in fantasy and unreality, which no doubt helped them entertain their audiences – in the courtly salon as well as at the village hearth – but they also serve the stories' greater purpose, to reveal possibilities, to map out

a different way and a new perception of love, marriage, women's skills, thus advocating a means of escaping imposed limits and prescribed destiny. (24)

Lewis Seifert argues that the genre had moved from the folk tales narrated by wet-nurses and peasants into the sphere of the aristocrat. The writers use models from heroic literature and also from Greek and Roman mythology as a basis for their stories, though, at times, they make radical changes to these stories.¹⁵ In examining how the writers provide challenges for their female characters, Seifert remarks: "it is striking to note that women of the *contes de fées* are more likely than men to be defined in opposition to their moral and / or physical antitheses. Thus, whereas heroes more often than not struggle with forces or beings totally unlike themselves, heroines are quite often pitted against a negative mirror image of themselves" (*Fairy Tales* 176).

This binary use of good versus evil allows the story-tellers to define and codify their characters, so that the reader knows from the description – beautiful / ugly etc. – whether the protagonist is malevolent or altruistic. These tales go beyond that, for even if they present good versus evil, they also depict beautiful personas that become evil, as well as portraying ugly people who have good characters and who are made beautiful. In looking at women in society, Seifert states that the role of women "in prescriptive writings [was] but one acceptable identity – that of wife and mother" (*Fairy Tales* 179), and the fairy tales examine and valorize this concept, looking at whether these expectations are valuable for women.

If one of the likelihoods for a married woman is the bearing of children, then an examination of the seventeenth-century laws and proscriptions will be useful. Leslie Tuttle's

¹⁵ For example, in using the myth of Psyche, d'Aulnoy replaces the beautiful Psyche with an ugly princess, Cupid with a snake (*Le Serpentin vert*).

recent work on pronatalism considers the legal and political changes introduced during the reign of Louis XIV, encouraging the production of large families. She scrutinizes the role of women in society, and perceives that the encouragement by the government to increase the population makes the cogent point that without women such a goal was impossible. In seventeenth century society women were valued as mothers and wives and their place in the home. Tuttle emphasizes that is where their domain was; it was not in the political or public arenas. Men were given money from the government for the production of a large family, bonuses for ten or twelve children were paid out (73), but it was women who carried and gave birth to these numerous infants: “one in five of the wives of dukes and peers could expect to give birth ten or more times in her reproductive life, [...] nearly always experiencing pregnancies in rapid succession” (75). Fertility is not confined to marriage, and so the *conteuses* also consider the problem of producing a child out of wedlock, and the reverse situation, the inability to conceive. As Holly Tucker shows, the fairy tales reflect these common social issues noting “the peasants’ ability to reproduce, and abundantly so” (*Pregnant Fictions* 81), comparing their fecundity to the barrenness of aristocrats, caused by their indolent and sedentary lives. Many would-be mothers go to extraordinary lengths, and make extravagant promises, in their quest to reproduce.

Pregnancy and Birth

Many fairy tales start with the desire to produce an heir and the *conteuses* particularly consider this biological drive in their narrations. Eleven of d’Aulnoy’s tales involve the difficulty of conceiving a child and the ensuing grief this causes. In nine of these the resultant child is a girl, an only child; there are only these two male births in d’Aulnoy’s stories. A further three of her tales concern a girl born into a family with older siblings. La Force tells of three girl’s births, one of which is into a family with other children. Eight of Murat’s tales involve the birth of a

daughter, six of which relate the birth of a girl after a considerable period of marriage, and one tells of the arrival of a boy. Neither L'Héritier nor d'Auneuil includes births. Of the *conteurs*, Choisy does not concern himself with pregnancy as such, but with the raising of a child. Mailly deals with pregnancy in a matter of fact way; it happens following marriage, but he does recount in two tales, *Blanche-Belle* and *Fortunio*, that the parents cannot have a much desired child. Préchac does not feature reproduction or its problems in his tales.

The question of what the gender of the offspring might be is also crucial. Under the legal principle of male primogeniture the delivery of a male heir was of great importance. This is forcefully shown in d'Aulnoy's tale *Fortunée*, when the pregnant Queen is shut up in a tower, having had six daughters, and the narrator wryly comments: "et comme si elle eût été la maîtresse d'avoir un garçon, son mari et son beau-père lui dirent qu'ils la poignarderaient, à moins qu'elle ne leur donnât un héritier" (I: 513). Most often, though, the storytellers, and in particular d'Aulnoy, choose to write about a baby girl. By placing her in a magical environment, they are permitted to examine her role in society, and to select what gifts and abilities are necessary for her to function in her milieu. Very often the baby is beautiful, and is given great gifts by the fairies who come to her naming ceremony or baptism. This is also the time when she is cursed, and must be shut away from the world until she reaches marriageable age. The detention may be seen as a metaphor for protecting the child, and depending on how biddable she is, she is able to submit to the parents' will or she rebels. When she reaches puberty, the problem of her fertility, in particular her ability to become pregnant out of wedlock also becomes an issue for her parent(s). They take measures to avoid this, but are not always successful in their attempts. In *L'Adroite Princesse*, the princesses are locked up in a tower, and given distaffs that will break if they lose their virginity, Persinette is put into a high tower, and becomes pregnant,

having admitted the prince (335), and she gives birth to twins. Tucker points out that:

“Persinette’s sequestration is motivated, then, by the fairy’s interest in preventing her charge in following in the footsteps of the mother – that is, to prevent her from marrying and bearing children” (*Pregnant Fictions* 106). When her planning goes so badly wrong, she takes revenge and Persinette is exiled, and the prince blinded. Livorette (*Le Dauphin*) also has a son, and even though these two princesses, Persinette and Livorette, have gone through a ‘marriage ceremony’ with the fathers of their children, they are punished because they have not gained the permission of those in authority over them. They both finally marry the fathers of their children after many tribulations. In these tales, the *conteuses* are only recounting the realities of their time, as Tuttle recounts:

For example royal laws stretched the period of legal minority, forcing French young people to obtain parental approval for marriage until a woman reached age twenty-five, and a man age thirty. Young adults who dared to make marital vows without parental permission risked being denied their natal family’s money and prestige. If a man or a woman married an underage spouse without the consent of the spouse’s parents, he or she risked prosecution for rapt, or criminal seduction, a capital offense. (15)

Even if the story tellers reflect the reality of their epoch, this is not to say that they approved of this law. In their tales whilst the pregnancies result in punishment, the mothers are shown to love their children, and after many years enter into a sanctioned marriage with their fathers. Marcelle Welch cogently argues that two of the *conteuses*, Murat and d’Aulnoy, try to correct the idea that women should be kept in a state of moral servitude, and that adulthood can only be reached, sexual desire satisfied, or acknowledged by “l’ordre patriarcal [qui] sanctionne

la consommation du désir sexuel de la jeune fille dans le mariage” (“Rebellion et resignation” 138). In these tales, sexual desire is clearly shown, and the young women who become pregnant develop a good relationship with their lovers. Marriage becomes the societal ratification by which the errant daughter is permitted to re-enter into the good graces of her parents, and in doing so can provide them with an heir. The conclusion must be that these marriages are devices used by the *conteuses* enabling them to suggest that a woman can form a relationship with a man, which is durable and satisfies her emotional needs, without the intervention of her parents.

The difficulty in getting pregnant and the heartache this causes to both parents is a feature of many tales, reflecting the reality of the need to produce an heir. Once the long-awaited pregnancy happens, frequently the pregnant Queen has cravings, causing her to seek out the desired food. Two stories by d’Aulnoy, *La Biche au bois* and *Chatte Blanche*, and La Force’s *Persinette* use this trope in slightly differing ways. The Queen in *La Biche au bois* desires a child, and in her quest is taken to the fairies’ garden, where the apricots and cherries are huge and have such an exquisite taste that: “après que la reine en eut mangé, elle ne voulut de sa vie en manger d’autres” (II: 116). The Queen then slights the fairy Ecrévisse who supported her in her desire to have a child – by not inviting her to the her daughter’s naming ceremony– and as a result the princess is incarcerated in a palace without windows or doors to protect her from the fairy’s curse. This mother’s enjoyment of the fruit seems to be natural, and although the fruit in the garden is exceptional in itself, the behavior of the Queen is not the cause of the curse; that is caused by her not remembering the fairy’s help. In *Chatte Blanche* and *Persinette*, however, the punishment of the daughters is caused by the Queens’ avidity. D’Aulnoy likens the cure of fruit

in *Chatte Blanche*, to the removal of a heavy and restricting dress.¹⁶ Hannon comments: “Metaphorically liberated from social protocol as if from the restrictions of an elaborate garment, the Queen gives free reign to her sensuality” (*Fabulous Identities* 84). Certainly the satisfaction of her overwhelming desires liberates her, and the comparison to clothing removal underlines the oppression that her illness has caused her.

Her daughter, the princess who becomes the white cat, is punished and shape-shifted because she manages to exert her own free will and escape the enclosed life planned for her by the fairies. It is clear from the *moralité* at the end of *Chatte Blanche* that d’Aulnoy regards the behavior of the mother as the cause of her daughter’s misfortunes: “Pour goûter de funestes fruits / Au pouvoir d’une fée elle la sacrifie” (II: 240). However, as Seifert remarks, in this *morale*, or concluding remarks, by d’Aulnoy, “the mother-daughter bond resurfaces as a conflict that is downplayed by the plot itself” (*Fairy Tales* 185).¹⁷ These pregnant women make promises to the fairies, who grant them the desired fruit, and then they renege on their promises, but their daughters’ stories are the central core of each tale; their metamorphoses will be examined in a subsequent chapter.

Persinette gives a slightly different interpretation of this trope in La Force’s tale, for instead of fruit, the Queen consort craves parsley. The exoticism of this herb is underlined by the narrator: “en ce temps-là, le persil était très rare en ces contrées; la fée en avait fait apporter des Indes, et on n’eût su trouver dans tout le pays que dans son jardin” (332). In using this as a reason for desiring it, La Force differs from Basile’s source story, in which the parsley is just an herb grown by an ogress, who only misses it because she was going to make a sauce with it. The

¹⁶ “Il lui sembla qu’on lui ôtait une robe fort pesante et fort dure, dont elle se sentait comme accablée, et qu’il avait des endroits où elle tenait davantage” (II: 220).

¹⁷ Seifert does not include *Persinette* in the works that he considers in his study.

reason for the Queen desiring such a rarity might suggest that she wants to have experiences which are beyond the norm; her penchant is so strong that it makes her ill, to the point where she is “méconnaissable” (331), in both mind and body, to her husband. When she does get the parsley she wants, she consumes it “avec avidité” (331).¹⁸ *Persinette* also differs from d’Aulnoy’s tales for not only does the King steal the desired food, but it is he who promises to give the baby to the fairy. In this way the King is complicit in his wife’s desires, and in the fate of his daughter.

The King, in order to assuage his unhappy wife’s desires, enters the fairy’s garden by stealth and steals the parsley from the fairy. His actions could be interpreted as those of a concerned husband, with a pregnant wife, seeking to assist her, but it is theft. The text hints at the desperation in the relationship, as he attempts to satisfy his wife. In the ‘fruit’ stories both Seifert and Tucker see a parallel to Eve and the fruit in the longing for particular food, but although the Queen’s desire for the fruit is as strong as Eve’s seduction, one could argue that Eve wants the fruit for the authority that it will give her. By including the King in *Persinette* in the obtaining of the craved food, La Force echoes Eve’s involvement of Adam in taking what was forbidden. It is clear, however, that in this tale, La Force treats the pregnant mother in the same way as d’Aulnoy does, and equally regards her desires as foolish.¹⁹

Not only do the Queen’s actions affect her husband, they also have a bearing on her daughter’s life. The removal of the child from her parents, her enclosure in the tower, and her upbringing away from the commerce of the world, could also indicate that this is a punishment

¹⁸ The herb is associated with conception and childbirth in folklore. Medicinally it was used for stimulating the uterus, for menstrual cramps and to induce a miscarriage, or to dry up lactation. (See *The Dictionary of Plant Lore* 285-86). Clearly La Force could be drawing on these allusions, but equally she may have used parsley because Basile’s original story did so.

¹⁹ D’Aulnoy characterizes the queen’s craving as “cette folle envie” (II: 240).

for the child because her mother was not satisfied with what she had. This fairy-tale type of mothers who crave fruit is taken to extremes in these tales, and the consequences for a mother's desires can be catastrophic for her daughter.²⁰ Tucker analyses the use of the maternal cravings in the *Biche au bois* and *Persinette* tales, and theorizes "not only is the daughter's body imprinted (both literally and figuratively) with the food desired, once born she is returned to a womb-like existence, where she is punished for the mother's transgressions" (*Pregnant Fictions* 99). This removal from the world, she suggests, is to prevent the princess from copying her mother's faults, by marrying and becoming pregnant (*Pregnant Fictions* 106). In addition to *Persinette*'s sequestration, Tucker argues that the text indicates that the mother's consumption of the herb has caused her daughter to be born with a birthmark, which only the fairy can help remove (105). This interpretation, while borne out by her analysis of the tale, could also be based on a close reading of the original tale by Basile in which the baby born to the Queen has a parsley-shaped birthmark on her breast.²¹ She is marked by her mother's desires, which are therefore shown to be excessive. Female bodies are clearly necessary for the production of a child, but in the male-centered construction of society they cannot be allowed to dominate. Any excesses in physical desire, whether caused by pregnancy or by manifestations of sexuality, are frequently punished in the tales and have consequences for those with whom the woman has contact. It is noteworthy that it is two women authors who use this theme; as Tucker explains, by eating large amounts of fruit, mothers increase their chances of having a girl (*Pregnant Fiction* 85). Male authors, apart from Perrault, do not consider pregnancies in their tales, and apart from

²⁰ These tales *Persinette* and *Chatte Blanche* in the Aarne-Thompson classification are type 310. See Mainil *Le Rire des fées* 178. *Chatte Blanche* is also classified as type 402, because of the metamorphosis of the cat. Robert *Les Contes de fées* 19, 139. *Chatte Blanche* has the two classifications as it is a "double récit initiatique (Mainil *Le Rire des fées* 177) The Aarne-Thompson classification identifies patterns and tropes in folk tales.

²¹ Jo Eldridge Carney explains how the writers of seventeenth-century fairy tales reworked source tales into stories which reflected their own culture. She also examines non-fictional queens, and demonstrates how their lives are reflected in the events that befall their fictional counterparts. She argues that a queen is a central character in the fairy-tale world and not just an adjunct to a king.

Choisy their explorations of sexuality concentrate on either transgressive elements (as in cross-dressing) or their male character's loves and desires.

Breast Feeding and Nourrices: Maternal Love

If one aspect of the reality of marriage that features in the tales is pregnancy, and the desire to reproduce, another aspect is the nurturing of the baby, once it is born. Normally the parents pay wet-nurses to provide milk for the baby. As Tuttle recounts, "early modern Europeans believed that sexual activity when a woman was nursing posed dangers for the infant. Medical texts argued that sex drew blood away from the breasts, diminishing the quality of the lactating woman's milk" (134). Therefore nurses were hired, which enabled the mother to resume sexual relationships, and thereby provide the necessary fidelity demanded by the Church. D'Aulnoy has two stories in which mothers breastfeed their own child, which was very unusual for aristocrats at this point in the seventeenth century. In *La Grenouille Bienfaisante* the Queen has to feed Moufette, as she is alone, hidden away from the world. It is possible to consider that her isolation, and the fate inflicted on her and her daughter, are the result of her inability to behave in a manner which would protect her child. Having been sent away from court for protection from the war in the kingdom, this Queen gets bored, and amuses herself by having a carriage built and going hunting "comme une seconde Diane" (II: 84). On one of her high-speed rides, she realizes she has acted imprudently, that "ce cher enfant que je porte dans mon sein va être aussi bien que moi la victime de mon imprudence" (II: 85). She and the reader interpret her actions as reckless; they lead to imprisonment by the fairy – who like her captive is bored by being alone – and hopes the Queen will amuse her (II: 86). One interpretation for the underlying reason for the incarceration of the Queen, which causes her to assume full care of her child, is that she took risks while pregnant. On the other hand, the child becomes a wonderful princess,

which shows that the Queen was an excellent mother, and raised a child on her own who is able to take her place in the world. This therefore validates the role of mothers in their children's development.

In contrast to this Queen, who has no choice but to feed her baby herself, in *La Princesse Carpillon* the Queen elects to breastfeed her son. If Tuttle's remarks are applied to this relationship, then this expression of maternal love could also be read as a rejection of her husband. This king, however, is older, and his desire to replace his unsuitable heir with his newborn son can be read as permissive of his wife's desire to nurse and bond with the infant. Whether the Queen would have decided to feed the child if it were a girl is a valid consideration. She chooses to nurse him because he is the heir apparent, and therefore needs more special attention than a girl. Élisabeth Badinter in her study of maternal love in France observes "la mère garde ses trésors de tendresse et de fierté pour son aîné, hériter exclusif du patrimoine et du titre quand ses parents sont nobles" (80). Although the King has an older son from a previous marriage this is this Queen's first child, so it is not surprising that she is devoted to him. In addition, the king intends to let this second child inherit the kingdom rather than his first-born son, which reinforces this interpretation. Even the prince, her stepson, recognizes that the bond created by this breastfeeding mother and her child makes his plot to remove the baby more difficult: "car la vigilance d'une mère est plus grande que celle d'une nourrice, et il est bien plus aisé de tromper l'une que l'autre" (II: 28). Critics generally consider the Queen as a loving mother, as Anne Defrance succinctly illustrates:

Chose fort rare qu'une reine allaitant son bébé. Le narrateur en attribue le désir à l'amour maternel. Cela laisse par conséquent supposer que l'usage d'une nourrice relève d'une déficience non pas fonctionnelle (l'absence de lait) ni sociale

(l'obéissance à la coutume en vigueur dans les familles nobles), mais sentimentale. De surcroît l'insuffisante protection apportée par la nourrice aux enfants passe pour un fait acquis. (*Les Contes de fée* 193)

However, if one of the reasons that the Queen chooses to nurse her child is to protect him, then she does not succeed. The baby is removed by her jealous stepson, and replaced by a cat that bites her breast when she tries to feed it, and she dies of the poison caused by the bite. The real bond created by the breastfeeding underlines the fact that this is a worthy, loving, mother, and emphasizes the grief and pain that the King suffers, losing both his son and his wife. Breastfeeding also occurs in a slightly earlier tale by Perrault, *Grisélidis* (1691). A consideration of this may suggest d'Aulnoy's attitude to this practice. Perrault's story is of a queen, who was formerly a shepherdess. As such, from a pastoral background, and therefore not from the nobility, breastfeeding would have been considered the norm, the only way of ensuring the survival of a child. In addition, this Queen feels that looking after her baby in this way completes her as a mother.

Elle voulut la nourrir: elle-même

“Ah! dit-elle, comment m'exempter de l'emploi

Que ses cris demandent de moi

Sans une ingratitude extrême?

Par un motif de nature ennemi

Pourrais-je bien vouloir de mon enfant que j'aime

N'être la mère qu'à demi? ” (127)²²

²² Tony Gheeraert in his edition of this conte in *Perrault, Fénelon, Mailly, Préchac, Choisy et anonymes. Contes merveilleux*. Bibliothèque des génies et des fées 4. (Paris: Champion, 2005) gives this footnote to the word “nourrir”. “Nourrir signifie aussi donner à téter à un enfant, l'élever jusqu'à un certain âge. Une bonne mère doit

In spite of her strong maternal love, this mother suffers because her husband is jealous of the love she shows to their daughter, and removes the baby from her care. The root of his jealousy may well be that his sexual urges are not satisfied, and he wishes to be the sole object of his wife's love. Grisélidis is held up as an example of patient suffering, continuing to love, despite her husband's cruelty. Both Perrault and d'Aulnoy present these women as good, loving mothers; so why these two women are deprived of the opportunity to fulfill this role is a legitimate question. For Perrault, the emphasis is on the patient suffering of his heroine. D'Aulnoy stresses the ability of others to fill the mother's role, and shows that maternal love is not limited to a birth mother, but can be provided, and felt by others.

The death of the mother in childbirth, a reality of the time, allows d'Aulnoy to feature two surrogate mothers in *La Princesse Carpillon*.²³ After the removal of the baby from his mother, he is placed in an eagle's nest, and cared for by the bird, which keeps him warm and feeds him.²⁴ The eagle is such an effective substitute mother, that "elle le nourrit si bien que la reine sa mère n'aurait su le nourrir mieux" (II: 31). Defrance comments that: "le narrateur insiste sur la supériorité de la nourrice-animal sur la nourrice humaine, n'hésitant pas à la trouver meilleure que la reine, mère de l'enfant" (192). The love and excellent skills of this noble bird are further emphasized by additions to her own family. After four years of carefully providing for the prince, when she has two new eaglets to care for, "sa tendresse était encore plus grande pour le jeune prince, parce qu'elle le voyait depuis plus longtemps" (II: 33). A mother's love increases as she spends time with her offspring, and this imperial bird is an excellent surrogate for the young prince and a model for humans.

elle-même nourrir son enfant" écrit Furetière. Par ce choix de l'allaitement, Grisélidis témoigne encore de la piété qui la caractérise et qui explique sa grande patience" (127 n1).

²³ For statistics on maternal mortality see Tuttle (131).

²⁴ The care given to this young prince by the eagle alludes to the legend of Romulus and Remus, and their lupine upbringing.

Once the prince is returned to civilization, another maternal figure takes care of him and provides him with the emotional nurturing he needs, promising: “Je l’élèverai dans son enfance et je le chérirai comme mon propre fils” (II: 40). The child is given a family in which all the members contribute to his raising, for not only does he receive a mother’s care, but also wisdom from a father, in addition to the companionship of two sisters. They all do a flawless job of raising a prince who can take his place in society. The pastoral aspect of this familial setting has been noted by Raymonde Robert (116) and Seifert and Stanton (*Enchanted Eloquence* 22) who all see it as a foil for the rich aristocratic milieu described. Seifert also considers the bucolic, natural settings of stories as indicative of good upbringing (*Fairy Tales* 186). The simple life, away from court, ensures that this prince learns simple values that are set apart from his regal status. D’Aulnoy is advocating a natural, unfettered childhood in which a child is given the best of starts. This commences with the bond of a loving birth mother, it is continued by the eagle, who gives simple protection and care, and ends with the loving care of a family, whose simple wisdom and love teach him how to behave as a cultivated man. The author favors the nurturing of regal children away from court, and in this and other stories (*Le Prince Marcassin; La Grenouille Bienfaisante*); she seems to suggest that a simple, Arcadian life provides for a good upbringing. Her reasons for this attitude are revealed by her more explicit criticism of the fawning attitudes and currying of favor by courtiers.²⁵ Such flattery gives a royal person a false sense of worth, and he, rarely she, becomes egotistical and proud. Children benefit from the pastoral life, where nature and simplicity and the attention of one or two parents enable the baby to grow into a prince or princess who is not a flawed individual.

²⁵ Le Prince Marcassin is taught this lesson by his mother when she criticizes his behavior, learning that because of his position, subordinates want to gain advantage, and so are not true friends (II: 474). As Bienfaisante explains to the queen, the monsters in the lake of quicksilver have been closely associated with court life: “les uns sur le trône, les autres dans la confiance de leurs souverains, il y a même des maîtresses de quelques rois, qui ont coûté bien du sang à l’État” (II:88-89)

Although Perrault and d'Aulnoy explore the theme of maternal love and care in these tales, more usually the new-born female child is given to the care of the fairies. This influence that “good” fairies play in the role of their charges is significant. They advise parents on the protection of their child. Sometimes they remove the child and raise him / her themselves, in an attempt to ward off the curse uttered at the naming ceremony. Sometimes a nurse maid in a family stays with the female child until she is married and acts as an advisor and companion to the young princess. In La Force's *Vert et Bleu* the fairy hides her daughter on a cloud with her nursemaid and four princesses the same age as herself, and provides her with a veil of illusion so that she cannot be seen if she wants to amuse herself on earth. Generally nursemaids are dedicated to their charges, and serve them with love and devotion, treating them as if they were their own children. These magical beings make sure that the young princess has all that she needs, but they frequently advise her parents to shut her away for her protection.²⁶ The parents of Princesse Rosette, who are warned by the fairies that she will cause the deaths of her older brothers, sequester her to safeguard them.

The fairies provide amusement and training in female skills to those who are given into their care. As with the eagle that provides food and shelter, the new-born must have the basic necessities for survival. In *La Princesse Printanière*, the choice of a wet nurse is very important to the royal couple; who want their much desired child to have an excellent start in life, particularly as all their other offspring have died in infancy. D'Aulnoy underlines the realities of life for aristocratic mothers, the necessity for an heir and raises the specter of infant mortality. The king and queen are angry that their children die in infancy, particularly as “ils avaient des

²⁶ Princess Printanière, Désirée (*Biche au Bois*), Chatte blanche, Peine perdue, and Persinette are all shut up in towers when very young to protect them from the curse of malevolent fairies. Philonice (*Tyrannie des fées détruite*) and Heureuse Peine are both locked away at the age of 12 years old, presumably before puberty, to prevent their being able to act on their burgeoning sexuality.

biens de reste, il ne leur manquait que des enfants” (I: 247). The subtly ironic treatment of this issue prevents it from becoming too grim.

Instead, d’Aulnoy’s gaze moves to practical issues, and the joy of having a much wanted child. After five years of infertility, the Queen spends her pregnancy planning everything “pour conserver la vie à la petite creature qu’elle devait avoir” (I: 247). One of her most important decisions is the selection of a wet nurse to provide the child with milk. Several possible surrogates come to be considered for the job, one of whom is the epitome of ugliness and deformity, and is nursing “un petit magot de singe” (I: 248). Amy Vanderlyn DeGraff in her psychological analysis of the tales observes that this female “represents a degraded form of life closely related to the subhuman and the purely material” (18). DeGraff analyses the physical description of the fairy and notes that her hump, which forces her to look down, is the “perfect symbol of spiritual deformity” since she is “unable to stand erect and face the heavens”, and that “clearly the creature’s blackness is also meant to imply that she is of diabolical nature (Satan is also known as the Prince of Darkness)” (19). It may be that d’Aulnoy meant to give a personification of evil to this nursemaid; but there is no doubting her ugliness, and her feral, non-human aspect, underlined by her nursing an ugly monkey. She is summarily rejected by the Queen. All the other nursemaids are healthy, and able to do the job: they are admired for “leur teint frais, leurs belles dents et leur sein rempli de bon lait” (1: 248). When the queen selects her surrogate, the first two are killed; one by a snake bite, another by a turtle dropped on her head by an eagle, and the third is blinded in one eye by a thorny branch. These events are caused by the rejected nurse. DeFrance, in a psychological interpretation to the fate of these three nursemaids, remarks:

Dans la symbolique freudienne, pied, tête et œil correspondent au sexe de l'homme. La valeur symbolique des trois agressions est claire:

1. La piqûre au pied par un serpent est symbolique de l'acte sexuel.
2. La tête cassée est symbole de castration.
3. L'œil crevé par une épine est symbole de l'acte sexuel suivi de castration.

(*Les Contes de fées* 191)

This may be a valid interpretation of the symbolism of the attacks on these women, but a logical point is to ask who fears castration. If Defrance is correct, rather than a direct assault on the women, who are mothers themselves, and thus have had sexual relations, the attacks are really acts of vengeance on the king who had played a joke on the ugly fairy, putting “du soufre dans son potage” (I: 249).²⁷ There is no evidence in the story that the wet nurses have damaged their husbands or sexual partners, physically or otherwise, but Defrance’s interpretation indicates the real reason for the hatred and desire for vengeance; the rejected fairy desires the king. Thus this is a symbolic castration of the fairy, who feels degraded and marginalized by her treatment. This interpretation is also borne out by Tucker’s analysis of the fairy’s descent down the chimney to enter the meeting held by the monarchs with their advisors. She explains: “The witch-fairy’s penetration of the enclosed family space through the chimney is not unlike that of the child through the birth canal. Symbolically, then, the fairy and her “surrogate” child are united, and the child’s fate will suffer for it” (*Pregnant Fictions* 68). The fairy’s acts therefore have consequences not only for the healthy nurses but also for the child. The fairy inserts herself into the intimacy of this family, and revenges herself on them, and the parents can only protect their daughter by shutting her away in darkness for twenty years, surrounded by women. Her re-

²⁷ Sulfur was used as a punishment for wickedness in the Bible, from which I infer that the king recognized the fairy’s innate wickedness. (see Gen. 19.24, Ps. 10.7, Luke 17.29).

admittance into the real world will come when she marries the man her parents choose for her. Her boredom and frustration caused by the life she has been forced to live make her rebel and run off with the ambassador; in spite of her parents' best efforts to protect their child, the girl's desire to be free causes the breaking of the protection, just before the allotted time is up. This is a leitmotif in many of the tales, and reflects the societal sequestration and lack of freedom that young women endured. There is a certain irony in the curse placed on the child that forces her isolation from the world, in an attempt to save her. The fairy's curse is in fact fulfilled, since such an incarceration could be interpreted as a misfortune. Even allowing for this more benign interpretation of the parents' actions, the bad fairy triumphs, because the girl rebels.

Whereas d'Aulnoy scrutinizes the lust that affects the provision of a nurse, Préchac's *La Reine des Fées* explores the financial realities of the servant / queen dynamic. This nursemaid is a companion and advisor to her adult charge; she acts for her own benefit, and not for her mistress. King Guillemot has arranged his marriage to Urraca, and all the ceremonies have taken place, with the ambassador as his proxy. Urraca is expected to travel to his country, but her pride and new status as queen cause her to dissent, and refuse. Her nurse encourages her refusal to acquiesce to the King's demand, and this state of affairs goes on for more than a year. The nursemaid is categorized as "méchante" (732), and the narrator makes it clear that the motivation for her intervention is greed. She has received "aucun présent" (732) from the king. Since the count of Urgel, Urraca's rejected suitor, "continuait toujours à accabler la nourrice de présents" (732) he expects to be successful in his quest to gain access to the princess, because of "l'avarice de l'artificieuse nourrice" (732). Having given the nursemaid gold which makes her "éblouie par un si riche présent" (733), this woman allows him to hoodwink her mistress, pretending that he is the King in disguise, who has come to meet his bride. As a result, Urraca becomes pregnant, and

has a baby girl. Queen Urraca decides to feed her baby herself, because: “[elle] craint [gnait] que si elle suçait le lait d’une nourrice ordinaire, elle ne prît aussi les mauvaises inclinations qu’elle pourrait avoir” (734). This queen is still far from humility; she believes that her baby will be adversely affected by the milk of a less highly-ranked woman than herself. Her decision might appear reasonable, since she has directly witnessed how her own nursemaid has behaved, but it also indicates that her experiences have not taught her to be unassuming. She believes that her rank places her above other women and she acts to realize what she wants. The narrator recounts that her sole reason for marrying was because she learnt from the stars –she is an accomplished astrologer – that she would give birth to “une princesse toute parfaite” (732). Her only interest is her child, and although she is proved innocent in the matter of her unfaithfulness, the shame of her experience makes her retire from court, to raise her daughter with the help of a fairy. When her daughter is taken away, she dies. In this depiction of obsessive motherhood, together with its portrait of a companion who does not protect, but betrays her mistress for her own ends, Préchac describes women who have strong desires and act to obtain what they want; they are not altruistic, but self-serving.

Nurses had a great influence on the child, since they were with her from birth and acted as surrogate parents, looking after and advising their charge until she was given into the care of a husband. The child’s life can be impacted either by the faults of their human nurses or by malign influences from a parent’s past. Thus by exploring the maternal bond, either by showing what good mothers can do, or by giving examples of the cupidity of these women, the story tellers indicate how they envisage the role of mothers in a child’s upbringing. They scrutinize this facet of a woman’s life further by placing supernatural beings, fairies, in this job, so that they may explore in greater depth the influences of those who might raise a child.

Fairies: Benign or Malign Substitutes for a Mother

The marvelous creatures that inhabit the tales' world have an impact on the fate of the newborn, particularly when they are malevolent. Human nurses are portrayed as fallible, but "bad" fairies epitomize the worse aspects of female nature. Fairies are frequently at the naming ceremony of the new-born child, endowing her with gifts, as Jack Zipes points out:

Fairies do more than attend the birth scene; they also orchestrate every stage of reproduction. They predict conception and, if angry, cast spells of infertility. They determine the circumstances and outcome of pregnancy by providing – or withholding – aid to the mother-to-be. Following labor, they attend to the needs of the newborn and dictate the child's path in life through their gifts, beneficent or malevolent. And, in true fairy-tale fashion, woe to those who forget or refuse to offer adequate compensation to the fairies' contributions to these rites of child birth. (*Irresistible Fairy Tale* 18)

Rather than the fairies directing the child's path through life, it would appear that they endow the child with gifts that enhance its existing goodness. In addition they frequently have to mitigate the wrongdoings of their sister fairies. For when a pact is made with the fairies, humans must abide by its terms, since as the fairy in *Chatte Blanche* points out, if "vous avez irrité mes sœurs, elles ont autant de pouvoir que moi et rarement nous agissons les unes contre les autres" (II: 225). If a curse is laid on a baby, fairies cannot undo it, but usually they are able to temper its effects. They might try to persuade their irate sister of the need to forgive the erroneous human who has unwittingly insulted them. In *La Biche au bois* the other fairies, fearing the *fée de la Fontaine's* anger, flatter her in an attempt to soften her reaction: "Ma chère sœur, lui disaient-elles, que Votre Altesse ne soit point fâchée contre une reine qui n'a jamais eu dessein de vous

déplaire, quittez de grâce cette figure d'écrevisse, faites que nous vous voyions avec tous vos charmes" (II: 119). This compliment has the desired effect, and the fairy softens the punishment she was going to give. The fairies, caricatures of their human equivalents, reflect their enjoyment of compliments, the sense of their own stature in society, and their worth.

Although some fairies can be persuaded that their reactions are excessive, and temper the punishment, others are plainly menacing, and monstrous. Fairy Lionne (*La Grenouille Bienfaisante*) first appears as a giant to terrify the Queen. When offered money and even half a kingdom to set her captive free, Lionne retorts: "je suis suffisamment riche, il m'ennuyait depuis quelque temps d'être seule, tu as de l'esprit, peut-être que tu me divertiras" (II: 86). D'Aulnoy, as Jasmin points out, always respects the *bienséances*, but she adds that there is "une veine de cruauté" (650) running throughout her work, that is most frequently embodied in females, and often in malevolent fairies. Lionne, like other cruel fairies, sets the hapless Queen tasks; the first to make "un pâté de mouches" (II: 87). Knowing that in the grotto where they are such a task will be essentially impossible, Lionne is surprised when the Queen cooks one.²⁸ This is done with the support of Grenouille Bienfaisante. However, such a fulfillment of her task does not make Lionne any less disagreeable. Her next demand is a bouquet of the rarest flowers, which the Queen gets with the aid of a bat (II: 91-92). Lionne is again astonished that her tasks have been completed; simply using the trope of the unreasonable demand. A further consideration is why she desired these things. It could be argued that her selection of food, made of flies, is there to emphasize that she is an animal. However, the choice of a pastry (no matter that it is filled with flies) and flowers, might indicate that she is desirous of a world that is richer and more sophisticated; she wants to be pampered, and have elaborate dishes, and ornamentation. It is

²⁸ Furetière notes for "paste": pièce de four faite de viande cuite hachée, ou lardée, et enfermée avec plusieurs beautilles ou assaisonnemens dans de la pâte (III sig. G2^f).

possible that she asks the Queen to provide these because she wants to attain a lifestyle which has regal overtones.

A more credible assertion, in view of her character, would be that the tasks she sets the Queen are impossible to achieve; they could not be completed without Grenouille's intervention. The motivation behind these requests is one of cruelty; her reaction to the Queen's protest about making the pastry is "impitoyable" (II: 88), and she threatens to beat her captive if she does not get the flowers (II: 91). As well as assigning what can be regarded as domestic or home-making duties, Lionne also shows a savage aspect to her personality when the Queen gives birth. The narrator explains: "la reine, avec bien de la peine obtint permission de la fée Lionne de la nourrir; car elle avait grande envie de la manger, tant elle était féroce et barbare" (II: 94). This fairy seems to exhibit all the animal nature that her name suggests, living to satisfy basic needs, but without the higher emotions that humanity would give her. It is Moufette's charms which tame her a little; she is sufficiently "apprivoisée" (II: 95) to permit the Queen and princess to go hunting. Her motivation is in no way altruistic; her captives may enjoy the fresh air and sunlight that release from their underground prison gives them, but they are freed on condition that they give Lionne all they catch in the hunt. Lionne's cruelty and savage nature are the antithesis of the sweet nature of the child and her mother.

Her cruel treatment may also be seen as a punishment for the Queen who did not wish to stay in the castle provided for her by her husband. Thus the life that Lionne forces her to live might be seen as a condemnation of her inability to settle into domesticity, and Lionne represents the repressive element of society that wished to confine women. To rebut this belief, the narrator reveals that it is the Queen's isolation, her separation from her husband, and the wilderness in which she finds herself (II: 83-84) that cause her restlessness. D'Aulnoy further underlines that

she is not condemning the Queen, first by the words that Grenouille says to the king, when instructing him that he must rescue her – “elle a tant de mérite” (II: 98) – and by the *moralité* in which she notes the Queen was “au milieu des horreurs d’un infernal séjour”, and rescued from “la Lionne cruelle” (II: 112). The queen’s removal from her husband’s side, her ability to endure her suffering, as well as the love that the spouses show to each other are the most important elements in this tale.

Fairy Magotine appears in *Le Serpentin vert*; the Queen forgot to invite her to the naming-ceremony feast, and has no gift for her. Magotine refuses the gifts that are hastily got for her, as she states “je venais seulement pour voir si vous aviez pensé à moi, vous m’avez fort négligée” (I: 632), and so curses one of the twins: “d’être parfaite en laideur” (I: 632). In her passage to adulthood, Laideronnette is imprisoned by the fairy, and given three tasks: to wear tight iron shoes, to spin cobwebs, and then to make nets from the thread she spun. This pattern of three tasks recalls the tasks given to Gracieuse by Grognon, and is a trope in fairy tales.²⁹ The number could allude to the three temptations of Christ, and suggests a struggle against, and overcoming, evil (Luke 4.1-13). In La Force’s story, *Plus Belle que Fée*, the heroine similarly has three tasks. The first two are: to clean the cave into which she is placed of spiders’ webs, and to fetch the water of immortality from a high mountain, which can be regarded as domestic chores. The task of obtaining the water is further complicated by the fact that Plus Belle que fée is to fly to the summit of the mountain (again an allusion to Christ and the pinnacle of the temple, Matt. 4.5), and is given wax and feathers, to make the wings, the hope being that “elle se perdît comme un autre Icare” (316). Her third task is to catch a doe with silver hooves. Although this doe is a fairy queen who has been metamorphosed, she can only be freed from her

²⁹ The tasks given to Gracieuse will be further examined in the following part of the chapter: “Step-parents and Mothers-in-law”.

enchantment by a beautiful girl chasing her for ten days. Those who have tried have never been heard of again, and the task is seen to lead to “une perte assurée” (323). The reason for Plus Belle que Fée’s tasks is quite clearly expressed: “il n’y eut rien que [les feés] ne pensassent pour se venger de l’orgueil de son nom, et pour détruire une beauté qui leur causait tant de jalousie” (309). Whatever the reason for their punishments, the tasks that Laideronnette, Gracieuse, and Plus Belle que Fée are given are difficult and repetitive, and of impossible scale.

Laideronnette receives a further punishment for her curiosity, once she has declared her love to Serpentin Vert, and asked his forgiveness. She is sent to get the water of discretion in a broken pitcher, with the millstone tied round her neck. Patricia Hannon notes: “the aggressive dimension involved in domestic oppression cannot be more forcefully rendered. Symbolizing the futility of the never accomplished, always renewed household task, the iron shoes, millstone and pierced jug recreate the domestic ‘prisons’ imagined by the century’s prescriptive literature on women” (*Fabulous Identities* 113). This conclusion by Hannon is equally applicable to the other two tales, where the excessive chores would be impossible without a fairy’s help to complete them. Laideronnette asks for, and obtains, the fairy Protectrice’s support, but with a stark reminder that all this is “le juste paiement de votre fatale curiosité, ne vous plaignez qu’à vous-même de l’état où Magotine vous réduit” (I: 656). Fairies might want to aid their tormented protégées, but that does not stop them from being direct, and truthful, pointing out the mistakes that the young women make, particularly when the consequences of their actions affect others.

As well as gaining the support of fairies when tasks are given them, princesses get aid from others. Fairy Tigrine in *La Princesse Aimonette* is described as “malicieuse et implacable quand on s’opposait à ses volontés” (852). Her wish is to marry Lohier, Aimonette’s lover. Aimonette is helped by her dog, which has been enchanted, and cannot be affected by the fairy’s

spells. In a comic scene, the dog smells the invisible Tigrine because “les fées ont beau se parfumer, elles exhalent un goût infernal, qu’elles contractent avec leurs démons” (856). The faithful dog aids the princess, and as a foil to the fairy, as Preyat succinctly comments, Choisy “réduisit ces créatures fantastiques à l’impuissance, à l’instar de la colérique Tigrine dont la passion malsaine pour un humain confinait au ridicule, dans l’atmosphère médiévale de *l’Histoire de la princesse Aimonette*” (299). La Force’s Plus Belle que fée also completes her tasks, assisted not by an animal but by the son of her persecutor. This nemesis is the queen of the fairies but “n’était pas une de ces bonnes fées, qui sont les protectrices de la vertu et qui ne se plaisent qu’à bien faire. Après le cours de plusieurs siècles, elle était parvenue à la royauté par son grand savoir, et par son artifice” (309). Not only is she not a good fairy, but her sovereignty is also subtly critiqued. She rules, not by right of birth or by her regal attributes, but by her knowledge, and her skill. The word ‘artifice’ is defined by Furetière first as “adresse, industrie de faire des choses avec beaucoup de subtilité et de précaution”, second as “fraude, déguisement, mauvaise finesse” (I, sig. Q3^r). Thus her reign at best can either be interpreted as one in which she manipulates events by careful management, or at worst she is duplicitous. This portrait of a queen is unusual in the tales, as usually they are portrayed as spouses and mothers, but not as regnant queens. Rather than directly attacking the monarch, La Force may be using a queen to question the abuse of power. She may also be making an oblique commentary on women at court who were able to influence events by their wiles rather than their position. Even if the portrait of this queen is not of a real person, it is clear that her character is not admirable.

Whereas Nabote is not punished when Désirs regains her powers, others acknowledge their errors and try to make amends for them. The fairy who helped Duchess Grognon to persecute Gracieuse recognizes her unjust treatment, and “elle chercherait les moyens de réparer

les maux qu'elle lui avait fait souffrir" (I: 139). She leaves the feast immediately for the King's palace, where "elle chercha Grognon, et lui tordit le cou sans que ses gardes ni ses femmes l'en pussent empêcher" (I: 139). Once a wrong is realized, justice is swift, and brutal. D'Auneuil also has the fairies repent of their cruelty, and injustice, in *La Tyrannie des fées détruite*, which was published much later than the other *contes*, in 1702. In this story, the power of the fairies is removed, and they are made to work filling the hydraulic system for the fountains of Versailles at Marly (*Contes* ed. Robert 530 note 1). This punishment is for "tous les maux que vous avez infligés à tant d'illustres malheureux" (549), and because they have used their powers to oppress them (549). If fairies are understood to be exaggerated symbols for human failings – in the same way as figures in a tragedy embody extremes– and similarly, these vices lead to exclusion or death. Sometimes, as with d'Auneuil, their punishment is tinged with an ironic smile; how fitting that the disenfranchised fairies should be made to provide the means to serve the King's marvelous designs for his chateau.

Step-Parents and Mothers in Law

Fairies are not the only beings who might be involved in the raising of a child. The death of the mother shortly after the birth of the long awaited child, underlining the reality of the dangers of childbirth for seventeenth-century women, sometimes results in a remarriage. This allows the appearance of the binary characterization of the stepmother. Perrault's *Cendrillon* gives a picture of an imperious stepmother, who hates her stepdaughter because she is "d'une douceur et d'une bonté sans exemple; elle tenait cela de sa mère, qui était la meilleure femme du monde" (223). An altruistic and loving stepmother is a rare creature in the magical world; more frequently the stepmother is the diametric opposite of the birth mother. Her intentions are to either gain precedence for herself, or for her own child. D'Aulnoy deals with this phenomenon in

two tales. In *Gracieuse et Percinet*, duchess Grognon states unequivocally “je veux être la maîtresse de votre fille [...] qu’elle dépend entièrement de moi” (I: 115). In *L’Oiseau bleu* the new Queen consort favors her own daughter over her stepdaughter, and treats her cruelly. The two girls find their fathers have chosen second wives who are the complete opposites of their birth mothers. Seifert remarks: “In each of these tales the narrator takes particular delight in describing the horrible ugliness and corruption of the stepmother and her daughter, who of course are the perfect antitheses of the incomparably beautiful and kind heroine and at least implicitly, her deceased mother” (*Fairy Tales* 183).³⁰

This dichotomy is perfectly illustrated in *Gracieuse et Percinet*. Grognon is described by Gracieuse’s infatuated father as “une colombe”; Gracieuse sees her as “plutôt une chouette” (I: 115). Grognon, having decided to punish her stepdaughter, enlists a fairy to aid her: “je veux la faire souffrir et lui donner toujours des ouvrages difficiles, dont elle ne puisse venir à bout, afin de la pouvoir rouer de coups sans qu’elle ait lieu de s’en plaindre; aidez-moi à lui trouver chaque jour de nouvelles peines” (I: 131). David Adams considers that Grognon’s cruelty “in which she exults in the flaying of Gracieuse by four furies” (16), demonstrates d’Aulnoy’s realism, and also the things she witnessed at the court of Spain where “she had seen barbarities such as burning live of heretics” (16). While there may be no denying the truth of d’Aulnoy’s experiences, her inclusion of acts of persecution demonstrate the stepmother’s desire to wield dominance, and power, which may be motivated by feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. In both *Gracieuse et Percinet* and *L’Oiseau bleu*, the inescapable truth is that both Grognon and Truitonne’s mothers are deficient. Their characters are unpleasant, they are physically unattractive, and they embody vices, in complete opposition to the virtuous, beautiful princesses to whom they are now related.

³⁰ Seifert includes *La Biche au bois* in this comment, but in this tale it is more the malevolence of jealous servants (Longue-Épine) and rejected suitors (l’Éthiopienne) that cause the princess’s downfall.

With the assistance of the fairy, Grognon gives three tasks to Gracieuse, to unravel a massive skein of tangled thread (1: 131-32), to sort a barrel of a wide variety of birds' feathers into individual species (1: 133-34), and to take a box, which she must not open, to Grognon's castle (1: 135). Gracieuse manages to complete these tasks with Percinet's help. Mainil indicates that Grognon is consumed with "la jalousie, source de tous les maux de la princesse" (*Le rire des fées* 131), but although Gracieuse is more beautiful, skilled, and regal in her bearing, she is not presented as perfect. She cannot resist showing the same curiosity as Laideronnette shows, and opens the box which she was told not to. The consequences are not too dire, it contains dancers and musicians; she has not opened Pandora's Box which unleashes evil on the world, but the inference is there.³¹ Jasmin clarifies this in her edition of the *Contes*, remarking that "ouvrir une boîte, c'est toujours prendre un risque" (I: 135 note 33). Jasmin goes further in her analysis of this box, noting: "Ouvrir une boîte fermée en phase d'initiation sexuelle comme c'est ici le cas de l'héroïne, n'a rien d'innocent si l'on se réfère à l'interprétation de Freud, y voyant une représentation du corps féminin" (I: 135 note 33). Jasmin's comments are interesting, and there is clearly an element of risk, and inevitability in the temptation to do what is expressly forbidden. Parents and psychologists know that children are naturally curious, and will inevitably do what is prohibited, which is why her stepmother forbade Gracieuse to open the box. Yet this Freudian interpretation would not seem to fit the circumstances. It is clear that this young woman is attracted to Percinet, she is described as being "pas indifférente" (I: 137), but since it is not the young man who gives the box to her, nor are its contents damaging, in this instance, d'Aulnoy is again using the trope of Psyche's curiosity – Psyche cannot resist looking at her husband's body,

³¹ See Jan N. Bremmer's "Pandora or the Creation of a Greek Eve" for a full examination of the origins and meanings of the myth.

even though forbidden to do so, which has become a metonymy for the insatiable desire to know of women – but this time it is used to humorous effect.

In contrast to this tale, where the stepmother seems to consider her stepdaughter as a rival, other *contes* deal with blended families. Both L'Héritier and d'Aulnoy write of a re-marriage involving a stepsister.³² In *Les Enchantements de l'éloquence*, L'Héritier's heroine is certainly beautiful, but the emphasis is more on the intellectual differences between Blanche, her stepsister, and her stepmother. The narrator points out that the stepmother “avait donné à sa fille une éducation pareille à celle qu'elle avait eue; et sa fille étant d'un caractère rude et fort propre à recevoir des impressions grossières, il n'est presque pas possible de voir deux personnes plus populaires et plus rustiques qu'elles étaient” (71). Blanche loves to read, and when she is discovered by her stepmother, who can barely read, reading a novel, she is accused of reading a love story in secret. Blanche's father, unusually for a father with a second wife in the tales, defends his daughter, and lauds her reading in the following manner: “L'histoire peint les hommes comme ils sont, et les romans les représentent tels qu'ils devraient être, et semblent par-là les engager d'aspirer à la perfection” (76). Reading is a means of improvement, and Blanche learns to express herself with “une politesse achevée ... on ne peut pas s'exprimer avec plus d'agrément et plus de justesse qu'elle faisait” (77). Certainly this ability leads to her marriage, and despite the tasks that she is set by her stepmother, she is able to charm, and win her prince. Clearly, the *conteuse* is also promoting the very task in which she is engaged, and so there is a vested interest in having such a panegyric to the pastime of reading literature.

As well as stepmothers who replace mothers, some mothers are displaced by the marriage of their son. Blondine encounters a particularly vicious mother-in-law in *Belle-Étoile*. She is

³² D'Aulnoy's tale is *L'Oiseau bleu*. She also emphasizes the differences in beauty, both physical and in character, between the two stepsisters.

described as “la plus cruelle de toutes les femmes, et la plus emportée. Quand elle sut que son fils s’était marié sans sa participation, et surtout à une fille d’une naissance si obscure, et que le prince en avait fait autant, elle entra dans une telle colère, qu’elle effraya toute la cour” (II: 376). She does not consider the harm her actions might cause her son, but is determined to rid the court of her daughter-in-law, attempting to have her grandchildren murdered twice, once when they are babies, and again when they are adults and return to the court. This may be because she wants to retain her supremacy, which she will probably lose given her new status as dowager queen. This supposition is borne out by the efforts put into persuading her son to re-marry, “que la reine-mère et ses sujets l’ayant fortement pressé, il s’était résolu à épouser une princesse de sa Cour” (II: 424). Since, as we have already seen, everyone in the court is terrified of the dowager, this princess will doubtless be under her influence and governance.

Chaste Until Marriage

A seventeenth-century girl-child did not often experience an independent life, with choices and freedom. She was under the tutelage of her father, who, in aristocratic circles particularly, decided who she would marry. In the case of royalty, these arranged marriages were for reasons of state, and even the King’s sisters and daughters were not exempt from a marriage to create alliances which were advantageous to France. Many tales illustrate these demands on a girl, and they differ according to the degree to which the father is autocratic, and therefore does not countenance any opposition to his will. Some exceptional fathers are delighted to let their daughters choose their spouse freely. In addition to choosing a husband, the necessity for the bride being chaste, a virgin, until her wedding is frequently underlined in the tales. Two particular instances demonstrate this need. In *Le Dauphin*, Livorette goes through a ‘wedding’ to the canary Bibi which is sanctioned, and witnessed by her parents. When her engagement to the

canary is announced, her ladies-in-waiting are amused by her “parfaite innocence” (II: 518); she has no understanding of what marriage and a sexual relation entail. Since the canary returns to human form at night, and having slept with the man, the princess becomes pregnant.

Livorette suffers, and is unwell, throughout her pregnancy. This is unusual in the stories: many women have difficulty in getting pregnant, but their pregnancies, apart from cravings, are uneventful. The difficulties that Livorette suffers may be a literary device to enable the revelation of her state, or there may be an underlying moral here, to discourage young women readers from following her example. The country doctor who is summoned to her side diagnoses her pregnancy. The innocence of the princess, together with the care and supervision, given by the courtiers – she has not been left alone with a man – do not make the court suspect that the cause of her ailment is pregnancy. The only people who suspect the truth are the doctor and Alidor. When the baby is born, the reaction of her father is condemnatory in the extreme; he wishes to have her thrown off a high peak, with the baby. It is only the intervention of the Queen, Livorette’s mother, which spares her this fate. Nevertheless, the King is determined to exact retribution, as the narrator states: “il fallait du sang pour laver une tâche si honteuse dans leur maison” (II: 525). The investment that the king places in the chastity of her daughter, and his inability to marry her advantageously since she has had a child, produces an extreme reaction in this father. His daughter is shut up in a tower until the baby is born, since she will not confess who the father is (she cannot, as she does not know), and the child is used to reveal who his father is. Once the parentage is known, Livorette, her baby, and Alidor are put into a barrel, with “un pot plein de lait, une bouteille de vin, du pain” and “le roi ordonna de les jeter ainsi au fond de la mer” (II: 527). The sacramental and sacrificial nature of the food provided for the adults cannot be overlooked (bread and wine), as this treatment is going to end in their death. If not for

the dolphin, they would have drowned. The couple only achieves happiness and a married life together once the princess gains forgiveness from her parents and recognition of her innocence in the pregnancy.

In another tale, *L'Adroite princesse*, a father has his daughters locked up in a tower while he goes off to fight a war. This king has two frivolous daughters whose basic characters are demonstrated by their names, Nonchalante and Babillarde, and a third daughter, Finette, the youngest, who is bright and accomplished. As might be expected, the two foolish daughters, who are bored, and unable to amuse themselves in the tower, are seduced by a roving prince and become pregnant. To ensure their chastity, during his absence, their father gave them a distaff made of glass. The distaff, a traditional symbol of femininity deriving from the fact that women used this in their homes to spin yarn, shows that the father intends that his daughters should conform to their female role.³³ There is also an allusion to the Fates, who used a distaff to spin thread, either white or black, for the outcome of a person's life.³⁴ Patricia Hannon also comments on this use of weaving in d'Aulnoy's story, *Finette Cendron*, when the Queen offers to weave nets for the king so that he may catch birds for food, which Hannon remarks, "is associated with both women's tasks and with the Fates (*Les Parques*) who preside over man's destiny" (*Fabulous Identities* 142).³⁵ Whereas in D'Aulnoy's tale, the Queen consort is controlling the fate of the King, and of the kingdom, as Hannon suggests, in L'Héritier's tale, the use of the

³³ There is also an allusion to women telling stories. Harries comments, using an analysis of a woodcut in the Frontispiece to Perrault's tales, which depicts a woman who is "simultaneously spinning and telling a story, spinning wool or flax and 'spinning a yarn'" (*Twice upon a Time* 47). This metaphorical use recalls the work of the *conteuses* in creating their tales, and also brings to mind the roots of these tales, based in folklore, and repeated by women to their charges.

³⁴ Furetière: 'filer' "les Parques employaient sur leur quenouille de la laine blanche pour filer une vie longue et heureuse; et de la laine noire pour filer une vie courte et malheureuse" (II, sig. F3^r).

³⁵ The Queen not only directs the King in how he should lead his life, but also decided that their daughters must be removed, as they will be a drain on their resources. Although the King is sad to lose his daughters, whom he loves, "la reine était la maîtresse" (461).

glass distaff suggests that the young women have their fate in their own hands. The glass distaff will break if they have sexual relations, an indication of the rupture of the hymen, and their loss of virginity. If, like Finette, they resist the advances of the male, they will remain in control of their lives. When their father comes back, in a comedic scene, they share the one remaining distaff, that of Finette, to try and hoodwink their father into thinking that they are all still whole. Their deception is revealed, and the two sisters are given into the care of a fairy, who makes them use their time working “aux travaux les plus grossiers et les plus vils; et sans égard pour leur teint, elle les envoya cueillir des pois dans ses jardins et en arracher les mauvaises herbes” (110). The reference to weeds makes an allusion to the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13), in which good seed is choked by the weeds that grow up. The sisters can be seen as bad seed, in that they do not fulfill any useful role in society, and although there is an attempt to rehabilitate them, their basic weak characters cannot be overcome. It is noteworthy that although the babies have been returned to their father’s court by Finette, and therefore there is no physical evidence of the princesses’ loss of virginity, the King knows of their loss of virtue because of the broken distaffs, and has them removed from his court. The broken distaff shows that they have not fulfilled their role as daughters, and disobeyed their father. In contrast, Finette, who is only given the same treatment as her sisters, because the king wishes to treat them in the same way “pour faire tout égal” (97), receives love and advice from both her father and the fairy. She is able to defeat not only the seducer of her sisters, but also to secure a virtuous husband for herself.

Filial Obedience

Once the girl reaches marriageable age, she has to submit to her parents’ choice of spouse. In the real world, daughters generally accepted their parent’s selection. In the tales, women step into a magical world, in which they are the arbiters of their fates. Some, like Babiolo

and La Chatte blanche, run away to avoid their subjugation. Some relationships between daughters and their fathers raise questions about the appropriateness of the bond. In particular, in d'Aulnoy's tale *Le Mouton* the affinity between the king and Merveilleuse approaches a rapport which goes beyond that of a normal father / daughter. The King is more affectionate to his youngest daughter to whom he gives "plus de caresses qu'aux autres" (I: 422). Angered by his erroneous perception of her designs on his throne, he plots her death. When she returns to the palace incognito for her eldest sister's wedding, she slips away before the end of the ceremonies. Her father, however, is captivated by her beauty. "Le roi qui avait espéré de la rejoindre et qui brûlait de la connaître, fut au désespoir de ne plus la voir; il ordonna absolument que, si jamais elle revenait, on fermât toutes les portes sur elle, et qu'on la refît" (I: 440). The use of the word *brusler* indicates a strong feeling for this woman, and the fact that he then gives orders that she should not be allowed to depart the next time she visits, gives an impression of a man whose passions rule him, and who is not prepared to be thwarted in his desires.³⁶ When she does return for her second sister's wedding – as Merveilleuse had foretold in her dream – he pours water from a ewer, so that she may wash her hands. Defrance interprets this in the following manner:

Par-delà le fait que la toilette entraîne la représentation d'un corps dénudé, l'aspect provocateur que contient le récit du rêve à son père est renforcé par la symbolique des gestes de la toilette, qui impliquent le frottement, l'intervention de l'élément liquide. A cela la symbolique freudienne ne manquerait pas de donner un sens sexuel. (*Les Contes de Fées* 162)

D'Aulnoy's choice of vocabulary and imagery certainly suggests elements in the father / daughter relationship which are excessive. For Seifert, in *Peau d'Âne* and *Le Mouton*, "fathers

³⁶ Furetière: 'brusler' "être agité par une violente passion d'amour, d'ambition, de désir, d'impatience" (I sig. L13').

are potential seducers, a phenomenon Freud explains as a girl's own desire for her father" (*Fairy Tales* 163). But there is also a questioning of Merveilleuse's desires. The crowning of her as queen regnant, to his king, and the abandonment of her promise to return to Mouton – "elle s'oubliait auprès du roi et de ses sœurs" (I: 442) – shows that the daughter has her own aspirations. Elizabeth Harries points out that "D'Aulnoy deliberately thwarts our narrative desire for the expected ending [...] her heroine, "Merveilleuse" in every other respect, does not return in time and fails as agent of transformation" ("Violence of the Lambs" 58). It is clear at the beginning of Merveilleuse's stay with Mouton, she is not happy; she states: "je ne suis pas accoutumée à vivre avec les morts et avec les moutons qui parlent. Tout me fait peur ici" (I: 433). Nevertheless, she is won over by Mouton, "un joli mouton, bien doux, bien caressant ne laisse pas de plaire, surtout quand on sait qu'il est roi, et que la métamorphose doit finir" (I:438). She does love him, though the narrator's observations suggest that she loves him because he is a king, and she wants the resultant power and position that she will achieve once he is returned to his human shape. Once she re-establishes her relationship with her father and attains the rank of queen with him, her promise to return to Mouton is swiftly forgotten. As well as being seen as attack on patriarchal order (*Fairy Tales* 165), this tale questions the bond between father and daughter.

In contrast to Merveilleuse, the abbé de Choisy's Princesse Aimonette is a model of duty, but her response to her father is a result of not being forced to bend to his will. He talks to her about Lohier, saying: "ouvrez-moi votre cœur, je ne veux point vous contraindre" (855). Her response is "je suis soumise à toutes vos volontés" (855). Such a response may be surprising, if we consider the author, who might be expected, as a churchman, and an aristocrat, to uphold the primacy of fathers' rights, but Choisy allows women to express their own will, and is concerned

that their emotions should be taken into account when marriage is contemplated. In this respect he follows the model of d'Aulnoy who demonstrates in *Le Prince Marcassin* that arranged marriages end in unhappiness. As Sophie Raynard states, both these authors believe: “il n’y a rien de bon à forcer une union [...] et la seule issue est le libre choix” (*La Seconde préciosité* 438).³⁷

Siblings

In fairy stories, siblings play a vital role in the fate of the heroine. Family dynamics are obviously important in the stories, and why the story-tellers choose these members of the family is revealing. In the introduction to *Sibling Relations*, Johnson and Sabeen make the point is that in the German high aristocracy in the seventeenth century, all that was needed was “one male heir to the patrimony, and a daughter with whom to ally one’s house with another” (4). The authors point out that because of the high incidence of child mortality, parents conceived more children than the two needed, to ensure that property remained in the patrimony, these children classified as “the ‘extra’ ones” (4). In a family there was a set order for the offspring: “both sons and daughters were fixed in a hierarchy based on age [...] the older ones destined for secular roles (successors and wives) and the younger ones bound for celibacy and the Church” (5). The same system of rank was also applicable to French aristocracy, although as Tuttle points out, Louis XIV’s 1666 marriage edict gave rewards to procreators of large families, because “human fertility signified the blessings of God upon His people, and offered tangible, worldly benefits to a monarch” (6).

³⁷ Raynard goes onto cite other instances where the young woman flees rather than submit to marrying someone chosen for her whether that be a man, or a monster: *La Princesse Carpillon*, *La Grenouille Bienfaisante*, *Le Pigeon et la Colombe*. Her full exposition of this theme can be found in *La Seconde préciosité* 438-39.

Frequently, the stories feature three sisters, and it is the youngest who is instrumental in saving her sisters.³⁸ Accepting, therefore, that there is a hierarchy in a family, these younger sisters step outside the expected and due familial order. Their motivation may be to show that although they are younger, age is not a barrier to their abilities; indeed, the younger sisters are much more capable and astute than their older sisters. In *Finette Cendron* the heroine saves her sisters from starvation. In *L'Adroite Princesse* Finette is wiser, less gullible, and does all she can to save them from the disgrace of their pregnancies. In the three sisters are equals, but because of their marriages, Blondine suffers from the jealousy of her oldest sibling, Roussette.

D'Aulnoy's tale *Finette Cendron* recounts the loss of their kingdom by a king and queen. Having sold off everything they possess, they are destitute, but have three daughters to raise. The queen's judgment of her offspring is "ce sont de franches paresseuses, qui croient être de grandes dames" (I: 461). Since the Queen "était la maîtresse" (I: 461) in her marriage, her determination to rid them of the girls wins. However, the youngest sister Fine-Oreille saves them, aided by her fairy godmother's instructions. The first time the fairy godmother gives Fine-Oreille a bag containing beautiful clothes of gold and silver, and a thread that does not break; she uses it to mark their route. Geneviève Patard comments that "ce fil fragile de la quenouille se révèle aussi le fil de la vie et de la mort" ("De la quenouille" 241). Without it the sisters will not survive. When they are abandoned, Finette is tempted to leave her sisters, "car elles me battent et m'égratignent jusqu'au sang" (I: 464), but she is unable to do this, and they promise her a doll if she takes them back home. The control that the two older girls have over their sister is emphasized when they return. Their father is not pleased to see them, so not only do they not

³⁸ There are also stories which tell of two sisters, the antithesis of each other, –*Heureuse Peine, La Princesse Léonice*–. By placing an opposite in close proximity, the 'good' sister is threatened, and placed in exaggerated difficult situations.

give her the doll, instead, “prenant leurs quenouilles, elles la battirent comme plâtre. Quand elles l’eurent bien battue, elle se coucha; et comme elle avait tant de plaies et de bosses, elle ne pouvait dormir” (I: 466). The fact that they use distaffs to beat her underlines their complicity in the subjugated female role, and their dislike that their sister is able to act independently of the restraints of her gender. Her inability to sleep underlines the severity of her beating, but also alludes to her active role; she is not a passive Sleeping Beauty.

However, at this juncture, she is unable to break the bonds that exist between her and her sisters. The second time she prepares to leads them she is told by her fairy godmother, not to bring her siblings back, for “elles sont trop malicieuses, et si vous les ramenez, je ne veux plus vous voir” (I: 467). Finette is won over by her sisters’ affectionate caresses, because they need her to lead them back (I: 467) which suggests that as the youngest child she has been starved of affection, and therefore is swayed to act against the wisdom of her godmother. The third time they are taken into the forest, the sisters scatter peas, on their own initiative, which are eaten, so they cannot find their way home. When Fine-Oreille’s sisters discover the fine clothes and diamonds given her by her fairy godmother, they decide to take everything for themselves and when she protests, threaten to kill her (I: 471). It is only after she has been reduced to the level of their servant, and beaten continually, that Finette seeks to find her own prince and to escape. In her examination of this tale, Tatiana Kooneva contrasts it with L’Héritier’s *L’adroite Princesse*, and Perrault’s *Petit Poucet*. She argues that these tales show a desire for vengeance, and that Finette is constantly seeking power. She illustrates this by referring to the bartering that Finette does with her sisters as a reward for her help, and by noting her selection of fine clothes and jewels, rather than food, when she knows they are going to be abandoned (740). Kooneva concludes:

The interactions of the protagonist with the other characters are therefore constantly determined by power-based relationships. Even in the conclusion of the tale, when Finette negotiates the return of her parents to their thrones and the distribution of power between her parents and her new family, she does not establish equality between the two royal houses. (740-41)

For Kooneva, this tale demonstrates that while Finette in some ways seems to forgive her family's wrongdoing, in their treatment of her, she nevertheless makes sure that she is never put into a position of subjugation, or, worse, ever again, and that she is the strongest character. Her acceptance of this prince, however, who appears to be more in love with her footwear than the actual woman, and her acquiescence to her role as wife, might reduce her to a much more passive figure. She gains physical and fiscal security, and she is able to restore her family to their former status, but in doing so she loses the freedom and ability to act that she has enjoyed as a single woman. This underlines the realities that a woman faced, for although the writers might suggest more liberty for women, in reality, once married they became much less self-determining.

Like Finette Cendron, the namesake Finette (*L'Adroite Princesse*) is able to demonstrate her skills and outwit both Riche-Cautéle, and her eventual husband Bel à voir. She shows determination, and enterprise; causing Riche-Cautéle to fall into a sewer (104), to trip into the barrel full of knives he has destined for her (107), and on her wedding night makes a dummy, “[elle] composa une figure de paille dans laquelle elle mit les boyaux et la vessie pleine de sang” (112) so that her husband can kill this representation instead of her. The symbolism of the ‘killing’ of the dummy might be considered a means to allow Finette the happy ending that she obtains, and L’Héritier comments that it is her “prudence et [sa] présence d’esprit” (113), that

allows the couple to have a successful marriage. This union, however, like that of Finette Cendron, does not enable her to continue to enjoy her freedoms. In addition to her entering into a subjugated role, “la bizarrerie des sentiments de ce prince” (113) is also remarked upon. He is a man who could not break the vow that he made to his brother (to kill Finette), even while admitting that he knew such a promise was wrong (112), and who contemplates suicide as a means of escape (112). Since the author herself comments on her hero’s peculiarity, some doubt may be inferred about his suitability as a husband. On the other hand, since this is a fairy tale, the love of a good, strong young woman may be the catalyst which enables him to overcome the malign influences of his youth. Both Finettes have to overcome singularities in their husbands’ characters, and the authors show the strength of character of these women. Their marriages to weaker or flawed males, give them status which as the youngest daughter they would not otherwise get, and there is a possibility that they can continue to influence their husbands and therefore use their fortitude to help the men rule.

In the realm of the fairy tale, there is an expectation of a happy ending and that through trials and tribulations, the heroines and their siblings should be refined and improved. L’Héritier shows that experiences do not always eventuate in changes for the better. L’Héritier uses caricatures in *L’adroite Princesse*, the two culpable sisters are incapable of behaving as befits their royal status, and despite the best efforts of their father, enclosing them in a tower with their wise and virtuous sister Finette, they are seduced, and both become pregnant. The king loves Finette “beaucoup plus que ses autres filles et il faisait un [si] grand fond sur son bon sens” (96), but he treats her in the same way as his other daughters, even though he is “sûr de sa vertu” (97). Because of this treatment, Finette does not have any problems getting on with her sisters, and often seems to be the older, and more astute, of the three. Her distress at their pregnancies could

almost be that of a mother, rather than a younger sister: “la honteuse faiblesse de ses sœurs la mettait dans un désespoir dont elle avait peine à se rendre maîtresse” (105). Certainly Finette’s sisters could be considered to change their lives radically after their seduction, but it is clear that they do not undergo any character improvement.³⁹ The heroine is the person who is most altered by her contact with Riche-Cautéle, transmuting from a self-assured, and self-contained woman, to a dutiful wife. She acquiesces to her father’s marriage arrangements for her, for even though she is his favorite, “dès ce temps l’inclination était la moindre chose qu’on considérait dans les mariages” (111). However, the point by Christine Jones in contrasting women who put on male garb, and act as men, to those who always remain in their female attire, is very well made. She suggests:

Heroines who have not been separated from their skirts – by which I mean the prescribed behaviors and treatments for which the skirt acts as symbol – often do not enjoy these freedoms in the fairy-tale universe. They do have all kinds of plots to foil and dangers to avoid, but their focus is on *outwitting* the men and women immediately around them. (“Heroinism” 29)

These ‘skirted’ women, although they exhibit characteristics that may be considered ‘masculine’, never leave the female realm. They do not set out, as their cross-dressed counterparts do, to actively participate, and to control events, but rather respond to the actions of others. When they eventually enter into a marriage, they take the role proscribed by their female condition in early modern society, and since marriage is what they have expected, they accept it without demur. These tales appear to argue that the brightness and independence shown by a female child may well be curtailed by marriage and maturity.

³⁹ It can be argued, of course, that they are not the heroines of this tale.

Virtuous women

Women cannot just be seen and considered in their familial roles; they also have an identity as a woman, living in society, subject to the rules that it places upon them. It cannot be over-emphasized that seventeenth-century France was a patriarchal society, and that the tales, by using the *merveilleux*, enable these characters to move out of the more submissive role, to which they then return once they are married. To put it another way, once women have chosen to marry (or have consented to the choice of husband made for them, a much more rare occurrence in the tales), their behavior is unimpeachable. Two tales, one by L'Héritier, *La Robe de sincérité*, and the other by Choisy, *Madame de Guercheville*, provide a view of virtuous women. *La Robe de sincérité* is a type 1620 in the Aarne-Thompson classification, and is like the later Hans Christian Andersen story, *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1837). In L'Héritier's story, prince Cléarque who is by nature untrusting of women, is given a marvelous garment, on which he will see extraordinary embroidery if his sisters or (future) wife is virtuous. Of course, there is no such embroidery, but every man who is shown it cannot admit that they are unable to see it, apart from one, King Téléphonte.

Another man, Dinocrite, the favorite of Cléarque, also causes his wife, Anaxaride, great distress, and harm, because he does not believe her faithfulness to him. In comedic scenes, echoing the conventions of farce, he is sure that she is entertaining a lover. The first time he gets up in the night, believing his wife is with a lover, he grabs the female servant bringing a jug of water to his wife. He knocks her down, the jug breaks and he is soaked. He cries out for assistance, believing he has been wounded – “Au meurtre! au secours! je suis noyé dans mon sang” (231) – but then has all his servants search the house looking for the ‘lover’. He does not hesitate to voice his suspicions, and his jealousy. The second time, it is his dog that knocks over

a seat, and Dinocrite grabs a handful of the hair of his attacker. It is revealed that he has pulled a lump of the dog's hair out (233), but in falling he has injured his head (233). In spite of the explanation given him by the servants, he continues to treat his wife as a pariah; "il reçut excessivement mal les soins d'Anaxaride; mais malgré tout ce qu'il lui dit d'offensant, elle ne le voulut point quitter qu'elle n'eût pris toutes les précautions possibles pour son soulagement" (234). In contrast to her husband's suspicious nature, and ill-treatment of her, after his death she is characterized as having given him "tous les soins et toutes les complaisances que la plus exacte vertu lui pouvait prescrire" (264). Like d'Aulnoy, *L'Héritier* is drawing on her knowledge of Molière's plays, as this characterization calls to mind *Georges Dandin*.⁴⁰

Like Dinocrite, prince Cléarque believes immediately that his sister and the princess he loves are not high principled and chaste women, in spite of the evidence to the contrary:

car, sans se souvenir le moins du monde de tout ce que la renommée publiait d'avantageux de l'exacte vertu de Célénie, ni sans faire attention à la noble modestie qui paraissait dans toutes les paroles et dans toutes les actions de cette princesse; entièrement livré à ses chimères, il se dit que c'était bien assez d'avoir une sœur qui flétrît son honneur, sans aller encore s'exposer à se donner une épouse qui pourrait le couvrir de honte. (227)

Cixous examines the role that fairy tales have played in depicting the quiescence of women, "belles, mais passives" (120), and critiques the traditional view that women are the weaker sex, waiting for a man, a prince, to wake her up, so that she can begin her adult life.⁴¹ In exploring this depiction of women, and their immobility, Cixous also analyses the men who are

⁴⁰ For a full analysis of allusions to Molière and farce in d'Aulnoy's tales see Nadine Jasmin, *Naissance du conte féminin* 162-173.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Harries, *Twice upon a Time* also comments on Cixous's work (138).

“faits pout réussir, pour grimper l'échelle sociale” (122). In contrast to this argument, it is clear that the virtuous women depicted are not just waiting for a man to wake them up. If the ‘waking-up’ is put into a sexual context, then it is obvious that the married women are beyond this, and therefore have reached a maturity, both sexually, and in their character, which enables them to be constant in their chosen path.

Choisy's Madame de Guercheville faces a different problem for it is neither her brother nor her husband who assail her virtue: it is the King, namely Henri IV (1589–1610). Known for her virtue as much as her beauty, although the object of admiration of the king, who wishes to give her presents: “elle n'ecouta rien, n'accepta rien, et pour lui oter toute Esperance, elle evita de le voir, et se passa de la Cour pour se conserver toute entiere a son honneur” (fol. 165^r).⁴² Realizing that to win the battle, she must retire to the country – “Il est de certaines victoires, qu'on ne remporte qu'en fuyant” (fol. 165^v) – she explains to the King that she is not highly enough born “pour etre votre femme et J'ai le Coeur trop noble pour etre votre maitresse” (fol. 165^v). So she retires to the country, living quietly in her home, saying that she can live more luxuriously there (because it is cheaper), than in Paris (fol. 166^r). The infatuated king, out hunting, sends a gentleman to ask if he can stay one night. Madame de Guercheville receives him with every honor, and appears beautifully dressed, wearing diamond jewels and pearls. The king is overjoyed at his reception “si favorable et si peu accoutumé” (fol. 166^v) because he thinks he has won over the lady. Marie Thérèse Hipp observes that Choisy “compose une scène ... baignée de tonalité quasi racinienne entre Henri IV et Madame de Guercheville” (40, n 68). Certainly the risks that the marquise is taking could end in tragedy, and the reader knows that the king is not going to get the outcome he expects, as a result of this reception. Having escorted him to his

⁴² The words ‘toute entiere’ have been added to the manuscript, in the same hand.

room, Madame de Guercheville then orders her coach, and prepares to leave. When the King remonstrates with her, her tart reply is “un roi doit être le maître partout où il est et pour moi, je suis bien aise d’avoir quelque pouvoir dans les lieux où je me trouve” (fol.167^r).

Madame de Guercheville is an unpublished manuscript that is held in the collections of the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal in Paris. It is very short, six leaves, and has not received critical attention. The inclusion of this tale is important because it shows how an ecclesiastic viewed married women, and their behavior, and it is markedly different from other works by the Abbé de Choisy treated in this dissertation. It is based on a real person, Antoinette de Pons, marquise de Guercheville (1570–1632), who apparently did leave the King in her country house, and go to stay with her friend. The tale calls to mind Madame de Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), and her retreat from the world, to escape a love affair. This allusion is amplified by the placing of the tale in a previous reign, and the detail given to courtly life. However, it is clear that Madame de Guercheville, unlike Madame de Clèves, is not running away because she fears succumbing to her feelings.⁴³ Second, the moral standing of the heroine is never in question, but her method of dealing with a difficult situation is both unexpected, and skillful. She informs the King that although he has power, she does too. It would seem that women who are or who have been married, are able to do what they choose in society. In looking at other works by Choisy, a writer of historical treatises, of stories for the education of young women, it is possible to see how this work fits into his overall philosophy. Of particular insight in this regard is Preyat’s article on Choisy’s *Histoires de piété et de morale* in which he analyses Choisy’s work, contrasting it to the writings of François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon (1651–1715), and

⁴³ Joseph Harris explores the relationship between *Histoire de la Marquise/Marquis de Banneville* and *La Princesse de Clèves* in “Novel Upbringings” Harris posits that Choisy used elements from Madame de Lafayette’s tale and parodied them.

Claude Fleury (1640 –1723).⁴⁴ He notes that Choisy used tales based on history to instruct: “L’historiographe voyait dans l’anecdote le moyen de supplanter l’Histoire, selon les critères d’une plus grande véracité et d’une moralité exemplaire. L’anecdote aurait eu pour objet le ‘vrai’ dans toute son étendue et ne disconvenait pas que la contemplation du vice pût former le jugement” (312). *Madame de Guercerville* does not necessarily portray the veracity of her life, but rather is a means to illustrate how a woman can maintain virtuous behavior, and also win the approbation of her would-be seducer.

While these mature women are held as examples of wisdom and worthy behavior, their younger, unmarried counterparts have to grow into this role. These older ladies act in clear contrast to teenaged women, for example Princess Printanière, who because she is infatuated by Fanfarinet, rejects accoutrements which would enable her to enter the adult world as a woman (I: 255). DeGraff analyses her behavior, and posits that “her complete indifference to the crown, the scepter, the golden mantle and the skirt of butterfly wings is revealing, for each of these gifts can be seen as a symbol of transformation to a higher stage of being” (25). Printanière refuses this transition, and instead of the beautiful signs of her status, is given “une écharpe de toile d’araignée, brodée d’ailes de chauves-souris” (I: 256). Once she has learnt her lesson, and has suffered, and matured, she is given a richly embroidered gown (I: 272). *La Princesse Printanière* focuses on the garb of the differing characters to show personality traits, and their status. The dress is a symbol of the princess’s refusal to accept her position in life and of her naivety. She accepts the courtship of a man whose betrayal of his sovereign and his selfishness show that he is not a worthy partner for the princess. Whereas in some tales, elopement might be a literary

⁴⁴ Fénelon, *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), *Lettres et Discours : Œuvres* ed. J. Le Brun (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

Claude Fleury, *Catéchisme historique* (1679) (*Opuscules* . Nîmes: Baume, 1780), *Traité du choix et de la méthode des études* (2 vols., 1686)(B Jolibert ed. Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998).

device to bring the lovers together, in this tale, the objective seems to be to demonstrate that if a young woman is shut away from the world, with only women for company, the likelihood is that she will be gullible and easier to lead astray. The princess is infatuated with Fanfarinet because he is the first adult male she has seen, apart from her father, and although he is gauche in his interactions with her, she is captivated by him.

Several critics, namely Christine Jones, Jack Zipes, and Lewis Seifert, have pointed out that the writers of the *contes de fées* insist on the power of the fairies in the tales, and that this can be interpreted as either a metaphor for their abilities as writers, as an expression of their aligning themselves as modern, in *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, or as promoting the role of women, and using tales to subvert the patriarchal suppression of women. Both Zipes (“The Meaning of Fairy Tale” 231), and Summerfield (137), explain that the etymological root of *fée* comes from the Latin *fata*, from which *Les Parques* (*the Fates*) also derive, and thus they can be considered as controlling, in some degree, the direction of the lives in which they are involved. However I find Summerfield’s assertion that the fairy “can do anything, she can change everything” (137), to be hyperbolic. Frequently the fairies, whether they are good or bad, are limited in what they can do.⁴⁵ In Murat’s tales, they even admit that they are powerless against human passion as fairy Anguillette tells Hébé that if she gives into her feelings for Altimir “je vous avertis que vous m’invoquerez en vain pour faire cesser cette passion fatale que vous croyez un bonheur si doux, mon pouvoir ne s’étend pas jusque-là” (91-92).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Seifert (*Fairy Tales* 198) and Warner (*Beast to the Blond* 15) also comment on the etymology of the word, emphasizing the derivation *fatum*, past participle of *fari* ‘to speak, reveal, bear witness’. Not only are the fairies involved in the fate of their protégées, but they also commentate on what they see.

⁴⁶ Geneviève Patard, in her edition of Murat’s *Contes*, comments: “Le peu de pouvoir des fées est un thème récurrent dans les contes de Mme de Murat” (92, note 1).

In the conventions of the fairy-tale, good fairies are usually beautiful; their external looks are a reflection of their inner grace and admirable character. They are forces for right; benevolent, supportive of those in need, and above all they are kind. An example of this altruism is shown by the fairy in *Le Rameau d'or*, who transforms Torticolis, because he recognizes his inner goodness, and gives him an outward appearance that reflects it. The narrator remarks that Torticolis's transformation "[c'] était le digne ouvrage d'une fée bienfaisante et sensible" (I: 304). Fairies are female; there is only one example of a male fairy— Percinet— in the works studied in this dissertation. They educate, and demonstrate wisdom, and upright conduct. As Christine Jones cogently remarks, they are "composite[s] of seventeenth-century manners" ("Poetics of enchantment" 68). However, fairies seem suspicious of humans, and they may disguise themselves to find out if the person who meets them is really altruistic, and is deserving of their help. This disguise may be as an old lady, for example in *La Princesse Belle Étoile* (II: 372), and *La Bonne Petite Souris* (I: 373), or as an old shepherdess in *Belle-Belle ou le chevalier Fortuné* (II: 250). The fairy in *La Bonne Petite Souris* explains why fairies hide their true shape. They want to have friendships, and find that, "on ne nous aime que par intérêt, et cela ne nous touche guère; mais quand vous m'avez aimée en petite souris, ce n'était pas un motif d'intérêt" (I: 375). Finally fairies are seen as wise, often the confidants of kings, who seek their advice in managing their familial lives, though they do not need their advice in matters of sovereignty. An example of this is the fairy in *L'Adroite Princesse* "le roi étant un ami intime" (97) who is asked by him to make the glass distaffs to protect his daughters' chastity. When he discovers that they have lost their virginity, he sends them to her, to keep them with her for the rest of their lives "et de les punir comme elles le méritaient" (110). One of the punishments that she has for them is a

gallery of pictures “de femmes illustres qui s’étaient rendues célèbres par leur vertu et par leur vie laborieuse” (110).

These examples show fairies that demonstrate the attributes and virtues of a woman who lives her life according to the precepts of the Church and of society. Fairies, however, tend to be dualistic figures in the tales, and in contrast to the benevolent, and helpful figures, there are many who display the more ‘sinful’ aspect of human nature, embodying desire for revenge, spitefulness, jealousy, and hate. Summerfield gives an explanation of “[the] dichotomy of wicked *fées* and good *fées* [...] [which] can be the reiteration of a presence of the difficulties of carrying out motherly duties” (137). This explanation does not go far enough in explaining why maleficent fairies are more forceful, and dominate their more benevolent sisters. If as Seifert posits, “evil fairies [...] comply with a rigid law of patriarchal representation: they incarnate unvirtuous femininity, just as good fairies embody its virtuous opposite” (*Fairy Tales* 201), then it is not duties as mothers which are critiqued, but rather the repressive desire to contain women within the home, in a submissive role. The fairies not only comply with the rigid patriarchal rule, but they are also enforcers of it, trying to force the women in their care to accept their choice of spouse, enclosing them in a world where feminine occupations are expected, and punishing the women who attempt to rebel against their designs for their lives. In the subsequent chapter, I will examine how the trope of metamorphosis is used to remove women from their world in an attempt to make them conform to the life that has been planned for them.

In the fantasy world of fairy tales, women can be liberated from societal constraints and can fulfil many roles. Mainil remarks in his analysis of d’Aulnoy’s work, “ces personnages féminines sont aussi libres de devenir une héroïne indépendante qu’une femme frivole, vindicative, idiote, passive, menteuse, mère sans amour, épouse sans parole, voire une ogresse

aussi monstrueuse que ridiculement coquette” (*Le Rire des fées* 173). In other words, d’Aulnoy and the other writers in this corpus use other women as a foil for their heroines. Women are not all depicted as paragons of virtue, and the writers are not afraid to paint unpleasant traits which can be used to throw the heroine’s virtues into relief. The less pleasant aspects of female personality traits, either through the introduction of stepmothers and stepsisters or through bad fairies – who embody differing vices – allow the writers to threaten the innocence of a young princess, in a way which is not sexual. Those who wish to protect the female child resort to isolation and sequestration to do this. The boredom and frustration which then ensues, as rebellion makes even the most perfect girl long to see a world outside the four walls which protect her, are the catalysts which lead to the adventures which provide the maturing process for the adolescent. Even as the story writers reflect the realities of differences in personality of their female characters, there is no doubt that they valorize those who are able to be independent, and to escape the bounds of domesticity. It is rare that a woman who is able to do this as an adolescent can continue to be free of these constraints; since they remain in the patriarchal system, they accept marriage as the culmination of their adult life. Since matrimony is the outcome for the young woman, with the prince of her dreams, the expectation might be that men are heroic chivalrous knights, serving their ladies and providing them with a courtly ideal of love. However, as seen in the interactions that fathers have with their daughters, the fairy-tale world is a means for authors to expose the weaknesses and failings in relationships. While they offer ideal personifications of gender, they are also skillful in illustrating the flaws their representations. The fantastic microcosm contains a realism which critiques the societal constraints placed on women and suggests that there should be equality with men in the societal responsibilities of women.

Chapter 2

Shape – Shifting the Female: Power and Freedom

In their exploration of male and female roles in society through their stories, the writers of French literary fairy tales select classical myths, symbols, and tropes as well as contemporary events to weave their tales. One of the principal elements they use is the literary trope of metamorphosis, which began with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It has been used since by many authors as a basis for imagining how such a physical transformation might affect their characters as they examine their development and maturation from babyhood to adulthood. This change of human beings into a distinctive non-human form is also used by seventeenth-century French authors as a means to explore differing aspects of human experience. They use the physical change of metamorphosis, a fascinating and complex biological process which some insects and amphibians experience as they change from infancy to adulthood, to consider the physical, mental and sexual changes that humans go through as they too progress into adulthood.

In analyzing the possible reasons for seventeenth-century writers' use of metamorphosis, it is essential to consider their society. Women typically held a subordinate position in society and they were generally either under the control of their fathers, or of their husbands. They could only achieve emancipation if they were widowed, and thereby gained autonomy of their own lives. Women faced "serious consequences of a rebellion against marriage as a legal prison and too frequent childbirth as a health hazard" (*Tender Geographies* 21), and these issues kept most women from openly resisting. All of these societal pressures and difficulties may well have driven the writers' need to suggest radical changes to the societal norms. They use an indirect means, metamorphosis, exaggerating and making these perceived wrongs grotesque and ugly, to

throw them into relief. French authors were not alone in using this literary device. A study of metamorphosis in German texts by David Gallagher comments that figures such as Undine “allow[s] insights into the female psyche, her feelings of alienation and the changing social position of women in society” (386). Clearly authors from these countries are using the same concept. They place their characters into bodies which are radically different from their reality, to permit them to experience either utopian happiness or alienation and isolation; whichever they experience contrasts sharply with the reality of seventeenth-century court life.

Therefore, if Gallagher’s idea that metamorphosis is used as an examination of a society in flux is applied to the French seventeenth-century short-story writers, it is clear that they use the genre to critique society. Jean Mainil’s magisterial work on subversion and the use of humor in fairy tales, shows that these stories do not embrace “le mythe patriarcal de la femme passive qui dort pendant cent ans en attendant l’arrivée du Prince Charmant” (14) nor “le mythe du bonheur conjugal éternel” (*Le rire des fées* 15). In addition to this he states that the seventeenth-century writers do not accept the stereotypical ideas associated with happy endings; their writing “s’oppose à ces topoï génériques, qu’il s’agisse de la félicité obligatoire, de la passivité, la faiblesse ou encore de la ruse de la femme” (26). Consequently, it is possible to see that metamorphosis was used as a means of subtly examining the society of seventeenth-century France towards the end of Louis XIV’s reign. Since criticism of the state and of those in power had resulted in imprisonment, censorship, or suppression of a work, authors had developed more discreet ways of disseminating their views.

One of the ways of circumspectly communicating their ideas was through stories using unreal and wondrous settings. By shape-shifting in this make-believe world, four authors in my corpus – d’Aulnoy, Murat, d’Auneuil, and Mailly– are able to move their characters out of

human experience. Maily is the only male writer of *contes de fées* who uses metamorphosis and corporeal transformation. The other male writers either use cross-dressing, that is, a superficial transformation of outward coverings, to position their personalities in a different environment, which I will examine in the fifth chapter, or they keep them solidly in the male or female human form. Both male and female writers' explorations of these roles demonstrate how societal demands mold women and men into definite gender-specific expectations of behavior. Therefore in this chapter, I investigate how metamorphosis enables the authors to explore how, by being taken out of their human appearance, the women in this imagined world can experience more freedom.

One broad view of metamorphosis is that, in one sense, every human being changes, as he or she matures and grows from a small baby, reliant on others for its needs, to being an independent, physically mature, adult. If I used this broad definition of metamorphosis, then the subject area would be so vast that it would be impossible to look at in any depth. Therefore I have limited the scope of the metamorphoses studied in this chapter to include only stories in which a whole body transformation takes place, and use the original meaning of the word from the Greek, 'shape shifting'. I also exclude animals that talk, as they do not change their original physical form and so remain outside the scope of this study.⁴⁷

Societal Norms and the Need for Liberation

Transformation as a means of exploring situations and developing character has been used in a variety of literatures. In *Aspects of Metamorphoses*, David Asker argues, "where species blending occurs in literature, whatever the specific form, the impulse to place one living

⁴⁷ Talking animals are used by the French fairy-tale writers to help and advise the main characters. As Maya Slater notes, their use in Madame d'Aulnoy's work "indique l'importance de ces créatures hybrides pour créer des effets de suspens et d'ironie dramatique" (159).

form into another is exposed as a way of exploring the nature of human life and its limits within a larger world of nature” (18). Certainly the use of animals allows the fairy-story writers of seventeenth-century France to place their characters into places and situations where the cultural norms of the day, and the *bienséances* would not have permitted them to go.⁴⁸ In this way, females are emancipated and can escape the closed-in life of court as in *La Biche au bois*, are able to rule as Chatte blanche does, or an ugly young man succeeds in gaining access to his love’s bedroom as in *Le Dauphin*. However, in the tales, nature, that is, the natural environment, is not itself a way of testing the characters, nor is its vastness compared to the microcosm of man himself. It is frequently used by the story-tellers as a singular place to which their characters are removed, often to pastoral, utopian surroundings, free from the confines of court, and from those of aristocratic life. D’Aulnoy also uses it as a place to which metamorphosed beings escape, when the conflicts of being both animal and human become overwhelmingly difficult. Both Babiole and Marcassin flee court as Seifert indicates: “they both retreat to their natural habitats when the constraints of human society overwhelm them. In each case these constraints become unbearable while they pursue their unsuitable (because human) marriage partners” (“Animal-Human Hybridity” 248).

One aspect of this aristocratic life was the importance of outward appearance and how a person presented him/herself to the world; clothing was not only a symbol of status, but also of power. Philip Mansel in his work *Dressed to Kill* examines court dress in many realms and the attire worn at the court of Louis XIV. In his discussion, Mansel shows the importance of the correct dress for courtly functions established by the King: for a man “[an] elaborate silk or

⁴⁸ *Bienséance*: a wide definition of this word would be ‘rules for behavior in society’, or ‘etiquette’. In seventeenth-century France, this concept was strictly applied to what was allowed in society, in plays, and other works of literature. Language had to be moderate, and general behavior such that no one would be shocked or offended. Politeness and good manners governed all behavior. Furetière defines it as “[l]’action qui cadre aux temps, aux lieux et aux personnes; [l]’égard que l’on a pour toutes ces sortes de circonstances” (1, sig. Dd.2^r).

velvet coat [...] often covered in jewelry and embroidery”, for a woman “a bare-shouldered embroidered dress with boned bodice, puffed sleeves, a heavily trimmed skirt worn over a hoop, and a long train” (2). Sophie George comments that a woman’s court dress: “ne diffère en rien de celle de la tenue quotidienne des dames de qualité; en revanche, il est beaucoup plus richement agrémenté de divers ornements” (*Modes du XVII^e siècle* 61). In addition, the clothing of the King’s body was very important; Mansel comments that “the only new office that [Louis XIV] created in his own household” (5), was that of *grand maître de la garde-robe*, the head of a section of the King’s retinue entirely responsible for his clothes. Some courtiers received the distinction of being selected to being at the King’s *lever* and *coucher*, helping the King to dress and undress. In addition he comments that “dress was a political issue”; Louis XIV “used dress, like architecture, to send out a signal of his court’s wealth and splendor” (2). In such a society, where power and appearance are so important, liberation, therefore, from not only clothing, but also the human form, and the constraints of rigid societal rules, liberates the metamorphosed person. He or she can enjoy nature and the peaceful tranquility of the countryside. Very often this experience has a maturing effect; the character returns to his or her human body having progressed through a difficult adolescence into maturity. He or she is now a reasoning adult. Such transformations take place in d’Aulnoy’s *L’Oranger et l’abeille*, *Le Rameau d’or*, Murat’s *Le Turbot* and *Le Palais de la vengeance*, d’Auneuil’s *La tyrannie des fées détruite*, and *La Princesse Léonice*, in Mailly’s *Fortunio* and *Le Prince Arc-en-ciel*.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ This tale is found in the *Nouveau recueil des contes de fées* (1721). Mary Elizabeth Storer attributes some of the anthology to Mailly, also stating that she does not know whether he wrote or edited the tales, s’il n’a pas rédigé à sa façon tout le recueil” (171). Following this, Barchilon attributes this edition to him (53) and therefore the 1731 edition of the *recueil* does too: “Authorship attributed in J. Barchilon, *Le conte merveilleux français de 1690 à 1790*, p. 53, citing the 1721 edition.” However both Raymonde Robert and Elisabeth Lemirre in her edition of the *Cabinet des Fées* (2000) class this tale as ‘anonymous’. Robert acknowledges that the tale is a original work, but since the *recueil* was published in 1731, after Mailly’s death, and the earlier 1718 edition is lost, she doubts it is by Mailly. Tony Gheeraert acknowledges that attribution is problematic, but decides “le volume contient effectivement une

Shape-Shifting and its Importance in Fairy Tales.

Joseph Parker considers that generally in the trope of metamorphosis the change reflects the character of the person who shape-shifts. In the introduction to his seminal work *Metamorphosis and Place*, Parker notes “the very outlines and contours of one’s own psyche are drawn in one’s descriptions of an Other which one temporarily inhabits” (2). He contends the projection of the person’s character while metamorphosed does not change from their original personality. This is certainly the case with those that are changed once they have a personality of their own, when they are adolescent. As we will see with animals such as the boar, the monkey, and the pig, the writers of seventeenth-century fairy tales choose a creature whose characteristics embody the personality that they wish to describe. While this use of metamorphosis enables an adolescent character to escape from the confines of society, and frequently parental control, and thus to mature, other stories such as *Le Prince Marcassin*, *Babiole*, and *Le Roi Porc* have the child changed at birth. The newly-born child does not have a personality that can be changed.

Asker continues his thesis on the use of metamorphosis, by defining it as a way in which “a real transformation does take place in the recognition that we rely on shifting our mental focus between human and non-human living forms in order to gain a perspective on human events and identity” (19). Thus having the story told through the animal’s shape, we gain perspective on humanity. By their use of metamorphosis, the writers are able to examine both human activity and individuality. The *conteuses*, in particular, examine the role of women, their attitude to marriage, the societal norms by which they lived, and the constraints and curtailing of their freedom. By using a mammal or (more rarely) a bird or an insect as a vessel for their character, the writers are able to permit women to rule as queen in their own right (an impossibility under

imitation de Mailly” and that it shows “au moins l’influence persistante des fées de Mailly jusqu’au cœur du XVIIIe siècle”. For his complete argument see Introduction to *Les Perroquets, Contes Merveilleux* (655-56).

Salic law) as the Chatte Blanche does, or to travel, as Babiole and the bee in *L'Oranger et l'abeille* do, to marry for love, and to express eroticism and sexual desire, albeit in veiled and discreet manners.

Bruce Clarke has examined the theory of allegory and literary metamorphosis in *Allegories of Writing*. While he does not study the writers of seventeenth-century France, his remarks on the concept and use of metamorphosis are pertinent to this study. In examining Plato and his use of metamorphosis, Clarke notes: "Images of human metamorphosis seem to serve two main purposes. One is the metaphoric allegory as a poetic vision for moral consequences and judgments" (26). This objective can be seen in the writers studied in this dissertation. In these tales, it is the fairies who principally replace the gods found in Greek and Latin texts, and become the omnipotent instruments of judgment, although magicians and enchanters also intervene. As the method of correction for faults in the people they encounter, they use shape-changing. D'Aulnoy explicitly states this in *Serpentin vert*. Discrète learns of a prelapsarian forest in which all the animals live in peace together: "Rien n'était assorti selon son espèce, car il ne s'agissait pas d'être tigre ou mouton; mais seulement des personnes que les fées voulaient punir de leurs défauts" (I: 663). Clearly, the fairies use metamorphosis to show human beings that they have committed faults and to punish them. The fairies are the judges, who mete out the appropriate punishment for the transgressor. Of course, not all the fairies that metamorphose humans do so because they see their role as admonitory. The function of the female fairy is often to teach, assuming a task which is usually the responsibility of a mother in society. Mothers give their daughters the skills to be a wife and parent, but this duty may be taken by the fairies if the mother is absent.

Fairies may be imparters of skills, but the depiction of female traits, as seen in the preceding chapter, is not always approbative. Fairies are not always benevolent, altruistic beings; they have their own desires, and like the Greek and Roman gods who used metamorphosis, they are omnipotent and employ their power for their own personal objectives. They yearn for love, and as Céoré does (*Le Palais de la vengeance*), they punish if the object of their love does not respond in the desired manner. Social recognition is very important, and they react with rage if they are not treated in the same way as their sister fairies. La fée Ecrévisse curses the baby because the Queen has forgotten to invite her to meet the new-born princess, Désirée, (*Biche au Bois* II: 119), and Magotine casts a spell of ugliness on one of the twin princesses for the same reason (*Serpentin vert* I: 630-33). They can exhibit spitefulness, as with the fairy that mutters words and cackles with laughter when visiting the future mother of Marcassin. When the Queen recounts this incident to the King, he remarks: “la plupart [des fées] sont malicieuses, et ce n’est pas toujours bon signe quand elles rient” (*Le Prince Marcassin* II: 456). Fanfreluche demonstrates the same maliciousness (*Babiole* I: 549, 570), as do several fairies in *La Tyrannie des fées détruite*, whose names symbolize their characters: *Rancune*, *Cruelle*, and *Envieuse*. Marcy Farrell remarks in her article on violence in two of d’Aulnoy’s tales, that the fairies in *La Chatte Blanche* are “overtly described as merciless and violent, these fairies are at once more powerful and more despicable than any of the male despots found in [d’]Aulnoy’s work” (37). The power that these iniquitous fairies wield leads them to punish, even when the human being is innocent; punishing a helpless baby, or an adult who unwittingly sees or does something which they should not (*La Tyrannie des fées détruite* 513). The stories demonstrate that, depending on their character and their own desires, magical powers allow fairies to bless or to curse. Their power is often encapsulated at the christening of the child, when they bestow a name on the new-

born baby. As Anne Defrance states: “C’est ainsi que la fée associe pouvoir sur le corps et pouvoir sur les désignations, de manière à leur ôter tout arbitraire” (*Les contes de fées* 111). The naming of infants establishes their power, and enables them to extend the designation to shape-shifting when they so desire.

The second part of Clarke’s thesis on Plato’s use of metamorphosis is that the metamorphosed creatures are “figures for intellectual development” (27). He expands this idea to show how Plato uses his characters to expound the philosophical ideas and concepts of “a metamorphic myth of the soul” (28). There is, however, no explicit didactic and philosophical role expressed by the characters themselves in the *contes*; they do not declaim a message themselves. Some of the characters do show intellectual development, as the story advances, they grow older and reach maturity. It is possible to see that the storytellers who use metamorphosis, by their choice of situation into which they place their characters and how these characters then react (in ways which society would not allow them to in the “real” world), indicate the authors’ views on societal faults and shortcomings, and in this way, the stories themselves fulfill a didactic role.

Very often, however, the metamorphosis is a means of bringing the person to maturity, as he or she develops, there are lessons about societal and behavioral norms are expected. The learning of these standards of conduct usually ends in the lovers being married, with parental blessing, and they return from the environment outside the court to fulfill the role of ruler of their kingdom. In the fairy-tale world, particularly in the one created by d’Aulnoy, women are frequently shown to be able and worthy sovereigns of their kingdoms, free to love and to choose their partners, and able to rebel against the choices of their parents. There is, however, no indication in the stories that the imagined society in these tales can and will learn from the

metamorphosed person's education and example, although there is perhaps a hope that reflection on such stories might cause change in the readership. As Jackson notes "fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints" (3). If the writers of the tales all recognized this lack, then an inference may be made concerning their goal in writing. It must be remembered that salon writing was an activity in which more than one person worked on a tale, and therefore it is possible to consider these themes as generated by several people, as the ideas are spread through the salon society. It would be a mistake to surmise that the *conteuses* themselves are not critiquing society, and indicating there are ways in which it could and should change.

These views are often implicitly expressed by what befalls the hero or heroine but sometimes they are summarized by an explicit *moralité* at the end of the *conte*, particularly by Mme d'Aulnoy. For example, her thoughts on love and wisdom are summarized in the *moralité* of *Le Prince Marcassin*, "Il vaut mieux manquer à l'amour / Que de manquer à la sagesse" (II: 495). In *La Chatte blanche*, she comments on the behavior of Chatte blanche's mother and advises "Mères qui possédez des objets pleins d'appas, / Détestez sa conduite et ne l'imitiez pas" (II: 240). Mme de Murat similarly uses a *moralité* in *Le Prince des feuilles* to comment on the complexities of relationships: "Hélas! que l'on serait heureux, / S'il suffisait d'être fidèle" (177). These comments at the end of the stories do not summarize what might seem to be the main object of the tale, which a reader might have inferred from the title or subject matter. Seifert comments:

The *exempla* formulated by the *moralités* at the end of "Le [C]hat botté," like all the morals and maxims in the seventeenth-century fairy tales, are *not* (as Perrault theorizes) the condensation and generalization of the narrative's purported moral

value. Rather they use the *dulce and utile* formula to reveal the “hidden” values of the moral. (*Fairy Tales* 57)

Neither Maily nor Murat use this device to try and instruct the reader; the story-line and the fate of their characters are sufficient for them to show what lesson they are hoping to impart.

Marina Warner studies Ovid’s work in depth in *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other worlds* before widening out her study to other works, both of literature and of art. In her introduction she examines what metamorphosis in Ovid meant for the person to whom this happened. She remarks that, for Daphne, Hyacinthus, and Narcissus: “From the perspective of creation and the life force, the shape into which they shift more fully expresses them and perfects them than their first form” (4). This can certainly be seen in the arboreal metamorphoses which the seventeenth-century French story-tellers use. Trees are seen as perfect expressions of beauty; they are majestic and a permanent way for lovers to remain together. Other vessels which the story-tellers choose are frequently an expression of an aspect of the character of the human, but it cannot be said that it fully expresses them or perfects them. Metamorphosis improves and teaches them in many cases, so that when they are returned to human form, it is then, at that point, that they reach perfection. However, when Warner looks at Apuleius’s *The Golden Ass*, her definition of classical metamorphosis is one that can be applied to the seventeenth-century use of the trope: “[...]traditional storytelling of a hero or heroine, who journeys through numerous ordeals, through misprisions and neglect, finally to arrive at selfhood, follows this method of metamorphosis; the protagonist’s true self generates itself in its proper character after undergoing several transformations” (*Fantastic Metamorphoses* 85). Although in seventeenth-century French tales, as I will show in the subsequent chapter, the person who is metamorphosed is transformed once, multiple changes do occur but in exceptional circumstances. The quest

trope, however, and the true character developed by the shift-shaped character is identifiable in many of the stories.

Arboreal Metamorphs and Sexuality

Seifert and Stanton, in their joint work on the *conteuses*, note that Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses* was very well known to the *conteuses* (*Enchanted Eloquence* 20). However, like most writers, their treatment of the trope differs from the original. The first thing to note is that most of the choices that the writers make for the container of the human were similarly used in Ovid: animals, birds, insects, and trees. Other holders come directly from seventeenth-century France and reflect the contemporaneous culture. For example, d'Aulnoy uses an orange tree in one of her stories, reflecting the luxury and novelty of this newly-imported tree, new to France and found at Versailles, where Louis XIV had a grove of orange trees.⁵⁰ Second, in Ovid, the metamorphosed body is depicted as a punishment, as a means to requite passion, or as a means to educate. The seventeenth-century story also uses the first and last of these, punishment or teaching occur in all the *contes* which feature metamorphosis, but shape-shifting is not used as a means to requite passion. The *contes* differ from those of Ovid's work, in which, as will be seen, the transformations are much more violent and final. D'Aulnoy's use of shape-shifting, as that of the other writers, does contain one aspect that is found in Ovid: metamorphosis is powerful. Jasmin comments on metamorphoses in *Le Pigeon et la colombe* and *La Biche au bois*, "derrière l'humour inhérent au décalage habituel entre la forme seconde (animale) et l'être premier (humain) s'énonce peut-être, dans une notation apparemment marginale, une réflexion sur le pouvoir de la métamorphose" (67). In the seventeenth-century

⁵⁰ Note by Nadine Jasmin in her edition of d'Aulnoy's tales: "Les orangeries de Versailles sont célèbres. [...]. En 1663, Louis XIV fait personnellement transporter les orangers de Vaux-le-Vicomte à Versailles" (362).

story, metamorphosis involves swift and comprehensive physical changes, loss of power or free will, and sometimes speech.

The differences between Ovid and the stories under discussion are particularly noticeable in the metamorphosis into trees. In Ovid, it is women in his poem who undergo this transformation. Dryope is changed “and the slow creeping bark climbed upwards from her feet and covered all her loins” (2:27). Her son, who was nursing, “felt his mother’s breast grow hard” (28). Dryope retains speech as the bark rises, but it is clear that the transformation into the tree kills her: “In the same moment did she cease to speak and cease to be” (31). Myrrha is turned into a tree at the end of a pregnancy, and goes into labor. The tree suffers the pains of labor like Myrrha would, “still like a woman in agony the tree bends itself, groans oft, and is wet with falling tears”. With the aid of a charm from the goddess of childbirth, Lucina, the birth takes place. “Then the tree cracked open, the bark was rent asunder, and it gave forth its living burden, a wailing baby boy” (101). In the seventeenth-century fairy story, it is either males who become trees (perhaps reflecting the gender of the French word), or the couple is changed. In these tales, the transformation is not violent and does not result in death. Both d’Aulnoy and Murat have the male lovers in their stories changed into trees, but it is the reaction of the females who see this shape-shift which is of interest.

In *L’Oranger et l’abeille* the transformation comes about as a result of the magic wand wielded by the princess, which she loses, and so the change cannot be immediately undone. However, the prince in this story certainly does not die. Seifert devotes several pages to the study of this *conte* (*Fairy Tales* 122-26). He notes that Aimée encloses herself in one of his flowers: “the text interprets this act as an expression of love and, by means of metamorphosis “tenderness” takes the most physical of forms (123). He further convincingly argues that the “suggestive scene

between Aimé and Aimée ”, or as they are at the time, the orange tree and the bee, “ tells of the many pleasures that his flowers can afford *her* [...] and that it is the heroine who is the active partner (she entered one of Aimé’s flowers)” (125). Therefore Seifert suggests, from this reading of the story, that although the man in this story is loving and caring, the woman, and (by extension there is an inference that this is a possibility for other women) is not only very resolute in making her way in the world, but is ready to seek and obtain a satisfying sexual relationship. Further sexual references can be inferred by the recounting of the balm which the bee fetches to heal the wound caused by Linda, but this time it is Aimé who receives pleasure from the administration of the ointment, which “fut bien moins par l’excellence du baume, que par le plaisir qu’il eut de voir la princesse Abeille prendre tant de soins de son mal: elle y mettait tous les jours de son baume” (365). Robert comments, however, that in contrast to the more licentious *contes* of the eighteenth century, *conteuses* like d’Aulnoy “ignorent (ou peut-être feignent d’ignorer) le caractère scabreux ou pervers des situations qu’elles décrivent” (180). Certainly there are hints in this story, but the tales are never overt in their sexual references.

The role of Aimée and her reaction to her lover are obviously the main interest in this story, but the character of Linda also merits consideration. She provides a foil to Aimée, giving insight into her jealousy, and therefore her love for Aimé. Aimée’s stinging of Linda provides comedy, and contrasts the two princesses. Linda has chosen to live apart “parce qu’elle craignait de n’être pas toujours aimée de celui qu’elle choisirait pour époux” (I: 361). Linda’s interaction with the two metamorphs provides d’Aulnoy with the means to show a strong female figure can rule wisely and well, seeking help when the tree is damaged, and being magnanimous when Aimé and Aimée are returned to human form (I: 366-67). This interpretation however, omits one element in the story. Linda has banned men from her palace, and yet is seduced by the scent and

beauty of the tree. She wants it, and has it transported to her own garden. She is so troubled by it, and “mourait d’envie” (1: 363) to have its flowers, to the extent that, she makes herself a suit of armor in order to get to the tree, urged on by one of her companions to imitate Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece, thereby avoiding the stings of the bee. The comparison to Jason, a kingly warrior who sets out on a quest, indicates the type of woman Linda is; she is not a fireside-loving domesticated woman. D’Aulnoy suggests that she has a strong attraction for the tree, and implies that if Aimé were to have had a relation with Linda, that “il ne lui serait demeuré ni bras ni jambes” (1: 365). Linda would have devoured him. Jasmin in her commentary in her edition of these tales considers Linda’s desire for a *bouton* to have a sexual connotation, and she notes the gender inversion; it is Linda, a female, that wishes to pluck the flower. She reminds the reader of the allusion to *Le Roman de la Rose* in which the (male) lover’s goal is to pluck the rose in the garden. Jasmin succinctly references this story as “la métaphore sexuelle de la rose à cueillir” (I: 364, note 25). This tree plays a key role in showing the passionate desire that women can feel as well as the different lives that they can experience, and that they can be able leaders in society, and active partners in sexual relationships.

In a different tree metamorphosis, Murat’s unhappy lovers are both changed into trees at the end of *Anguilette*. The lovers have died; Atimir at the hand of his rival, and Hébé by her own hand: “Anguilette [...] toucha avec sa baguette les restes infortunés de l’admirable Atimir et de la belle Hébé; dans l’instant même ils se changèrent en deux arbres d’une beauté parfaite” (117). What is surprising about this story is that these two lovers have been married to other people, and Atimir eloped with Hébé’s elder sister. Anguilette had warned her that to meet with Atimir again will result in death: “songez [...] à ne chercher jamais la présence fatale d’Atimir; il vous en coûterait la vie” (100). As a result, these two are united as trees in death as they never were in

life. Seifert sees this metamorphosis into trees as “the unhappy ending in these tales [which] is not only a negation of received conceptions of love and sexuality but also – thereby– a yearning for different ones” (*Fairy Tales* 133). Seifert develops a cogent argument showing that this tale shows a utopic vision of a world, which nevertheless cannot satisfy the desires of Héb . There is a suggestion that if H b  had stayed on the island there would be a solution to the suffering caused by love and desire, since there she is composed, even phlegmatic (133-34). This outcome is not sufficient, since her desire for tranquility is superseded by love and sexual desire. The richness of these fairy tales makes this a possible interpretation, but others can be understood.

On the one hand, the two lovers are united in death. On the other, both H b  and Atimir have married other people, and betrayed them. In addition to this, H b , although given the gifts of great beauty, riches and wisdom by the fairy, desires love, and is consumed by the desire to have a loving relationship. This can be construed as indicative of the dissatisfaction that superficial, external riches bring, and that matters of the heart are more important. Murat makes it clear that the fairy is impotent to guide and help her in this matter. She does not know about romantic love. She can only advise and warn H b  that once Atimir has eloped with her sister, that she must avoid meeting him again. It would seem, however, that Murat is advocating against being overcome by emotion; for in this tale, being in love has disastrous consequences. H b ’s husband is weakened by his emotions to the point where he cannot resist her, and after his initial refusal, he gives into her, and allows her to return to her father’s court. Murat clearly shows that his judgment and rationality are blinded by his love: “peut-on refuser quelque chose   ce qu’on aime? Il crut plaire   la belle H b  par son aveugle complaisance” (109). As Patard succinctly remarks: “dans ce dernier conte, Mme de Murat d montre l’ineptie d’une lecture morale du conte, puisque la f e, qualifi e de “sage” ne parvient pas   faire entendre la voix de la raison”

(41). This tale gives us a portrait of succumbing to desire, and the folly of marrying someone with whom one is not in love.

Female Curiosity and Fulfilling the Female Role.

At first sight, the inclusion of *Le Serpentin vert* in a section on women's metamorphoses might appear arbitrary, and I will examine the metamorphosis of Serpentin vert in the subsequent chapter. The story is included here because of the transformation which Laid Laideronnette undergoes and the use of the myth of Psyche. D'Aulnoy's ugly Psyche is not metamorphosed herself, but her actions cause Serpentin vert to be condemned to another seven years in his metamorphosed form. Yet through the suffering she causes him and her own trials, it is only when she too has changed, and has learnt discretion, that she can rescue Serpentin vert from Hades. D'Aulnoy in the *moralité* at the end of the story underlines that Laideronnette's curiosity and her inability to learn from previous experiences, faults she shares with many humans, are at the core of this story. "Hélas! de leurs malheurs passés / La plupart des mortels, curieux insensés, / N'en fait pas un meilleur usage" (I: 668).

D'Aulnoy uses the legend of Psyche, from *The Golden Ass* written by Lucius Apuleius (2nd century AD), to create *Serpentin vert*. There are similarities in the stories, as both Psyche and Laideronnette succumb to curiosity about their husbands, and therefore lose them for a while. As Anne Birberick points out in her study of the Psyche myth by d'Aulnoy, however, "traditionally, Psyche's curiosity about her husband's identity has transformed her along with Eve and Pandora, into a symbol of woman's innate wickedness" ("Rewriting Curiosity" 136). In addition, Laideronnette becomes curious about her mysterious husband only when she has read the legend of Psyche, which makes her reflect on her own situation because "elle y trouvait beaucoup de

choses qui avaient du rapport à son aventure” (I: 648).⁵¹ Laideronnette, as her name suggests, does not have the outstanding beauty of Psyche, and does not become physically exquisite until she has developed a beautiful character. As Christine Buehler points out, another difference that d’Aulnoy makes is that 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” (141). The allusion to the myth of Psyche in d’Aulnoy’s story is interesting for the changes made to the original myth, but because of the reference to the word *psyche*, from Greek, meaning ‘butterfly’ and ‘breath of life’, and therefore mind, spirit or soul. By drawing on this allusion, d’Aulnoy demonstrates that the spirit, or temperament, of the young woman, shown by her self-determination and choices, is more important than her beauty.

Paula Allen draws on the wider meanings of Psyche in her study of metamorphosis in twentieth-century American literature. In the introduction to her work she comments on the myth of Psyche, who was depicted as a butterfly, the personification of a soul. Her interpretation is thought-provoking because of the analogies she draws with the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly. Allen first analyses, and shows how, in biological terms, the transition from larva to adult necessitates a complete dissolution of the original insect into something completely different: “a final breakdown of form that must take place before a new form can be built from its remnants” (5). She then skillfully applies this idea of complete disassembling and rebuilding to what happens to Psyche, as she changes from adolescence to full maturity. She concludes that this new being realizes “that she is no longer compatible with the terms of her former existence – that her self-conception is no longer compatible with the gender role forced onto her by society” (6). Allen takes the view, as Judith Butler does, that gender is largely a social and cultural

⁵¹ Jasmin notes that it is the contemporary work by Jean de La Fontaine: *Les Amours de Psyché et Cupidon* to which d’Aulnoy is referring. I: 648 n. 16.

construct. In *Gender Trouble* Butler notes: “as a shifting and contextual phenomenon gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations” (15). If this thesis is applied to those metamorphosed in the *contes*, it is possible to see that, for the majority, the result of physical metamorphosis is a new person, who has changed and can be successful in his or her position in society. However, in the metamorphosis of women, and their subsequent return to a human body, there is no indication that the women were incapable of accomplishing the gendered role that society assigned them. They are often able to act with much more freedom as a metamorph, and in ways that the female gender in their society would not have permitted. For the female shape-shifters, there is no concept of them not being able, having undergone metamorphosis, to return to the aristocratic position they left. They satisfy the societal expectations of marriage and procreation, and so in direct contrast to the observations of Allen, the women do not find that their experiences as a metamorph make their gendered role inconsistent with their self-perception, rather the reverse is true, and they are able to fully accept their position and duties as a result of the bodily transformation they have undergone.

Retaining Humanity in the Metamorph

The writers’ choice of metamorphosis reveals what they wish the human in the new body to be able to do: obviously a tree will not walk, an insect will only have the strength of a small being, birds will fly and animals eat, run, and behave as the species to which they are newly assigned. This taxonomy, or classification of species, was first observed by Aristotle. He categorized living things according to their appearance and shared behaviors.⁵² D’Aulnoy in

⁵² “The first great generalizer in classification was Aristotle, who virtually invented the science of logic, of which for 2,000 years classification was a part. [...] In his writings, he described a large number of natural groups, and, although he ranked them from simple to complex, his order was not an evolutionary one. He was far ahead of his

particular is assiduous in assigning the correct physical attributes to the new beings: for example the frog in *La Grenouille Bienfaisante* takes a year to climb up from the depths of the cave where the Queen has been imprisoned, and seven years of travel to reach the court and the King.

However, d'Aulnoy requires this frog to help the Queen: the frog manages to cut wood to re-construct a shelter for the Queen, and also makes a bed for her to lie upon so, unusually, this frog is half fairy (II: 89). The feats of strength which d'Aulnoy's frog performs are clearly beyond the power of a normal, non-magical frog.

The choice of the writer to allow speech in the creature is significant: the majority of metamorphosed beings maintain their ability to reason and to speak. It is rare, and therefore to be remarked, when a metamorphosed person cannot speak in the *contes*. The lack of speech, the ability to express thoughts and emotions in words, might be considered a sign of an absence of human qualities and reasonableness in the creature. Conversely, it can also signify the depths of depravity in the fairy or magician, who punishes the person they have metamorphosed even more deeply by depriving them of this human ability. The suffering that the removal of speech causes is expressed by King Grandimont, who is metamorphosed into a lion, and who regains speech as a result of meeting Esprit. Seeing the lion's distress, Esprit comments that if he were on the island that the Queen would be able to offer some comfort. As soon as he has said this, "le lion ... lui [dit] d'une voix humaine: "cher étranger que les dieux m'envoient sans doute pour finir mes malheurs, ou du moins pour les adoucir en me donnant la faculté de les exprimer" " (*L'île de la magnificence* 247). The princess who is transformed into a doe cannot speak (*La Biche au bois*). She is recognized by her servant by an expression of emotion: "[elle] vit avec une extrême

time, however, in separating invertebrate animals into different groups and was aware that whales, dolphins, and porpoises had mammalian characters and were not fish. Lacking the microscope, he could not, of course, deal with the minute forms of life. The Aristotelian method dominated classification until the 19th century".

"taxonomy." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 04 Nov. 2012.

surprise de grosses larmes qui coulaient de ses yeux; elle ne douta plus que c'était sa chère princesse" (*La Biche au bois* II:140). The fear that the princess feels as a doe, and therefore her vulnerability to attacks by animals in the forest, adds to her plight. D'Aulnoy underlines the horror and fear that metamorphosis can cause.

With very few exceptions, for example the trees in *Anguillette* and the sheep in *Le Mouton* who remain metamorphosed in death, metamorphs regain human form at the end of the tale. While they may exhibit human characteristics while they are transformed, they also behave as animals with their needs for exercise, diet and shelter. In considering the humanity of these characters, a useful thesis is propounded by Rosemary Jackson in considering how writers use fantasy in their works and what sort of writing this produces. She posits "there are 'marvellous' works which invest otherness with supernatural qualities" (24). This is certainly true in the tales, where magical transformations take place, and fairies intervene, but the metamorph retains humanity in its emotions, a human figure, for all its animal or insect external appearance.

The Story-Tellers' Objectives in Using Metamorphosis.

The difficulties, surprise, and fear that some characters feel when they are changed is not universal, and many just accept and adapt to their new being, and suffer no anguish. All the metamorphosed characters maintain the sexual identity of their original body, that is to say that they are metamorphosed into an object which carries the same gender as themselves.⁵³ This raises the question of whether a metamorphosed body conforms to sexual stereotypes or whether a changed person is released from the constraints of their gender, or whether they still display characteristics associated with their gender. Within the world of the seventeenth-century French

⁵³ The only exception to this, in the stories in the body of work in this dissertation, is when two lovers are changed into trees. *Anguillette* 117.

fairy tale, metamorphosis enables the writer to escape the societal constraints that a gendered body places onto a character, and to place the transmuted person into situations which they would not or could not enter into as a human.

Examining how the metamorph lives in the new milieu in which his or her new body is found is one of the ways in which it is possible to see how the literary trope is used. In Madame d'Aulnoy's tales, metamorphosis can be seen as a means of educating a person so that when they return to a human body, they are then able to fit into the role that they were born to. Raymonde Robert, in her study of the contes, considers that metamorphosis is one method by which writers of *contes* express a central function, of "méfait", which may be expressed in the following manner: "enlèvement, métamorphose, sommeil magique, dons maléfiques, mauvais traitements" which then lead on to "réparation du méfait" (18). Other critics have concentrated their studies only on Madame d'Aulnoy's tales. Her tales are not only more numerous, – she wrote twenty-four *contes de fées* –, but were also widely read in the eighteenth century and translated into other languages. The richness, length, and variety of her tales have led many critics to examine her stories, and to compare them to others written at the time. Jean Mainil remarks that d'Aulnoy "fut la conteuse la plus adulée du règne du Louis XIV" and that her works "seront distribués 34 fois en livrets populaires contre douze fois pour Perrault" (*Le Rire des fées* 19). Joan DeJean also comments on d'Aulnoy's fame and output (*Tender Geographies* 58). Jasmin in her introduction to her work devoted to Madame d'Aulnoy examines why d'Aulnoy's *contes* are worthy of the interest of critics from the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. (*Naissance du conte féminin* 13-20). Jasmin sees d'Aulnoy's use of metamorphosis as a way to "exprimer à son tour, sous un voile transparent, la vérité sociale et morale des êtres dont elle révèle les faiblesses et les travers individuels" (281). Many of Madame d'Aulnoy's stories, and those of other seventeenth-century

fairy-story writers, use metamorphosis to correct behavior: misfortune befalls the character, because of some fault in that person, who then at the end of the story is restored to a human form, frequently more beautiful in body and certainly with more acceptable behaviors.

Another variation on the use of metamorphosis is an unwarranted transformation, and sometimes the metamorphosis takes place because the parent of the new-born child has transgressed and the child's metamorphosis is a punishment. On one hand the malevolent beings which inflict the punishment merit consideration. They are frequently punishing the metamorphosed person because their advances have been refused. They desire to enter into relationships and to be accepted; their rejection – whether their sexual desires are thwarted or their social acceptance denied – makes them vengeful and cruel. It would be a gross simplification to assume that all of their malice is the result of repudiation – some of their characters are just simply evil. In his glossing of *La Chatte Blanche*, in which the Queen has promised her daughter to the fairies for fruit that she desired when pregnant, Seifert notes “In the second half of the final moral, d’Aulnoy [then] links the heroine’s metamorphosis to her mother’s ‘folly’ ” (*Fairy Tales* 184).

Tairai-je cette mère et cette folle envie,
 Qui fit à Chatte Blanche éprouver tant d’ennuis ?
 Pour goûter de funestes fruits,
 Au pouvoir d’une fée elle la sacrifie. (II: 240)

This punishment of the child because of the fault of the parent, usually the mother, is examined by d’Aulnoy in *Babiole*, *La Chatte blanche*, and *La Grenouille Bienfaisante*. As explored in the chapter on women’s bodies, D’Aulnoy uses the motif from folklore of a pregnant mother who desires fruit, taking elements of folk stories, and developing and changing them, so

that, as Mainil notes, “ le conte se sépare ensuite du Conte-Type” (*Le Rire des fées* 179). More often, the metamorphosis is not because of a parental fault but results from a flaw in the character of the fairy, which is basically evil, and punishes an unfortunate person for some real or perceived wrong. This retribution may happen either because a parent does not return the fairy’s love, or does not invite the fairy to the christening, or does not give the fairy her due recognition. Such metamorphoses may have a profound effect on the parents and in reaction to their monstrous child, the parent may feign a stillbirth (*Le Roi porc*), or plot its death (*Babirole*), or try to pretend that the animal is a human. (*Le Prince Marcassin*). These tales all ensure the survival of the cursed infant and its eventual return to human form.

Another tale by d’Auneuil, *La Tyrannie des fées détruite*, reveals that the fairies are tyrants, and full of anger: “la colère implacable des fees” (520). The use of the adjective “implacable” shows how strongly the fairies feel; they cannot be appeased, and their ire is excessive and violent. In this tale, a fairy metamorphoses a couple which sees her bathing. It is not because of her beauty that she punishes them, but because she has feathers on her body. “Le dépit d’être découverte lui fit souhaiter que ceux qui l’avaient vue ne pussent le dire, et qu’ils devinssent eux-mêmes tourterelles” (513). This metamorphosis happens in spite of the fact that the fairies had decided themselves that the couple was meant for each other and should marry. In the end, however, they are returned to human form and they do marry. In *Serpentin vert* d’Aulnoy insists on the use of metamorphosis by the fairies to teach humans. The fairies have a huge task in trying to fulfill their role of producing good constituents of their communities. Many of the creatures Laideronnette meets, while *Serpentin vert* is away from her, in Hades as a punishment, are revealed by the canary to be metamorphosed beings. It explains to her:

[Les fées] 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 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. (I: 659)

For d'Aulnoy, the faults or failings of the human being influence the choice of being into which they are changed. Their metamorphosis is a punishment and is commensurate to their defect. Catherine Marin, in her article on pleasure and pain in the stories, notices that the people who have been metamorphosed in this manner can recount their sad stories to Laideronnette, and as a consequence, she will be comforted and distracted: "Au lieu d'affliger Laideronnette, ... la triste situation dans laquelle ces êtres se retrouvent condamnés devrait la distraire. Les mésaventures des uns contribuent donc au plaisir des autres" (266). In this tale by d'Aulnoy there is a time-limit imposed by the fairies for the duration of the metamorphosis. The person must do penance, and improve, and is then returned to human form. This would seem to be overtly religious in its connotations, and again reflects the fact that in these tales, fairies have taken the place of the gods. It is unsurprising that d'Aulnoy would use references to her own, contemporary, culture, where the court practiced Catholicism, to provide her readers with symbols and ideas with which they could identify, to engage them in the story, and therefore be able to expose them to her views.

This quasi-religious realization of wrong-doing, improvement in behavior and restoration does not always occur. Some tales do not end happily; d'Aulnoy's *Le Mouton* ends with the death of the metamorphosed person, the ram who dies of a broken heart. He is betrayed by

Merveilleuse's failure to return to him from her father's court, and this tale also explores the theme of an unnatural bond between father and daughter. In Murat's *Anguilette* the unhappy couple remains as trees, and Murat recounts that the fairy named them "*Charmes, pour conserver à jamais la mémoire de ceux qu'on avait vus briller dans ces malheureux amants*" (117). Their unhappiness is not confined to the lovers themselves; these two people have damaged those who loved them: not only their respective spouses, but also the princess's parents. In *Le Pigeon et la Colombe*, both Constantio and Constantia contemplate suicide as a means of escaping their unhappiness. Constantio wishes to kill himself when he is told by his mother that Constantia is dead, Constantia considers suicide to be a preferable to an arranged marriage to a giant. Since suicide is a mortal sin for those who are of the Catholic faith, they are both prevented from taking this course. In the end, however, these two choose to flee and remain metamorphosed and to live "*une vie innocente, sans ambition, sans désirs*" (360). Unlike the usual happy ending, Murat shows a more bitter, perhaps more realistic view of life. Rather than having to live in a way which they have not chosen, the lovers flee into nature, echoing the tales where a bucolic life is a way of achieving tranquility.

In another tale, written by Murat, the tone is darker, and the metamorphosis is never removed. The princes in *Le Palais de la vengeance* have been trees for two thousand years, changed for trying to escape the enchantment and servitude of the fairy Céoré, and are never returned to human shape. Murat has a more acerbic tone in her stories, and her characters are punished for infidelity; the men who sought "*gloire*" (154) are changed into trees, as they were perceived as unfaithful by Céoré. Others are punished for being in love and happy, as are Imis and Philax in this tale. Their stories end with them being locked up in the palace together, and

nothing disturbs their happiness, but they “s’ennu [ient] du bonheur même” (158). For Murat’s characters, there is not always a happy ending.

Similarly, in d’Aulnoy’s *Le Nain jaune*, after the death of le Roi des Mines d’or, Toute Belle dies of despair, and they are both metamorphosed into palm trees, their branches intertwined, joined together as trees as they never were as humans: “ils se caressent de leurs branches entrelacées, et immortalisent leurs feux par leur tendre union” (I: 615). The use of the word “feu” suggests that their love is a passion that burns them, that is extremely strong. It has consumed them, and can only be joined by a transformation into another, immobile species. Trees, as a means of perpetuating a metamorphosis, were also used by Ovid. The fixity of a tree, unable to move and yet able to provide shelter, or to intertwine its branches, gives a pathos and permanence to this type of metamorphosis which is absent in an animal or insect transformation. Seifert sees a positive outcome in this transformation into trees: “what was a tragedy becomes, apparently, a fate even happier than a final marriage. For the protagonists, love acquires an irreversible, physical form” (*Fairy Tales* 131).

The Progeny of Maternal Transgressions

Two stories by d’Aulnoy, *Babiole* and *La Chatte blanche*, use the motif of the child who is punished as a result of the mother’s angering the fairy. *Babiole* is the result not only of Fanferluche being dissatisfied with *Babiole*’s mother, but also with her grandmother. “Et [la reine] disait sans cesse que la fée Fanferluche était venue à sa naissance, et n’ayant pas été satisfaite de la reine sa mère, s’était mise en furie et ne lui avait souhaité que des chagrins” (547). The mother of *Chatte blanche*, as examined in the previous chapter, desires the fruit that she sees in the fairies’ garden so much during her pregnancy, that she becomes dangerously ill when she cannot have it. She offers “mes royaumes, mon cœur, mon âme, pourvu que j’aie du fruit” (II:

219). The fairies grant her wish, on the condition that she gives them possession of the baby princess when she is born, so they may bring her up.

Babiole, born a beautiful baby, is metamorphosed into a monkey, shortly after her birth. Critics interpret this metamorphosis in differing ways. Birberick, in a feminist interpretation, remarks that “in having Babiole metamorphose into a guenon, d’Aulnoy has selected an animal that is clearly marked as feminine and whose status allows her indirectly to comment on the place of women in society” (“Gendering Metamorphosis” 97). Kathryn Hoffman, however, sees her transformation as aberrant, as “one of the few [transformations] explicitly marked in a fairy tale as monstrous. The queen laments, at the sight of her jumping, cavorting, walnut-eating, hairy princess” (69). There is no doubt that the Queen is ashamed, even horrified by this metamorphosis, and usually females are changed into beautiful creatures.⁵⁴ However, the Queen’s reaction to her baby is perhaps indicative of her attitude to being a mother of a girl. She sighs: “une fille qui me coûtera bien des larmes et bien des soupirs, ne serais-je donc pas plus heureuse de n’en point avoir?” (1:548). When the beautiful baby girl is shape-shifted, the Queen’s concern is for herself : quelle honte *pour moi*, tous mes sujets croiront que *j’ai fait un monstre*” (I: 549, my italics). Her solution to the problem is to have the monkey killed. Thus, Hoffman’s assertion that this fairy tale contains monstrosity is correct, but I would contend that it is the mother who is monstrous in her behavior, and not Babiole. This lack of grotesqueness is demonstrated in the new home Babiole finds with her aunt. She is attractive, clever and accomplished (I: 550-51). She is even required to provide insights to the rest of the court: “il fallait qu’elle réponde comme une sibylle à cent questions spirituelles et savantes” (I: 551). Furetière defines *Sybille* as “une Prophetesse qu’on croyait inspirée de Jupiter” and further

⁵⁴ For a description of the natural transformations that d’Aulnoy uses, see Jane Tucker Mitchell, *A Thematic Analysis of Mme d’Aulnoy’s Contes de fées*. (Oxford, Miss. University of Mississippi Press, 1978). 70.

comments “on appelle proverbialement une vieille fille et scavante” (III, sig. H2h^f). So the simian body, which could be regarded as monstrous in one sense, hides an attractive person, full of wisdom. The female metamorphs, particularly those who suffer as a result of their mother’s transgressions, are shown to be resourceful and talented, in contrast to their more narcissistic mothers. One of the ways that d’Aulnoy shows this is by the way that Babiole is returned to human form, cracking the olive, “une [si] grande abondance d’huile parfumée que tombant sur ses pattes, elles devinrent [...] les plus belles mains du monde” (I: 567). She then rubs the rest of her body with the oil – a sacramental allusion – and becomes a beautiful woman.⁵⁵ The choice to make her hands change first is significant, showing her ability to act, and to be proactive in bringing about change.

Babiole, in spite of her possibly monstrous monkey exterior, is shown to retain the spirit and heart of a human, and although her shape has shifted, she suffers because she has human emotions. “Babiole avait un cœur, et ce cœur n’avait pas été métamorphosé comme le reste de sa petite personne” (I: 551). Therefore when she is rejected by her cousin the prince, when she declares her love and desire to marry him, she is fully cognizant of both her animal nature which she controls and her human feelings: “vous êtes heureux, seigneur, ajouta Babiole, que je n’aie pas tout à fait l’esprit d’une guenuche, une autre que moi vous aurait déjà crevé les yeux, mordu le nez, arraché les oreilles, mais je vous abandonne aux réflexions que vous ferez un jour sur votre indigne procédé” (I: 558). D’Aulnoy further underlines her spirit and clear sight by the adverbs she uses to describe first Babiole’s reaction to the Queen’s choice of a monkey husband. “Cela signifie, madame, répliqua *impatiemment* Babiole, que vous êtes résolue de me sacrifier à ce vilain monstre pour éviter sa colère” (I: 557; my italics). Later, as she argues further, she replies “*dédaigneusement*” to the Queen’s arguments that she will be given gifts, as the

⁵⁵ Ps. 22.5, Ps.26.1, Jas.5.14 etc.

monkey's first wife was. She flees the court, and this arranged marriage, and would prefer death than suffer that her fate be in hands other than her own: "quand les disgrâces sont à un certain point, l'on n'apprehende plus rien; et la mort même peut être envisagée comme un bien" (563). This desire evinced by the female protagonists in both *Babiole* and *La Chatte blanche* to choose their own marriage partners can clearly be seen as a comment on the practice of arranged marriages, which were not for love, and were frequently for social, political, or monetary advantage.

Hoffman contends that the use of a monkey as a metamorph reflects seventeenth-century's society fascination with and curiosity about hirsute females. The accomplishments that Babiole demonstrates, both in her speech and artistically, reflect this. Hoffmann remarks: "in the real world of early modern Europe, several multilingual, internationally portraited, and even harpsichord-playing hairy girls had already achieved enormous international fame" (70). Thus, actual events are recounted in the story of Babiole: "elle excellait à jouer du clavecin, on lui en avait fait un merveilleux dans une huitre à écaille; il venait des peintres des quatre parties du monde, et particulièrement d'Italie pour la peindre" (I: 551). This representation of real events gives d'Aulnoy the chance to reflect on her era's reaction to, and fascination with, human or other curiosities. These novelties were part of a widening world view, as people travelled and discovered things that were different from both the known, but also the accepted, norms. It is possible to see a desire to encourage acceptance of human beings who do not conform physically to these norms. In addition, since Babiole is born a princess, this also allows d'Aulnoy to explore the conflict between her desires as a woman and the expectations of society for a high-born female. As Seifert remarks, "the characters of the fairy tales inhabit a universe in which their aristocratic nature – their physical, emotional, and intellectual superiority – is destined to

prevail” (*Fairy Tales* 83). Therefore, unlike real princesses of the time, Babiole is able to rebel, to state her love interest, and to refuse to enter into an arranged marriage. She is able to follow her desires.

Like Babiole, *Chatte blanche* is also able to follow her desires, but in a different way. The baby princess is raised and tended by the fairies in a tower, with a parrot and a monkey for company. Looking out one day when she is an adolescent, she sees a young knight and falls in love. Like Babiole, she desires to follow her own heart and to make her own choices. She does not want to be married to Migonnet, a monkey-king who is the fairies’ choice for her, but to marry the young, beautiful king she loves. Not only does she fall in love but she also rebels against the fairies, decides that he will be her spouse, and she marries him. When her act of free will is discovered, punishment follows. Her spouse is eaten by the dragon and she tries to commit suicide by throwing herself into the dragon’s mouth. The fairies, however, intervene and she is metamorphosed into a white cat. Marcelle Welch interprets this metamorphosis as “une princesse exilée dans le corps d’une chatte après une joyeuse expérience sexuelle” (“Rébellion et résignation” 136). The punishment is long because she has dared to follow her own desires, thwarted the plans of the fairies, and become sexually active. The fairies decide “il faut [...] la réserver à de plus longues peines, une prompte mort est trop douce pour cette indigne créature” (238). Not only is she punished, but her courtiers are also punished, “[les fées] métamorphosèrent tous les seigneurs et toutes les dames du royaume en chats et chattes, elles en laissèrent d’autres à qui l’on ne voyait que les mains” (238). This dehumanizing of those who surround the princes can be seen as providing her with companions during her punishment, and permits her to show her ability to reign, without a male to help her.

The princess, held captive in a tower during her adolescence, only gains authority and freedom while she is a metamorphosed being. As Patricia Hannon remarks “ true to the vast majority of [d’] Aulnoy’s tales, this metamorphosis empowers the heroine, who converts her desire into poetry and presides over her own alternative court” (85). Hannon’s remarks are certainly true for this tale; Chatte blanche is given authority as a metamorphosed being. Princesses and noblewomen are more autonomous when they are liberated from the constraints which their gender places on their lives. This emancipation is very evident when they are cross-dressed, and disguised as men. However, if Hannon’s statement is applied to metamorphosed princesses in d’Aulnoy’s tales, Chatte blanche is an exception. Babiole, the doe (*La Biche au bois*) and the bee (*L’Oranger et l’abeille*) are empowered in one respect, in that in their metamorph form they can act more freely, but they do not rule, and their desire is expressed more overtly. Certainly, however, in her metamorphosed body, Chatte blanche is a good sovereign, able to provide her subjects with the necessities of life for their survival, to keep the peace in her kingdom and to vanquish her enemies. In addition to this, she is able to give the prince the means to fulfill the increasingly difficult and bizarre demands of his father:(a clever little dog, a piece of cloth so fine it can pass through the eye of a needle, and the most beautiful princess). In addition, one can speculate why d’Aulnoy chose the youngest son to be the prince for whom she provides. It may be that she is following folklore tradition, or that she wants to reverse the societal norms that have the firstborn inherit the throne, though there is no suggestion that the older two brothers would make bad kings. The third son being the one who eventually gains riches and governs wisely is a trope in fairy stories, for example the miller’s youngest son in Perrault’s *Le Maître chat* who becomes the marquis de Carabas. In d’Aulnoy’s tale each of the sons are rewarded with a kingdom, by Chatte blanche, as is their father.

The choice of the youngest prince may enable the metamorphosed princess to educate and guide the prince. Her power and gifts enable the prince to develop and to become the mature royal person that his birth demands. When he cannot find the piece of fabric which is inside a walnut, for his second task, his reaction is “Chatte Blanche, Chatte blanche, tu t’es moquée de moi.” However the response to his lack of faith in the cat is swiftly punished: “il sentait dans ce moment la griffe d’un chat sur sa main, dont il fut si bien égratignée qu’il en saignait” (II: 214). He does not know why this deep scratch happens, as d’Aulnoy explains, but it does have the desired effect of making him act. “Il ne savait si cette griffade était faite pour lui donner du cœur ou pour lui faire perdre courage; cependant il ouvrit le grain de millet” (214). Even at a distance, Chatte blanche can intervene and make her prince act. She has the power to direct events, and affect the outcome of the prince’s father’s demands, and so eventually gain release from her metamorphosis.

The strangest twist in this tale is the manner in which the white cat has returned to human form. Instead of the penance reaching the end of a fixed duration, or a fairy’s wand being waved, the cat is returned to human form by having her tail and head cut off by the prince. Critics vary in their interpretation of this act. Michèle Farrell sees it as an expression of feminine power (61). Patricia Hannon considers it a means to explore the wider issues of female authority in the world. (87). Conversely, Marcy Farrell and other critics view this return to human form as a loss of power. (36). Anne Defrance, however, views the removal of the head as means of regaining something her metamorphosis has caused her to lose. “Cette castration symbolique rend à l’héroïne une féminité que l’animalisation lui a ôtée” (*Les contes de fées* 126). Elizabeth Harries considers it a demonstration of the weakness of the prince; a sentimental, perhaps feminized hero. Marina Warner interprets this act of violence as an expression of the prince’s devotion

(*From the Beast to the Blond* 254). As can be seen by looking at all these different points of view and interpretations of the act of decapitation, critics have placed many distinct interpretations on this deed, though they all see it as an expression of power or lack of it. There is a sense in which her rebirth can be seen a continuation of her power. She has made the prince do as she directs, making him feel her claws when he doubts her (II: 214), and makes sure he arrives on time at his father's court, with the most perfect fulfilment of his father's demands. When she is restored to human form, although she marries, she distributes her wealth, and tells the king how the kingdoms will be divided, retaining three for herself and her chosen groom. However, her choice of the prince as her spouse is interesting. The fairies have told her that she will only be freed from her metamorphosis by "un prince qui ressemblerait parfaitement à l'époux qu'elles m'avaient ravi" (238). Thus her care for the prince, and her drawing him into her realm, and her provision of the items demanded by his father could be seen as not helping him, but as being self-serving. Since her first husband was also her first sexual partner, it is possible to see that she only desires a replica of him. However, it is the fairies who have placed this condition on her release, and so their decree can be seen as a way of maintaining the chastity of their ward. Whatever the motivation of the fairies, the motivation of the cat is not, as one might at first believe, to serve the prince, but rather to provide her with what she wants. Rather than the cat's return to the real world being a loss of authority, she never loses sight of what she wants, and uses her skills and abilities to fulfill her desires.

Adolescent Desires

D'Aulnoy explores female desire in *La Biche au bois* but in this tale, it is sexual desire which is more overtly expressed. The metamorphosis into a doe is again the result of a malevolent fairy, who threatens death if the princess sees the light of day before she is fifteen,

and the fault of the mother, who did not remember the fairy that helped her (II: 115-20). This shape-shift, therefore, does not take place until the princess is an adolescent, as a result of a trick. The transformation of the princess into a doe clearly suggests the motif of the hunt, as does the name of the prince, Guerrier. The idea of the chase and capture of the desired female, her sexual awakening and the fulfillment of her desires are reflected in the animal's behavior. When the doe sees the sleeping prince she approaches and "se coucha près de lui...soupirait ... poussait de petits gémissements [...] elle le touchait" (II: 146). Barchilon has interpreted this: "La biche a donc tous les sentiments d'une femme, mais elle est incapable de les communiquer, prisonnière de sa forme animale" (43). In contrast to this, Defrance thinks the metamorphosed animal with its evocation of her emotions and her physical reaction to the prince "permet alors la représentation de scènes qui, si elles étaient humaines, seraient fortement marquées sexuellement" (111). There is no doubting that the biche is strongly attracted to the prince. She may not be able to speak while she is metamorphosed, but she continues to go out into the forest and immediately rejects the suggestion that Giroflée makes to her, that she should "passe[z] dans cette chambre le temps fatal de [votre] sa pénitence" (II:144). Once she discovers that the man who is pursuing her is the prince, whose portrait she had fallen in love with, she is even more enamored.

With this recognition of the object of her desires, she cannot keep away and the following day involves a further chase, which exhausts her. She then permits him to first "la caresser" and then to make a bed for her where he "la coucha doucement" (147). As Jasmin remarks: "le récit ne cesse-t-il d'osciller entre bienséances humaines et licences animales" (339). Following this episode, there is a further chase, during which the prince shoots her with an arrow, which contrasts sharply with the tenderness of the previous chase. Defrance interprets this

injury, with the symbolism of an arrow piercing the doe, and the blood from the wound in the following way: “La symbolique sexuelle de l’épisode est évidente; sang des premières règles peut-être, mais surtout sang résultant de la perte de la virginité, puisque la blessure par la flèche est traditionnellement le symbole de l’acte sexuel” (142). Whether d’Aulnoy meant such a physical interpretation of the wound is open to question, but there is no doubt that male aggression, the desire to capture the female, and sexual tension between the chaser and the chased, are all laid out here.

Passivity or Acquiescence

If d’Aulnoy, Murat, and Mailly have their princesses take charge of their lives, and be pro-active in either saving themselves or their beloved, certain of Madame d’Auneuil’s princesses are more acquiescent. This passivity might be seen as a reflection of women’s role in society, and raises the question of d’Auneuil’s purpose in this depiction of unassertive women. In two stories, *Histoire de Cléonice* and *Histoire de la princesse Mélicerte*, which are set within the framing story of the *La Tyrannie des fees détruite*, Cléonice and Mélicerte faithfully wait and guard their metamorphosed husbands. One of them, “la triste Cléonice suit son cher dragon” (525). The other, Mélicerte visits her husband who is entombed, and can only communicate with her by sighs. She visits him every day “à la même heure, d’entendre [s]on cher époux se plaindre” (546), but even in her visits she is not idle: [elle] fai[t] les mêmes efforts pour le tirer du tombeau” (546). The unhappy princesses, who await the return to human form of their husbands, are the victims of the evil rule of the fairies. Philoxipe, Cléonice’s husband, has been changed into a dragon as he vanquished the one threatening his kingdom: “Le monstre, en tombant, renversa son vainqueur, et le couvrit de son sang venimeux” (518). Yphidamante’s wife, Mélicerte, was destined to be the wife of the king of the monsters, and is entombed because

he and his wife dared to defy the fairies' plans for them. The dragon has no ability to speak, and Yphidamante after begging his wife to leave him to his fate, only communicates with her by sighing. Philonice's love, Anaxandre, hides in a room in the garden, "si troublé de la crainte d'être découverte" (525), that he does nothing. The difference between these waiting princesses and the heroine of the framing tale, Philonice, is that these princesses are married. They demonstrate faithfulness and devotion to their metamorphosed, powerless, spouses. This depiction of marriage is in contrast to most stories, where the princess is on a quest. She may be in love, and have chosen her future husband, but has not yet married him. In this framing tale, however, d'Auneuil makes the prince become the equal of her princess. As a result of her actions, he becomes more effective; he undertakes a metamorphosis into centaur (537) because "il n'est permis qu'aux monstres de [l'] approcher" (536). He becomes active as he follows the undertaking of Philonice's female servant. Having won his lady's heart, d'Auneuil cannot resist the amusing spectacle of having him in the same chains as Philonice. As the monster king prepares to sacrifice them and they are led into prison, Anaxandre is "contraint de suivre aussi bien qu'elle ce tyran monstrueux" (547). He does however show bravery, and is prepared to sacrifice his life to save her (548). Philonice is ready to do the same. By contrasting the different roles of the women in her stories, the immobility of the men, and by linking the wives' stories to her framing tale – Philonice is in both – d'Auneuil demonstrates that other relationships can exist between a man and a woman. She shows that equality of the sexes is possible, and that a patriarchal system is static, and outmoded.

One of the ways that d'Auneuil expresses this idea is by her allusion to other stories. In this story, various people have also been metamorphosed for daring to defy the fairies, as the fairy Serpente explains to Philonice. In addition to the couple that is changed into turtledoves

because they saw a fairy bathing, men have been transformed into statues, because they saw the fairies dancing. Both these punishments suggest references to myths and biblical stories. The bathing story alludes both to the myth of Diane's punishment of the voyeuristic Actaeon and to King David seeing Bathsheba bathing and desiring her. When Bathsheba becomes pregnant, King David causes her husband to be killed in battle (2 Sam. 13.2-4). The result of this transgression is not only the death of this child, but of David's son Absalom (2 Sam. 18.9-18). There is also a story of a beautiful young woman, who is desired by two elders, who, because she will not sleep with them, accuse her of taking a lover, the consequence of which would be putting to death for adultery (Dan. 13.1- 22). The truth is revealed, and instead the men who have spied on Susanna are put to death for false witness. The turning of men into statues is also an allusion to the Bible and to myth. Lot's wife was turned in to a pillar of salt for not obeying God, and looking back to Sodom (Gen. 19.26). In Greek myth if a man looked at Medusa he would turn into a statue. Looking at what is denied or secret has dire consequences in all of these allusions, but this raises the question of why d'Auneuil uses them. Bérénice Le Marchand gives a strongly feminist interpretation. In considering the punishment of the men who mock the fairies' different positions as they danced, she constructs an argument which sees this scene as a metaphor for the conteuses: "Comme si les conteuses souhaitaient prendre position et défendre ce corps métamorphosable, lui laissant toute liberté de se mouvoir, sans contrainte. Les conteuses sont conscientes des restrictions imposées au corps féminin et souhaitent à travers leurs contes en décrire toute la puissance et versatilité" (31). This view of the use of metamorphosed body is indeed possible, and certainly d'Auneuil represents a female body in the person of Philonice as a strong and versatile female. By using these Biblical allusions, illustrating the severity of punishment for seeing what should be private, this fairy story emphasizes the woman's right to

be modest, and to enjoy freedom. These stories also show men breaking their own societal rules, for which they are punished. I contend that this *conteuse* is showing that the male metamorphosed body is a sterile and powerless object, and men are unbending, holding society in a fixed, rigid set of rules. This tale is both an attack on patriarchal values and recognition of the strengths of women. By using both Biblical stories and classical motifs, two very patriarchal systems, the writers are indicating their strong dislike of the oppression and objectification of women.

In the denouement of d'Auneuil's tale, she mentions female characters in d'Aulnoy's tales who were metamorphosed, and who arrive in this tale to celebrate the end of the fairies' supremacy. These are women rulers who have overcome their metamorphosis, and the dominion of the fairies, and who arrive to rejoice at the triumph and sovereignty of the princess. Raymonde Robert explains: "Mme d'Auneuil évoque dans l'ordre les personnages de *La Biche au bois*, *La Chatte blanche*, *La Grenouille* [b] *Bienfaisante* de Mme d'Aulnoy et pour finir elle cite son propre récit, *La Princesse Léonice*" (550, n.1). In doing this, d'Auneuil links her tales to those which were more widely disseminated, and her heroines to the spirited princesses of d'Aulnoy's tales. She joins, therefore, her work to d'Aulnoy's and shows a similar freedom in her attitude to women's role in marriage, and the equal roles that men and women should play in this.

In d'Auneuil's *La Princesse Léonice* the prince finds a greyhound on a mountainside attached to a chain. Here again, the *conteuse* uses the immobility of the female as a feature of her story. The prince takes pity on the dog, and breaks the chain: "quelle fut sa surprise de voir cette levrette devenir femme dès qu'elle fut libre" (587). Freedom comes to the dog, only by the intervention of the male. However, this is not, as one might expect, a story of male quest and female passivity. Levrette is so eager to be free and to help the prince that she "semblait prête de

s'étrangler" (587). She is not immobile through her own passivity, but is held immobile by the chain. This can be read as a metaphor for the constraints of society which hold her in a passive role. The prince then goes on, with the help of a magic shield, to free the courtiers placed under enchantment, the male courtiers "moitié serpents", "the women who are similarly "immobiles". Having then freed his love, princess Léonice, Levrette's palace is changed back from "un antre affreux" (593) into a wonderful castle. Here again, we have the metamorphosis of place, as in *Le Serpentin vert*, but in d'Auneuil's story, the freeing of the court is interwoven with Léonice's story. Seifert comments that in this story "the hero's final triumph is overshadowed by the fairy Levrette's narrative about her own kingdom, which he has unwittingly helped to disenchant" (*Fairy Tales* 151).

Levrette in recounting her story, in the same way as Chatte Blanche does after her release from metamorphosis, reveals the role that mothers play in the fate of their daughters. Chatte blanche, as we have seen, was the victim of her mother's desires. Levrette, however, was given a ring and other gifts by her mother "qui avait la vertu d'empêcher les enchantements" (592), but she forgot to put it on. It is Levrette's forgetfulness that leads to her metamorphosis and allows evil to work. Her mother tried to protect her daughter from evil, but is not there in person to guide her child, as she died in childbirth. D'Auneuil shows that Levrette's pleasure in her thriving court and the enjoyment of the ball by the women courtiers, a comment perhaps on the insouciant gratification of youth, leads to her metamorphosis. However Levrette's juvenile enthusiasm is not the only reason for the metamorphosis; the unattractiveness of Envieuse, her empty court, and her social ostracism, at a ball "l'on dansa longtemps sans la prendre" (592), are caused by her unpleasant personality. That results in the whole court being changed, and Levrette being changed into a dog and chained up.

Similarly the princess in Mailly's *La Reine de l'île des fleurs* is forced to be static. She has to be enclosed within a palace for six months to avoid the curse of the fairy. On the final day, her mother gives in to her pleas to be let out into the garden, and she is enchanted and removed to a wilderness, a solitary place without other people. Her inability to remain under the protection of her mother is indicative of adolescent rebellion. In the wilderness she is befriended by a dog. This dog cannot speak, and communicates with the princess by movements of its head, and by "l'avoir prise la robe, il marchait trois pas, et toujours de même côté, et revenant un moment après la reprendre par la robe paraissant visiblement lui vouloir faire suivre ce chemin-là, elle s'y laissa enfin conduire" (562). The princess is more passive and biddable here. She allows the dog to help her, and her ability to tolerate solitude becomes "plus supportable; son petit chien si joli et si caressant y avait beaucoup contribué" (563). Whereas she had her mother to keep her company while she was shut up in the castle, her mother is now replaced by the dog and she manages to cope for several months alone. One interpretation of this time in the desert and the removal of the girl from her mother to the care of the dog is that this period of time marks the passage from childhood to adulthood. Mailly may be suggesting that a woman is capable of more than just domesticity, and questioning his society's expectation of the role of women. As Seifert states: "The late seventeenth-century '*grand renfermement*' of women had not only glorified domestic motherhood, [...] but more generally promoted a vision of femininity that was hostile to the pursuits of 'worldly' (*mondain*) women" (*Fairy Tales* 203). This princess, instead of reliance on her mother for her needs, and an environment limited to the inside of a castle, is able to be separated from the domestic and put into a wilderness, where she learns to accept the care of the male, and to show care or love in return. When the dog no longer caresses

her, “elle le mena en un lieu où elle lui avait vu manger d’une herbe qu’elle espérait qui le soulagerait” (563). She becomes much more self-reliant, and outward looking.

The dog is revealed to be a prince, who has been subject to metamorphosis because he did not stop while out hunting to give a queen her due honors. His change is further exacerbated by being changed “en hideux vieillard” (566). In this metamorphosis he runs away from the princess and hides, as he does not wish to appear before her like this. Since his first metamorphosis was as “un petit chien d’une beauté merveilleuse” (561). Barchilon sees the attitude of the dog as soumis, respectueux et attentionné, comme un parfait amant” (58). So, by the shape-shift into an ugly old man which causes the prince to flee, Mailly is perhaps questioning the importance of exterior appearance, and whether beauty should matter to a loved one. This, however, is forgetting the confines of a fairy tale, in which the story would typically result in the uniting of two beautiful people, who fall passionately in love, marry, and live happily ever after. Mailly therefore cannot let the princess see the prince while he is ugly. It is possible that he is giving an indication that there should not be an age gap between those who will marry, and suggesting that young women should be paired with young men, and not forced into marriage with much older men. It is possible to read both these stories involving dogs as a passage from youth, and from the protection afforded by a mother to relationship with a male, and the escape from the confinements of domesticity to a relationship based on equality, for the tale ends with the princess returning to her castle, becoming queen, and then marrying her prince.

Cruelty and Rage

The story of *La Bonne petite souris* also has two metamorphoses, although the change into an old woman by the fairy is to test the Queen, as she tells her: “j’ai voulu vous éprouver plus fortement” (I: 375). As the mouse, the fairy is the instrument which frees the Queen from

the bad king and his son: “Elle lui mord son nez, et s’attache à le ronger; il y porte les mains, elle le mord et l’égratine. [...] Elle entre dans sa bouche et lui grignote la langue, les lèvres, les joues. ... Elle courut faire pis au fils, et lui mangea son bon œil (car il était déjà borgne)” (I: 377). The graphic detail of these attacks is softened by the comedy of the two injured men lashing out at each other and thereby causing serious harm to each other. DeGraff, in her psychological reading of the tales, remarks that we should “notice that it is not the mouse that is responsible for the death of the king and his evil son; she simply provides the arena in which they act out their true natures. It is *they* who deal the fatal blows” (55). She therefore exonerates the mouse from wrong-doing. Nevertheless, the mouse does set out to seek vengeance for the Queen and tells her: “vous serez vengée” (380), and is the agent by which the king and his son are tied up and drowned in the river by the subjects “qui les haïssaient mortellement, et qui ne les servaient que par crainte” (381). If not for the mouse’s interventions, the servants would not act. As Jean Mainil remarks, what happens to the king is “la critique du pouvoir nettement teintée de sadisme” (*Le rire des fées* 59). There is also a deeper message underlying this act, which shows that the most insignificant thing can be a means of causing people to rise up and revolt against tyranny. D’Aulnoy’s message is oblique because of the mouse. The graphic description of the damage caused to the men is tempered by the use of an animal to do it. It would be much more shocking if the damage was caused by a knife-wielding human.

Sometimes, however, the swift rage caused by another’s bad actions results in a transformation. In *Le Turbot* the fairy seeks revenge, which she comes to regret. She has metamorphosed her unfaithful husband into a fish. The fairy bitterly regrets her actions in metamorphosing her husband, but does not have the power to reverse the spell. The only thing she can do is “lui rendre l’usage de la parole” (321) and to send a halcyon to protect him. The

fairy also punishes the woman in the relationship, who caused the king to stray, by augmenting her feelings of love, so that she will feel his loss even more. The young woman therefore tries to throw herself off the cliff to rejoin him in the sea, and so, in a swift jealous reaction, the fairy metamorphoses her into “une petite herbe qui ne quitte point le bord de la mer, et que l’on nomme criste-marine” (321). Murat demonstrates the swift reaction that anger and jealousy can cause, followed by a wish that the consequences of these emotions could be undone. She accurately reflects the human response to a hasty decision borne out of anger.

In the same *conte*, the fairy Mandrine metamorphoses Prince Fortuné into a butterfly, not because of jealousy and betrayal, but because of rejection. She proposed marriage and he refused her. The care that the fairy shows towards this creature to ensure its survival is carefully recounted by Murat. The fairy comes from time to time “jeter sur moi d’une essence fortifiante qui me conservait la vie” (328) but the butterfly is closed up in a drawer in a “bureau de lapis”, which he describes as a “riche cachot” (328). The choice of metamorphosis here is only important as it permits the imprisoning of the prince, and is a means to show the power and strength of the fairy’s jealousy.

Portrait of Care

A young woman in d’Aulnoy’s *Fortunée* illustrates a different aspect of womanhood. She is apparently a simple country woman, orphaned, with a brutish, egocentric brother who treats her with violence, selfishly takes all the food, and her inheritance, for himself. As she searches for this legacy from her father, a pot of carnations, she is amazed to have a cabbage talk to her, and followed by a loquacious hen. The hen reveals that she was her nursemaid, metamorphosed because she liked to gossip and would recount all she knew about Fortunée’s story. She is

changed to safeguard Fortunée. For the same reason, twenty guards from Fortunée's father's court are transformed into cabbages. While Fortunée was growing up, and until this moment of maturity, neither the cabbages nor the hen could speak. The hen reveals Fortunée's history to her. Her mother, a queen, having given birth to six girls was threatened with death if she produced a girl: "son mari et son beau-père lui dirent qu'ils la poignarderaient, à moins qu'elle ne leur donnât un héritier" (I: 513). Unlike others who with the loss of parents, adventure out, and go on a quest to find love and achieve maturity, this woman's mother is the person who escaped from the palace, and gave her to the peasant nursemaid who cared for her. In this homely setting, protected by a fairy, love is brought to her. Next it is the pot of carnations that speak to Fortunée, after she has rescued them from an army of rats and mice and watered them with water taken from a fountain, where she met the fairy Reine des bois. The carnations are the metamorphosed son of this fairy, changed at birth by another fairy, with whom the Reine des bois had quarreled, who tells him "le temps fatal de votre enchantement vient de finir par le secours de la belle Fortunée" (I: 516). The perfection of this girl, who calmly accepts the evil doings of others, does not seek revenge, and the loving care which she lavishes on those with whom she comes into contact, result in the removal of the prince's metamorphosis.

Raymonde Robert notes that in this story, as in *L'Oranger et l'abeille*, the male is immobile, and the female active "pour exprimer les ambiguïtés ou les interventions des rôles sexuels" (364). She goes on to further explain this, concluding that the watering of the immobile plant, in the same way as the bee applies balm to the damaged tree, demonstrates "autant de soins maternels, qui placent leur bénéficiaire masculine en position de dépendance (infantile?) à l'égard de celle qui les dispense" (365). This hypothesis is certainly one interpretation of the act, but it is possible as Seifert does with *L'Oranger et l'abeille* to see desire in Fortunée's act. When

she rescues the carnations, and waters them “elle les sentait avec beaucoup de plaisir” (I: 515). The prince, declaring his passion for her, wishes he was still metamorphosed so that he could receive “vos tendres soins” and “des baisers [...] pleins de douceur” (I: 517), which her modesty prevents her giving him now he is a man. He certainly does not interpret her care as maternal. This tale shows a woman who is content with whatever life gives her, who is the embodiment of altruism. The metamorphoses in the tale are to protect her, provided by the fairy, to enable her to grow up in safety.

In conclusion, the use of female metamorphs is less common in the tales than their male counterparts. They often suffer their metamorphosis either as a punishment for their mother’s uncontrolled desires, and broken promises, or because of their own adolescent desires. Where they are used, they are generally creatures which are attractive; female metamorphs are not monstrous, and even if they are enclosed in a non-human shape, elements of humanity, whether of emotion or a reasoning mind, govern their behavior. Female shape-shifters depict women who are capable, and well equipped to deal with the world into which they are metamorphosed. If they suffer metamorphosis as an adolescent, it is because they desire an independent life, and wish to escape the confines of the restrictive, enclosed existence they have been forced to endure. This ability to move out of the societal confines that womanhood demands, by placing the female into a different shape, allows the story writers to depict women who are capable; they can decide on their life partner, and make other choices for themselves and for others. In other words, they are self-determining. They are shown to be excellent rulers, beloved by their subjects, fiscally able, and able to defend their realm and their people. These women are also fully imbued with femininity; not only are they able to excel in arts such as embroidery, music and dance, but equally they are sensuous, loving beings, who express their desires. Female

shape-shifting is generally an experience which allows growth, power, and autonomy. In the subsequent chapter, the treatment of males, how they fare with their shift into another form, what it means for their world view, and the society in which they live, will be examined

Chapter 3

Male Metamorphs: A Critique of Patriarchal Values

The seventeenth-century French story tellers did not only consider metamorphosis into female forms. As well as the twelve transformations into female metamorphs that are found in the tales, nineteen men are changed. The number of men who shape-shift is remarkable for several reasons, and is, to a certain extent, a function of the gender of the writer. The *conteuses*, predominant as writers of fairy tales, tend to focus on the role of women in their tales. They use male metamorphs as a foil for their female characters, to allow the women in their stories to experience a wilder, i.e. less civilized way of life, exposing them to hardship and awakening emotions in them. These experiences also allow the *conteuses* to critique men, through the choice of form into which they are placed, and to allow women to show their abilities as non-passive constituents of society. Women, obviously, do not live in a vacuum, and therefore the writers, as a corollary to what happens to women, consider the role of men in their society, and the attributes of a man who perfects this role. As might be expected, the male writers examine this in more depth; Mailly, however, uses metamorphosis to consider the behaviors of men in society, and their interactions with women. Whereas Mailly examines only male metamorphs in his stories, both d'Aulnoy and Murat use the metamorphosis of male characters to consider particularly what makes a man a good husband. Since the fairy tales deal with princes, heirs to thrones, and ruling sovereigns, they all investigate the attributes of a good king.

The Employment of Metamorphosis to Consider Kingship

In the introduction to his analysis of nineteenth and twentieth-century Germanic literature, David Gallagher examines how Ovidian themes of metamorphosis have influenced all literatures and genres for the last two thousand years. He states:

Metamorphosis is a powerful and versatile concept that can be used in an almost inexhaustible number of ways in varying contexts to achieve different effects, and it has been adapted from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to differing literary styles and genres, from fairytale to poetry, prose writings, drama and the modern German novel.(11)

Gallagher furthers his analysis of metamorphosis, stating that the thesis that he will argue and demonstrate “is that metamorphosis is frequently used as an index of social and cultural crisis, where society faces a particular threat to its moral, social or cultural values” (15). In applying this analysis to the stories studied in this dissertation it is necessary to consider whether such a threat to the value system can be perceived, in the later part of the seventeenth century in France. The most pervasive reality of the society was who wielded power. The King was an absolute monarch, and as such, decided how the country would function, without challenge from any other administrative or legal entity. He, as the sovereign, was at the same time both the legislative (or political) body and a physical body. In the seventeenth century, one demonstration of regal power was the acquisition of land and inheritance for his succession. Louis XIV wanted to give France prestige, greater than that of the states that surrounded it. Since the stories were written towards the end of his reign, the authors use their tales to examine the role of kingship in their society, and frequently depict less noble representations in their tales, particularly through their metamorphs. Francis Assaf observes: “sur les 27 [contes de Madame d’Aulnoy] 19

mentionnent un roi dans l'incipit" ("L'impossible souveraineté" 267). The other writers use courtly settings and tell tales involving the nobility. These offer insights and a subtle critique of the nature and responsibilities of a king, and by extension of his heir, or and of his subjects. By showing the strengths and weaknesses of the ruler, and his interaction with those who surround him the story tellers can paint a picture of kingship, and obliquely suggest alternative governance of a state.

Avian Transformations: Kings and Princes Become Birds

As with the female shape-shifting, male metamorphosis had its first depiction in Ovid. These metamorphoses reflect, as the seventeenth-century French tale writers will subsequently echo, a change which reveals the basic personality of the person who is shape-shifted. In Ovid's poem, Theseus is changed into a hoopoe: on his head he has "a stiff crest, and a huge beak stands forth instead of his long sword" (I: 335). This king, who uses his sword to intimidate and threaten Philomena, is changed because of his tyrannical treatment of women. The stiff crest alludes to his regal status, whereas the beak symbolizes his violent nature. Daedalion, of whom it is recounted "his only qualities were harshness, eagerness for war, readiness for violence" (II: 141), is changed into a hawk but Apollo in his pity "leaves him his old-time courage and strength greater than his body" (II: 145). However, his original character remains, and because of this "he vents his cruel rage on all birds, and suffering himself, makes others suffer too" (II: 145). These Ovidian shape-shifts do not have the redemptive and didactic element that we will see the *conteurs* and *conteuses* use.

Birds, because of the abilities of the species to fly, their beauty, their song, and their associations with myths and legends, are very important symbols in the tales. D'Aulnoy in particular uses birds to symbolize beauty, sometimes to show that that beauty may hide that the

attributes necessary for being a good ruler are absent, at other times to offer a way to provoke desire. *La Princesse Rosette* features peacocks, the beauty of which causes the heroine, the first time she sees one, to desire to marry the king of the peacocks. This story contains a reference to a mythical bird, the phoenix; its feathers fill the mattress of the bed on which Rosette is thrown into the sea, and provide a way of preserving her life. Other birds, a crow and an owl, in *La Belle aux cheveux d'or*, are saved from death by Avenant. When he needs help to complete the tasks set by the princess, they help him, by respectively blinding the giant, by pecking out his eyes, and by fetching the water of beauty that is guarded by various poisonous creatures and dragons. An eagle takes the role of a surrogate parent, in the same way as the she-wolf in the legend of Romulus and Remus, and nourishes and takes care of the prince in *La Princesse Carpillon* (31). D'Aulnoy remarks that the choice of surrogate is a good one, because eagles “sont les rois des autres” (31). In d'Aulnoy's *Le Dauphin* the prince Alidor, who is intelligent, but ugly, becomes a canary, and in this attractive guise he woos his love. Further exploration of this *conte* will occur later in this chapter. Other writers also use smaller birds, but for different reasons. The prince in Maily's *Le Roi Magician* the prince, falls in love with the portrait of the princess, and is helped by a fairy to reach her. The princess's parrot, which likes to fly from the palace, is captured by the fairy, and the prince transformed into a replacement. Unlike the metamorphoses of the female story tellers, the shape of a parrot does not bring knowledge of psittacine behavior, and the fairy “l'instruisit de la manière qu'il fallait se conduire pour pénétrer jusques auprès de la princesse” (518). Having reached the princess, he does not act as her parrot does, and he is only able to speak to her when she has taken hold of him and caressed him, “ce qui rassura le prince, et lui donna assez de hardiesse pour bien faire son personnage” (519). As in d'Aulnoy's *Le Dauphin*, the touching and affection shown towards Bibi and to this bird is a means by which the love

story between the two can begin. The picture of the male reduced to a pet is humorous, and also puts the woman into the position of protector and carer. The choice of a bird as a vessel for metamorphosis permits the writers to explore travel, and feats which because of their size, whether small, as a canary, or powerful and majestic, as an eagle, give a different dimension and perspective to the life of the person who undergoes an avian shape-shifting.

In *L'Oiseau Bleu*, another small bird shape-shift, the transformation of Prince Charmant is as detailed as any described in Ovid:

En même temps le roi changea 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 déliées 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. (I: 168)

This meticulous description emphasizes the nobility of the bird, and its beauty. The comparison of its eyes to “soleils”, the sun being defined by Furetière as “la plus brillante des sept planets” (III, sig. Iii3^r),⁵⁶ its beak to “ivoire” which not only conjures up a valuable commodity, that of elephant tusks, but also “se dit figurément et poëtiquement de ce qui est dur et blanc”⁵⁷ evokes purity and steadfastness. In addition the feathers are “bleu céleste” and he has a crest which forms “une couronne” (119). The bluebird, however, in spite of the magnificence and regality of its appearance, is reduced to being a charming pet, and to survive, the prince must be contained in a cage. In a psychological reading of the tales, Bettina Knapp sees that the

⁵⁶ And there is an allusion to *Le roi soleil*, Louis XIV.

⁵⁷ Furetière *Yvoire* III, sig. [P4p3]^r.

metamorphosis into “the bluebird may be identified, in Platonic terms, with the soul/anima. The bird’s ability to fly liberates it, symbolically speaking, from the weight of the world of contingencies” (119). It is difficult to see how Knapp can see that this bluebird is freed symbolically, for he is obliged not only to be caged, but also is forced to agree to marry Truitonne, to save his throne. The magician who rescues him reminds him of the realities of sovereignty. “Tel qui veut obéir à un homme, ne veut pas obéir à un perroquet; tel vous craint étant roi, étant environné de grandeur et de faste, qui vous arrachera les plumes en vous voyant un petit oiseau” (I:183). By changing a king into a bluebird, d’Aulnoy is depicting the problems of kingship, showing that a king must be a powerful presence in his realm, and that vacillation in a king is not welcome. The fact that he is duped by Truitonne is one instance of this. He ought to have realized that it was not Florine to whom he was speaking, as the narrator clearly shows “cela [les réponses de Truitonne] lui aurait fait de la peine” (1:165). He can be inveigled, almost blackmailed into doing something contrary to his own desires, a manifestation of a sovereign who is weak, and manipulated. It is only through the determination of his love, Florine, that he is freed from the consequences of his weakness.

Patricia Hannon sees this loss of power as the empowering of one gender as the other loses authority: “‘L’Oiseau Bleu’ serves his term behind bars at the precise moment that his beloved Florine assumes power” (*Fabulous Identities* 97). She sees his transformation into a bird as a result of following his own desires, “when ‘L’Oiseau Bleu’s Charmant rejects the homely, ill-mannered Truitonne in preference for her prudent, modest step-sister Florine, he at once respects his *inclination*” (*Fabulous Identities* 95). In the seventeenth century, the idea of the heir to the throne marrying for love, and following his heart would have been impossible and even inconceivable. Nadine Jasmin accurately sees humor in the trials that the metamorphosed bird

has to undergo: “le mode burlesque” which for her is there “pour signifier définitivement l’écart ludique qui sépare l’antique thème mythologique du traitement foncièrement ironique qui lui fait subir la conteuse” (69). Jasmin, in contrast to Hannon, sees the refusal of the King to marry unhappily as “l’éloge, en pleine moralité, de la “sagesse” d’un roi ayant préféré la métamorphose à un mariage malheureux” (367). Both Hannon’s and Jasmin’s interpretation of the King’s reasons for refusing marriage are possible, but do not consider the subsequent actions of the King, who to be freed from his metamorphosis, consents to have Truitonne at his court, while he thinks about marrying her. This King “était moins occupé de la conduite de son royaume, que de prolonger le terme que Soussio lui avait donné pour épouser Truitonne” (I:186). Although he is regal in appearance, he does not embody the attributes of kingship. He is not, as Herbert Rowan notes in his essay on Louis XIV, “centrally necessary to the functioning of the state” (314) nor does he appear to have, as John Rule suggests that Louis XIV did, a “dogged devotion to the task of ‘being king’, an absorption in the ‘*métier du roi*’” (24). D’Aulnoy has reversed the roles of the genders here; it is Florine, now crowned Queen who makes sure “nommer un Conseil afin d’avoir soin de son royaume en son absence” (I: 184) before she sets out on a quest to find and rescue the King. He is the shut-in, domesticated partner, on the point of being forced into a marriage to fulfill his duties to the realm.

Not all birds depicted in the *contes* are small, caged varieties; both Murat and Mailly use birds of prey for their metamorphoses. In Murat’s *L’Île de la magnificence*, Caméléor is an eagle and then a falcon, and as Philomèle recounts “avait eu recours à ce changement pour s’opposer à ma fuite!” (256). The definition of an eagle by Furetière is “le plus grand, le plus fort et le plus vite des oiseaux qui vivent de pro[i]e” (I, sig. [F4]^r), and so this powerful, fast and strong bird could be seen as suitable for the metamorphosis of a king, but there is no sense that he is

anything but a large bird. The choice of an eagle does imply certain resonances: it is “le symbole de la rouyauté [...] et de l’empire” (I, sig. [F4]^r). The eagle is linked to Zeus the ruler, or father, of the gods, and is the one of the symbols with which he is associated. So although Mailly does not give details of the metamorphosis, this bird does indicate to the reader that this man is not a commoner. Mailly’s *Le Roi magician* also has the king shape shift as an eagle, so as to be able to go further afield. Initially our sympathy is with this king who because he is recently bereaved by the loss of his wife travels to forget.

This bird, however, is not only strong, but also imperious, bold, and rapacious. The choice of metamorph is revelatory of the King’s underlying character. As he flies, he is attracted by the sight of beautiful gardens and the most beautiful princess, and, “comme un aigle qui a le cœur d’un roi est audacieux, il forma sur l’heure le dessein d’enlever la princesse” (515). Mailly makes sure that he retains his reader’s investment in the story, by adding the detail that although an eagle would not usually be able to carry a human, because the King is a magician as well, “le roi trouva dans son art des forces proportionnées à son projet et s’en étant pourvu, il ne songea plus qu’à le faire réussir” (515). Nevertheless he underlines that this kidnap of the princess is “la violence” a word which both the eagle (515) and the princess (516) use to describe the act. It is possible that the repetition of the word is meant to suggest ‘un viol’, though there is nothing concrete in this story that would offend the *bienséances*. However, the actions of the King are dishonorable, as the princess herself explains to him; since he is a powerful king, her father would have probably consented to her marriage to him. The taking of the princess indicates that this king has no hesitation in seizing what he desires, without thought or empathy for the human being he treats in this way.

In Murat's *L'Île de la Magnificence*, the naming of the princess as Philomela clearly references the Ovidian story. Caméléor is as lustful and rapacious as Theseus, but Murat never alludes directly to the source. There is an expectation that her readers will know it. Caméléor, unlike Theseus, is not changed into a bird as a punishment, but can use metamorphosis for his own purposes. He has snatched Philomèle, in the guise of an eagle, and wishes her to accept him as her lover. Her refusal to accede to his demands enrages him and "il résolut de se server de la force pour se satisfaire" (255). The threat to the woman in Murat's tale is much more explicit than that hinted at in Maily's story. This can be explained by the use by Murat of the Ovidian source, which is explicit in its depiction of violence. It also highlights these two authors' differing attitudes. Murat has an antithetical attitude to men's power over women; Maily has a more pragmatic attitude to the purview of men, and grounds his stories more solidly in the seventeenth-century world. Even with this difference, both authors show men who exploit women because of their position and strength. These kings act with all the rapaciousness that such a bird of prey embodies, to the point where they carry off their prey, the princesses that they have seen and desired. The choice of these birds of prey as metamorphs reflects the power that the kings have and also hints that not all kings use their power wisely. These are not regal birds, admirable for their strength and beauty, but are selected for their strength and predatory nature.

Maily's Atypical Containers

Maily's fairy tales make use of movement and inertia in his tales to explore women's ability to participate in decisions, which may be either personal or societal. Maily offers different portraits of men, exploring sexual awakening, and their interaction with women. Some stories explore *galanterie*, and sexual conquest, in which men achieve their goals by the use of the *merveilleux*, whether that is magic rings in *Le Prince Roger* or by metamorphosis. These

sexual conquests result in the young man falling in love and renouncing that life. As well as using more usual vessels for metamorphosis, such as a dog in *La Reine de l'île des fleurs*, Maily's work features unique choices. In *Blanche Belle*, a barren queen is impregnated by a sylph, a male spirit of the air, who subsequently delivers his daughter from imprisonment (511). Strikingly in *Le Prince Guérini* – unlike others tales where the nobleman exhibits savagery and so is changed into an animal – the metamorphosis is from a savage into a nobleman who no longer thinks of living a life full of “sang et carnage” (550). His metamorphosis makes him feel “une joie indicible d'un changement qu'il voyait si considérable” (550). Unlike all other metamorphoses in the tales, Alcée's shape-shift from savage to nobleman is permanent; he becomes an advisor and companion to the young prince, and gains the love of a beautiful princess.

Maily's use of unusual transformations continues in *Bienfaisant ou Quiribirini*, first by Bienfaisant, and then by the King, who enter into the bodies of dead animals. These bodies then come to life, and the human body is left, apparently dead, until the human spirit is able to return to it. Maily's choice of dead bodies is interesting on two levels. On the one hand, it firmly grounds his characters in the seventeenth-century world. The animals and birds could easily be found in France, and there is no element of the imaginary associated with them; they are not fantastic or mythological, and behave as animals and birds would. The only one that can speak is the parrot and this because the King, who inhabits the parrot's body, needs to explain what has happened to him to the Queen so that together they can find a way to restore the King to his body. “Ils concertèrent ensemble les mesures qu'il fallait prendre pour étouffer le feint roi de manière qu'il abandonnât le corps qu'il occupait, sain et sauf, ce qui fut exécuté fort heureusement et fort promptement” (584). Maily does not prolong the return of the King to his

body. The pretender is quickly stifled so that the King can be restored, without any detail or hesitation. On the other hand it cannot be denied that the bodies that Maily uses are dead. This Pythagorean trope of transference of the soul is explored by Marina Warner in the introduction to *Fantastic Metamorphoses*: “Thus Ovidian shape-shifting belongs on the one hand to the broad rubric of metempsychosis, the Pythagorean doctrine, which holds that the soul, or essence of something or someone, migrates from one body to another” (3). Consequently it can be seen that although these dead bodies initially appear to be an unusual use of shape-shifting, Maily is in fact making use of transference, which would have been familiar to readers of Ovid. Lewis Seifert remarks that Maily, of all the fairy-tale writers, uses “metempsychosis [or invisibility], [which] allows male characters to violate the heroines’ private space and then occasions sexually suggestive allusions” (*Fairy Tales* 120). This is true in other tales by Maily such as *Le Prince Roger* (525, 528) and *Fortunio* (539). However, whilst the King does fly into the Queen’s private rooms towards the end of the tale (584), there is no overt sexual allusion in *Bienfaisant ou Quiribirini*. We may conclude that this is to make the reader realize that this is not a tale about a single young man who is having his first sexual encounters. The King must reach the Queen in order to rid the kingdom of the usurper; his motivation is very different from that of the other two men.

Raymonde Robert examines Maily’s use of metempsychosis in this tale, and contrasts his story with the original Italian tale, by Christoforo Armeno published in 1584, and a later tale written by Thomas-Simon Guellette in 1714. She considers that Maily’s tale explores the theme of “reparation du Méfait” but shows that unlike other fairy tales, the wrong done and “les agresseurs sont des simples humains qui ne font guère le poids à côté des fées ou des magiciens, le méfait implique une bonne volonté du lecteur qui doit accepter que la protection se révèle,

pour l'instant, défaillante" (65). This conclusion is underlined by the fact that fairy tales written by the male writers are generally more predicated on human wrong-doing, and these writers explore the weaknesses of their male characters in a different way from the women. The male characters who feature in the male writer's tales are people who through the trials which they endure, exhibit the same maturing and development as those of the other, female, writers. Their core, or primary problem, however, is caused by their own character flaws. Examples of this are passivity, as evinced by le prince Arc-en-ciel, or seduction of women, by Prince Roger, or a nature which is too trusting and lacks insight into other's behavior, by the King in *Bienfaisant ou Quiribirini*.

Although Maily uses the trope of metempsychosis from the ancients, his characters are firmly placed within seventeenth-century society. The bodies that these two men take are suited to their social rank, and the choice of what they change into is determined by their needs. When the two men decide to rescue the Queen that the King has seen and fallen in love with, who lives in a kingdom overseas, they take the bodies of birds, so that they can quickly reach her. When, however, punishment must be meted out to the tyrant beseiging the Queen, it is Bienfaisant, and not the prince, who changes into a scorpion and stings the tyrant, resulting in his death and the liberation of the Queen (580).

This sovereign is clearly anchored to the seventeenth-century concept of kingship. For his first transformation the King is instructed by Bienfaisant, "qu'il fallait pour cela prendre cet arc qu'il avait trouvé si beau, et tirer une flèche en l'air en l'intention de tuer l'animal dont il aurait besoin, et qu'il viendrait incontinent tomber à ses pieds" (580). The King, unlike Bienfaisant, never kills the beast whose body he wishes to take. He has to shoot into the air, and the animal, this first time a doe, falls dead at his feet. Subsequent transformations are the result of him

finding the dead bodies of birds, a fish, and a parrot. The role of kingship means that his servant does the more menial or distasteful tasks. An understanding of kingship and its meaning to seventeenth-century society, and the expectations that the citizens would have had of their king are important, in understanding the picture of kings given in the *contes*. Ernst Kantorowicz has examined in great detail the nature of kingship from medieval times in his book, *The King's Two Bodies*, and what it came to mean to those peoples who had a monarch. To explain the difference between the body politic and the real body of the king, he compares the role of the king, as a person and as an embodiment of kingship, to the relationship between the body of the church (*corpus mysticum*) and the individual body of Christ (*corpus personale*) (196-99). Francis Assaf in his work *La Mort du roi* examines contemporary documents written at the time of Louis XIV to explore how seventeenth-century political analysts considered the concept of 'king'. Assaf quotes Jean François Senault who wrote *Les devoirs du souverain* in 1672.

Le roi ne peut être que bon. Un mauvais roi est une contradiction de termes.

Mauvais roi = tyran. Comme d'autres avant lui, Senault accepte la légitimité du tyrannicide. De cette première qualité, la bonté, découle une série d'oxymorons qui viennent s'ajouter à ceux qui circonscrivent déjà le corps politique du roi; le roi doit être à la fois grand et humble, fier et doux, majestueux et modeste.

Senault trace les paramètres du portrait royal: la majesté doit être empreinte sur son visage et son entourage doit la refléter. (69)

As can be seen from this, a king should show qualities that demonstrate his innate goodness, but there is a separation between what he does in his private life, and what he does as sovereign. The king in *Bienfaisant ou Quiribirini*, while he is a good ruler and does not kill, is revealed not to be totally wise when insight into character is necessary. The nephew of the tyrant

king, who had wanted his son to marry the Queen, becomes the King's favourite: "lui ayant trouvé beaucoup d'esprit, il le préféra en peu de jours à tous les seigneurs de sa cour, et lui fit son confident et son favori" (582). Having gained the King's trust, and by feigning illness so that the King pities him, he is able to get the King to reveal the secret of transformation to him. This man is able then to steal the King's body and the King must find a series of bodies to elude death by the hand of the traitor. Instead of a metamorphosis, this is rather a corporeal possession, the possession of a material object; the King must take possession of other, lifeless bodies. By making the newcomer a favorite, Mailly may well be commenting on the wisdom of preferential treatment found at the court. This fictional king therefore can be considered not totally fit to rule his kingdom, and so he is removed from it for a short while. He is allowed to return, so this removal can be considered as a means to teach him to be a better king. As can be seen from the contemporary document cited above, however, the removal of a tyrant is permissible, and thus Mailly can allow the tyrant (who is killed by the scorpion) and his nephew to be killed.

Mailly, like the *conteuses*, depicts a queen who is both perspicacious and sagacious. She detects that there is something odd about the King when the traitor takes his body, "mais la reine avait conçu une si grande aversion pour celui qu'elle voyait, qu'on ne put jamais lui persuader de souffrir qu'il couchât dans son appartement" (583). The sexual desires of this man are not satisfied, and the *bienséances* are respected, as she remains faithful to her husband. In using this trope of the double identity, Mailly is making reference to the story of Amphitryon, in which Alcmena is seduced by Zeus, who takes on the appearance of her husband while he is away at war. The myth, which was well known in France in the seventeenth century was originally a comedy by Plautus (?254 BC–184 BC), the slapstick revolving around the cuckolded husband.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Examples of other uses of the myth are: Jean Rotrou's *Les Sosies* (1636) is a comedy, but in this version, Alcmena is "grief stricken by the taint on her honour" (xix). Molière's *Amphitryon* (1668) is a comedy in which

Mailly's tale has removed farcical elements from his use of the myth; he deals with the problem of maintaining power in the kingdom. The usurper who takes the place of the King hunts him while he is in the form of a doe and tries to kill him. Mailly, while dealing with serious issues of tyranny and power, avoids any tragic element in the tale. By using magical elements, highlighting the king's different changes from doe to fish to parrot as he flees and the protection afforded to the wife who is not duped – “c'était Bienfaisant qui quoique absent lui inspirait cette aversion par son art de féerie” (583) – Mailly provides amusement, while at the same time examining deeper issues. The physical body would have deceived the Queen were it not for Quiribini's magical support. This raises the question of whether physical desire or duty to her husband's demands would have allowed the Queen to unwittingly commit adultery, were it not for the supernatural intervention. Perhaps Mailly is suggesting that women are easily deceived by physicality, from which they must be protected. Since this is a story in which the *merveilleux* allows characters to perform feats of valour, here it is used to protect a woman's virtue, and Mailly does not allow the fidelity of the wife to be overcome by the deception.

In *Le Prince Arc-en-ciel* Mailly uses another unusual vessel for the shape-shift, that of a rainbow. Of course, this transformation can only occur when there is a source of water present. Jacques Barchilon comments that “[c]ette combinaison de merveilleux et de pseudo-science est caractéristique de cette fin de siècle. C'est une des plus étranges et plus poétiques métamorphoses qu'on ait imaginés” (58). There are several references to rainbows that Mailly would have known. The earliest would be from the Bible, when God makes a covenant, between himself and Noah, not to flood the earth again and the rainbow is the sign of this.⁵⁹ Equally it

“slapstick elements of cuckoldry and double-identity are mainly exploited through the servant triangle” (xix). (Introduction to Jean Giraudoux *Amphitryon* 38 Ed. R.K.Totton, London: Methuen Educational Ltd, 1969). Mailly would have known these works, as his story was published in 1698.

⁵⁹ Genesis 9.8–17.

may be a reference to the story of Iris, the rainbow messenger, found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to provide a unique shape. In classical Greek and Roman literature, the rainbow was a portent, as the *Dictionary of Literary Symbols* points out. "Zeus sends a rainbow as a sign of war or storm (Iliad 11.27–28, 17.548–49)". As well as using these literary references to enrich the symbol he has chosen, Mailly may have chosen this vessel because of his interest in natural phenomena, as evidenced in the book he published in 1723, *Principales merveilles de la nature*. This belief is supported by the detail Mailly gives to the manifestations of Arc-en-ciel. The theory of light refraction by Issac Newton (1642–1727) would not be widely known until the publication of *Opticks* (1704), and Newton's work would not be published in France until the work on the *Encyclopédie*. However, René Descartes (1596–1650), Pierre de Fermat (1601–1665), and Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) were all examining light and other scientific phenomena in France, and the thirst for understanding the natural and scientific world, which would intensify in the eighteenth century, had begun in the preceding century.

Arc-en-ciel's first appearance is in a fountain, lit by beams of sunlight and subsequently, his love Plus Belle que Fée must provide a basin of water so that he can appear before her, and the sun must be shining. Therefore their trysts are limited to periods when there is sunlight. At their first meeting, Plus Belle que Fée sees the rainbow from which comes "une voix dont le son la charma encore davantage. Cette voix paraissait être celle d'un jeune homme" (187). Mailly underlines that the prince can only communicate when he takes the appearance of a rainbow, and the two lovers "profitèrent de tous les instances de soleil, pour avoir de ces conversations tendres qui rendent les journées si courtes" (187). After his banishment, the prince is forbidden to speak but he is able to show his emotions: "l'usage de la parole, qui lui était interdit, était attaché à la vivacité de ses couleurs" (187). This change and loss of speech can be attributed to the

malevolence of the punishment that he is undergoing. It is clear that colors have always been given particular significations and while not being specific, Mailly is drawing the reader into his tale, and inviting him/her to imagine how the differing colors of the rainbow could express Prince Arc-en-ciel's emotions.

In most of Mailly's stories royal men, for example prince Fortunio, and the King in *Bienfaisant ou Quiribirini*, are active in rescuing their princesses. Mailly, however, makes his transformed Prince Arc-en-ciel much more passive than usually found in a fairy story, especially one written by a male writer. In this story, it is the princess who defeats the fairy and sets off to find her love.⁶⁰ Mailly's princess Plus-belle-que-fée undergoes tiring and strenuous adventures to reach him after his flight from Lagrée, the fairy. Mailly emphasizes her femininity and suffering, noting "elle éprouva les horreurs de la faim, et celles de la fatigue" (189), but in her determination to succeed she demonstrates the attributes of a knight on a quest. Le prince Arc-en-ciel is the quiescent person in this relationship, and he is in an enchanted sleep when princess Plus-belle-que-fée arrives to rescue him. Mailly suggests that this is because he needs to escape from the pain of his separation from his love. "Sans un pareil enchantement, sa douleur et son amour ne lui auraient pas laissé le moindre repos" (192). However his use of the word *repos* suggests that this prince is not as mettlesome as one might expect. According to Furetière *repos* can mean "cessation de peine" but can also be "un état dangereux pour l'âme" and he adds "l'amour de repos passe pour lâcheté et pour mollesse".⁶¹ This prince is drawn out of his deep sleep by a small Siren, who sings of everything the princess has suffered to reach him and "ajouta quelques légers reproches à ces recits" (193). It is these reproaches which fully wake him, and at this point he returns to full consciousness. If the deep sleep is a symbol for his lack of

⁶⁰ This motif of a feisty princess who is the savior of the prince is also used by d'Aulnoy in *La Chatte blanche*, but the cat-princess is portrayed as a sovereign.

⁶¹ Furetière III, sig.[Pp4]^v.

drive and endurance, then the return to full humanity, and the news that he is now king, gives him the power to act. He wishes to make Plus-belle-que-fée his queen, and to make known his choice to his court. When it is revealed that she is a princess, he gets the universal support of his court. Maily's metamorphosed prince gains a full life through the love of a woman.

Desires and Fears

Whereas a rainbow can be variously interpreted as a symbol of hope and beauty, Maily's use of a snake's body in *Bienfaisant ou Quiribirini* can be considered as a reduction to the lowest form of life. The transformation of Serpentin vert must be considered as one of the most cruel and damning. This king has been condemned to serve seven years as a serpent, yet it is never revealed what merited this punishment. Since it is the same fairy, Magotine, who also condemned Laideronnette to ugliness, the conclusion that can be drawn is that he did nothing to incur his punishment (I: 647). However, the use of this symbol provides allusions which enrich the story. Furetière defines *serpent* as "Animal venimeux et reptile, long et menu, et ressemblant à l'anguille. Le Diable tenta Eve sous la figure d'un serpent. La punition du serpent fut de ramper sur la terre et d'en manger [...] Le Diable est appel[1]é le Serpent infernal" (III, sig.G2g^v). The well-known associations with the devil and evil together with the ugliness and repulsiveness of Serpentin vert, "mais il est de rigueur de [s]a destinée d'effrayer tout le monde" (I: 637), make this unpleasant-looking metamorphosis both a metaphor and symbol. As Anne Defrance has noted, "l'animal est l'un des supports privilégiés du symbolique. Il offre à l'imaginaire humain de multiples ressources pour représenter ses fantasmes, pour incarner ses peurs ou ses désirs" (*Les contes de fées* 116). The serpent's ugliness suggests not only the insecurities that a man might have in being acceptable to a woman, and his ability to

consummate their relationship, but its shape also suggests the fear that a woman might feel in having a husband and the sexual duties which that involves.

If one of the readings of this story is the fear of sexual congress, others find desire and eroticism in this choice of metamorph. Robert sees that “dans *Serpentin Vert*, le fonctionnement particulièrement érotique de certains passages du texte tient probablement à la valeur spécifique de la forme animale utilisée” (153). The shape of the snake apparently leads Robert to see a phallic symbol in the chosen vessel. There are certainly passages in the text which she analyses, which show the erotic or sexual side of *Laideronnette*. One example of this is when *Laideronnette* escapes the ship-wreck. She believes she is clinging to some pieces of wood, but “elle embrassait étroitement *Serpentin Vert*” (I: 637). Having married the prince, her curiosity overcomes her, but when she takes a lamp to see him in bed “au lieu du tendre *Amour blond*, blanc, jeune et tout aimable, elle vit l’affreux *Serpentin Vert* aux longs crins hérissés” (I: 650). Having read the myth of *Psyche*, as Anne Birberick points out, “*Laideronnette* discovers she is not married to *Cupid* but to the *Green Serpent*” (“*Rewriting curiosity*” 136). Many critics including Birberick, Hannon, and Defrance in their examination of the *Psyche* myth in this tale concentrate on the main, female character. D’Aulnoy’s decision, however, to make *Cupid* into a snake is revealing of her attitudes to masculinity in this story.

The author never reveals the cause of *Serpentin vert*’s metamorphosis, but she has replaced the god of love, found in the original myth, with a reptile. This change allows d’Aulnoy to explore the meaning of desire, which in *Laideronnette* is not caused by knowing the physical attractiveness (or otherwise) of her husband, since she never sees him. It is his kindness and care for her, the love he has for her, recounted by his people, and his voice, that cause her to fall in love with him (I:638-47). When the actual physical reality is revealed to her, her belief that he is

a handsome man is sharply contrasted with what she sees. The erotic suggestion in the description of his mane, showing his virility, provokes a reaction of horror and fear, reflecting the possible reaction of an unknowing girl faced for the first time with masculine sexuality. D'Aulnoy is not suggesting that it is the ugliness of the animal that revolts her, but by choosing a serpent as the metamorph, suggests that it is sexuality that frightens and disgusts her. Of course any sexual reference is necessarily discreet in the *contes*, but there is no doubt that the story tellers are able to be more liberal in their depiction of desire when referring to an animal. As Jasmin remarks, metamorphosis allows females in particular to attain a freedom in their dealing with the opposite sex, whether they or he is metamorphosed. "La princesse humaine peut-elle tour à tour dispenser ou recevoir des faveurs de son amant animal, tandis que la princesse animale, de même, peut faire des avances à son prince humain, ou les recevoir de lui" (336). These references to the sexuality of the characters, while never overt, reveal the reality of desire and its consequences. Pregnancies occur while the human is metamorphosed, but the *conteuses* are careful to avoid any overt indications of bestiality in the relationship. Given the genre, and the necessity to conform to the code of *bienséance*, it is not surprising that the seduction by a man while a beast, as found in myths of Zeus, who variously took the form of a swan, an eagle, and a bull, is precluded. The seventeenth-century tales do, however, suggest that zoophilia exists, and that there can be aggression, whether sexual or physical in a relationship.

Male metamorphs do show the aggressively sexual side of their nature. Marcassin is able to show forcefully his desire for his first two wives, and to threaten to take what he wants if it is not freely given. Nevertheless, after their deaths, he regrets that his baser nature has proven stronger than his educated or courtly self. So, after the death of Ismène, he is sorry that "il voudrai[t] la posséder" (II: 471) and d'Aulnoy shows that he mourns her loss. With Zélonide, he

surmises that because he is a prince, and he wants to marry her, “qu’elle cèderait à la nécessité, et qu’elle ne penserait plus qu’à lui plaire” (II: 477). He does not have a true understanding of the need for the woman to desire him. He can perhaps be seen as a personification and reflection of the mores of seventeenth-century society. The woman is seen as a chattel, who can be forced to do as her family, or her future spouse, wants. Nevertheless, d’Aulnoy is careful to show that Marcassin is in love with his wives, and is aware of his behavior. He is torn between his animality and his humanity. Marcassin is the epitome of the animal nature struggling with the refined man. Seifert remarks: “As a prince, he is at the summit of court culture, itself the paragon of human civilization; but as a boar, he is also its antithesis, a wild, even dangerous, animal of the forest. Marcassin, then, is an oxymoronic figure, whose very being encompasses seemingly impossible opposites – in essence, a domesticated *undomesticatable* pig” (“Animal-human hybridity” 253). Seifert’s interpretation is a valid one while Marcassin is at court, where his true self is obscured in the civilized world, and where he reacts with avidity to the demands of his sexual desires. It is only when he leaves the court and returns to nature, that he is able to master his brutish side, and with the love of a woman, regain his human body. In returning to Mitchell Greenberg’s recent study on Racine we can see another portrait of a monster, Nero: “The only avenue open to Néron is the monstrous: he will become a parricide, the impassive assassin of his brother, his mother, his wife, and his tutors, and responsible for the destruction of Rome (*Racine* 116). Such an outcome could have happened to the monsters in d’Aulnoy’s story, but as we have seen, Marcassin in particular is saved from his aberrant behavior by the love of his third wife. The fairy stories do contain monsters, but their behaviors are controlled by first their ability to be educated, and by the love which they find. Marcassin and Serpentin vert achieve release from their monstrous being, through love of another, and return to a fully integrated life in society. As

Elizabeth Harries correctly points out, “In this tale, [*Serpentin Vert*] as in so many of d’Aulnoy’s tales and of the fairy tales we know, malevolent transformations gradually are resolved: monsters return to their human forms and lovers become an ideally beautiful couple (“Violence of the lambs” 57).

Like Marcassin, Alidor in *Le Dauphin* changes back from a canary into human shape at night. As a small, beautiful song bird, a canary, Alidor gains the beauty that he does not have as a human being, the freedom to caress his love, and to enter into her bedroom. It is clear from the description of their encounter that both Alidor and Livorette derive pleasure from this:

Elle se mit à sa toilette, il se plaça sur son miroir, prenant la liberté de lui becqueter quelquefois le bout de l’oreille et quelquefois les mains: elle était transportée de joie. Pour Alidor, qui jusqu’alors n’avait goûté aucune douceur il ressentait celle-ci comme le souverain bien, et ne voulait jamais être autre chose que Serin Bibi. (II: 516)

Seifert remarks, “when the heroine becomes pregnant, the fact that the canary is her favorite pet by day softens the impact of the canary/ hero’s real intentions” (*Fairy Tales* 119). Thus the seduction of the young princess and the sexual nature of their relationship are softened by the metamorphosis, and the attractiveness of the vessel. The canary is a symbol of loveliness, and beauty which attracts the princess, whereas the ugly body of the man causes her to make fun of him. As Jasmin properly notes, these metamorphoses, where there is an inequality between the couple, in terms of social or moral worth, provide the means by which the metamorphosed person gains closeness with the loved one, which would not otherwise be possible. “Rien de plus simple, semble-t-il, pour les séduisants animaux que sont devenus les amants métamorphosés,

que d'établir un contact physique avec l'élue(e) de leur cœur, grâce à la déconcertante facilité avec laquelle ils parviennent à l'approcher, aux deux sens du terme" (335).

However, in addition to the removal of societal status as a barrier to love, in *Le Dauphin* d'Aulnoy provides a more profound reflection on the morality of accepting something small and beautiful and the mockery of the ugly. Both are underlined by the subsequent treatment of Alidor, who upon his return to an ugly human body is rejected by the lady he loves, and loses his mind. Livorette also receives punishment, meted out to her by her parents because of her pregnancy. On the one hand, the treatment of the woman reflects societal norms; women were not expected to have children out of wedlock, and were either hidden away as a way to avoid the shame of being an unmarried mother, or tried to abort their child.⁶² D'Aulnoy, because this is a fairy story, does not allow her heroine to be a mother without a marriage, she and the canary are 'married', with the consent of her parents (II: 517). However, as is the case in many of d'Aulnoy's tales, the characters are not one-dimensional. As well as commenting on society's desire for beauty, d'Aulnoy draws attention to the effect of ostracism on those who do not fit the accepted norms. Rejected by his parents, his wife, and society because of his ugliness, this treatment affects Alidor's mental state: first he desires revenge then further rejection sends him mad. Only after he has suffered, admitted, and apologized for his treatment of Livorette, he is reunited with her and they are both restored to society. In addition, Alidor is restored to mental health, with "un esprit mille fois plus charmant" and also gains physical beauty "si bien fait, tous ses traits étaient si fort changés en mieux" (II: 532). Being accepted and loved and accepting his own wrong-doing demonstrates a psychological reality: to be a fully functioning prince, one

⁶² For a very detailed examination of this phenomenon see Leslie Tuttle. On unmarried mothers and abortion see pages 17-18.

must be a person who is completely integrated in society and who has friends. This interpretation is validated by the *moralité*, in which d'Aulnoy notes that “Le plus riche trésor qu'on puisse posséder, / C'est un ami tendre et fidèle” (II: 544).

Straparola, Pigs, and Boars

As well as the use of Ovid as a source, the writers used Italian tales written by Straparola and Basile as a source: d'Aulnoy, Murat, and Mailly all use these tales, but have modified them and in doing so reveal their own interpretations and preoccupations. Of particular interest are the two tales by Murat and d'Aulnoy: *Le Roi porc* and *Le Prince Marcassin*, which take as their basis *The Pig Prince* by Straparola in *Le piacevoli notti*. This tells of a boy born as a pig, who must marry three times in order to have a human body. Both the conteuses have similarities in their stories, but their depiction of the prince and his marriages is very different.

It is probable that the two seventeenth-century authors knew that they used the same source. Robert has remarked on this, citing *L'avertissement des Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* (1699):

Si les contes de Mme d'Aulnoy ressemblent à certains récits de Mme de Murat, c'est, affirme cette dernière, qu'elles ont toute deux puisés à la même source.
 [...] mes contes sont composés dès le mois d'avril dernier et si je me suis rencontrée avec une de ces Dames en traitant quelques-uns de ces mêmes sujets, je n'y ai point pris d'autre modèle que l'original. (*Le conte des fées* 104)

In comparing the three stories, and looking at how the metamorphosed creature is different, I will explore why the seventeenth-century authoresses made changes and what these differences signify. Seifert in “Pig or Prince?” has explored the differences between the three

authors: Straparola, d'Aulnoy, and Murat. He considers that all three “play to the assumption” that noble blood gives an inherent advantage in courtly civility “by presenting what, at the outset, is its obverse: a prince who ought to have been born graceful in manners and bodily appearance is quite the opposite” (186). This exploration by Seifert examines the role of an heir to the throne, and what it means to really be a civilized man. Hannon looks at the role of kingship in d'Aulnoy's stories and considers that *Le Prince Marcassin* shows that, “Both the monarchy and state are symbolically undermined from within: the danger is inherent to absolutism itself, which is on the verge of self-destruction through its very representative, the metamorphosed body of the prospective king” (*Fabulous Identities* 89). Certainly the story by d'Aulnoy explores more complex themes through the portrayal of the young boar than the other two writers do, and she remains “closer to Straparola's basic plot than Murat's” (“Pig or Prince?” 184).

All three stories begin with the barren queen asleep, and three fairies visiting her and bestowing gifts on her. Having decided that they will grant her wish for a child, the first two fairies promise a wonderful child. The third fairy is less benign. In Straparola's tale, the third fairy, after discussion with the other fairies of “how they might protect her”, wishes that “she will become the richest and wisest of women, but that the son that she conceives will be born in the skin of a pig with a pig's ways and manners, and he will be obliged to live in this shape until he has wed three times” (52). Murat and d'Aulnoy both follow Straparola in the form that the boy has and that he must be married three times before a return to human appearance can be allowed. The differences that these *conteuses* make are in smaller details, which reveal their own preoccupations.

The third fairy in d'Aulnoy's story, *Le prince Marcassin*, when cursing the unborn prince “s'éclata de rire et marmota plusieurs choses entre ses dents” (II: 455). What the fairy said is

only revealed at the end of the tale by Marcassin himself. Having listened to her sister fairies, who endowed the prince with many virtues, the youngest fairy chose to lay the curse of being born as a boar on him, because his virtuous character will be seen as all the greater, after such a trial. “Le printemps serait moins agréable s’il n’était pas précédé par l’hiver” (490). One interpretation of this difference is that d’Aulnoy is propounding the necessity of trial and tribulation to produce good character. It is also possible to argue that this explanation by the fairy is disingenuous, as the rest of the curse tells that this metamorphosis cannot be removed until Marcassin has married three times; a seemingly impossible condition. Murat’s fairy is a much more comical figure; she conducts herself like a badly-behaved old woman, and is described as: “une vieille fée qui avait apparemment trop bu au festin d’où elle sortait” (201). Her fellow fairies define her as “malicieuse”, having seen similar comportment from her in the past, they want nothing more to do with her. It may be that de Murat is making fun of a well-known person who frequented her circle, and obviously such “in-jokes” are impossible to verify, but the description of the old fairy appears to be a portrait of a real person.

Second, in the original story by Straparola the prince is born “with limbs like a pig” (52). D’Aulnoy chooses a *marcassin*, a baby boar.⁶³ With her selection of this animal, d’Aulnoy is underlining its character which is defined as “sauvage” and “qui se retire dans les forêts et qu’on ne peut jamais apprivoiser”.⁶⁴ Murat, in contrast, defines her animal as “le plus joli cochon de lait que l’on eût jamais vu” (203). Murat places her emphasis on the prettiness and vulnerability of her metamorphosed prince. This difference underlines the emphases that the two authors place in their stories. Murat’s prince is a gentler, far more civilized being than Marcassin, who has to be tamed by events more onerous than those of Murat’s prince. As well as giving their pig prince

⁶³ Furetière ‘*Marcassin*’ “Petit sanglier qui est encore à la suite de la mère, qui est au-dessous d’un an”. III, sig.K2k2^r.

⁶⁴ ‘*Sanglier*’ in Furetière III, sig.B2b^r.

a different character, each of the authors writes very different parental reactions to the metamorphosed child. Straparola notes: “since the king did not wish to disgrace his saintly wife, he felt compelled to have his son killed and cast into the sea” (52). The father in d’Aulnoy’s tale also wishes to have the (pig) child killed, but like the father in Straparola’s tale, this father repents of the thought “et il en eût pitié” (457). He keeps the infant from the mother, until she has the strength to cope with the fact of the mutated child. Murat differs significantly from both Straparola and d’Aulnoy, as it is the mother in her tale who hides the monstrous birth from her husband, “Sitôt qu’il fut né, elle [la fée] l’emporta sans être vu de personne, et le mit dans un lieu qu’elle avait préparé proche de son palais. [...] Et le lendemain au matin, l’on fit dire que la grossesse de cette princesse s’était terminée à une fausse couche” (203). Although Murat chooses to have the mother be more pro-active in concealing the child, helped by the fact that her husband is obliged to go to war and this leaves her “plus la maîtresse de ses actions” (203), all three authors show that the parent who acts does so to protect their spouse. The fact that the wife protects her husband in Murat’s tale, instead of the more traditional version of a male who protects the weaker female, gives a clear indication of Murat’s views. In her fairy-tale realm, the woman is a powerful figure who can make decisions regarding what her husband must know. It is possible that the tale is reflecting the realities of society. Women had no way to prevent pregnancy and the swiftness of the decision to present the birth as a miscarriage indicates that this may not have been an unusual occurrence. It also presents the reader with the reality of birth, ugly or deformed children, and societal reactions to such events. Unlike d’Aulnoy, whose boar is brought up at the court, Murat’s baby pig is spirited away.

D’Aulnoy’s story deals in detail with the growth from piglet to sexual maturity. The confusion in his relationships and his conversations with his mother reveal the complexity of his

character and his bewilderment in trying to come to terms with his milieu. However, as Defrance notes:

En effet, de tous les animaux qui un jour trouveront figure humaine, Marcassin est de loin celui qui présente les signes de cruauté, de violence et de barbarie les plus poussés. Le narrateur n'épargne aucun détail pour souligner à quel point la monstruosité est intolérable et fait naître chez les personnages féminins qui seront confrontés à elle la peur de la dévoration et la menace du viol. (120)

In contrast to d'Aulnoy's prince, Murat's learns "tout ce qu'un prince doit savoir pour joindre l'esprit et la politesse à la grandeur de sa naissance" (204). As Seifert remarks, "the outward rudiments of grace can perhaps be learned, so the logic holds, but its essence can only issue from a body so predisposed, and a body that is of course born noble. What Straparola, Murat, and d'Aulnoy all outline, then, is the path to recovery of the graceful human body" ("Pig or Prince?" 186).

Given that the stories all require three marriages, the story-tellers treat this necessity and how the prince is returned to human form in different ways. In Straparola's version the pig kills the first two wives, and when his parents remonstrate with him, replies that "he had only done to her what she had intended to do to him" (54). D'Aulnoy's first two wives also die. The first, Ismène, dies by her own hand having seen the man she loves, Corydon, kill himself, because she has married Marcassin. The second is killed by Marcassin, though he does it in self-defense, as she is going to strangle him. The savagery of the animal is clearly detailed by d'Aulnoy: "Il lui donna deux coups de ses grandes défenses dans la gorge" (II: 480). Although d'Aulnoy insists on the brutality of Marcassin, she does provide mitigation for it, by giving an explanation for his rage. In the first instance, she underlines that he loves Ismène, and that he mourns her death, and

in the second, that he is threatened by Zélonide. Critics accept this, but see d'Aulnoy's justification of her character and Marcassin's actions as more problematic. Birberick comments that: "Despite Zelonide's act of aggression, the problem ultimately lies, as both Seifert and DeGraff have pointed out, with Marcassin himself, since it is not simply his outward appearance that disgusts his brides to be, but his view of them as objects for his own (sexual) gratification" ("Gendering Metamorphosis" 97). The tension between cultural norms of behavior and appearance, together with the expectations of society and his physical desires, are clearly seen. D'Aulnoy would appear to be showing that the mask put on in the cultured milieu is simply a disguise, and that underneath the outward façade presented to the world may lurk a beast.

D'Aulnoy's protagonist is certainly the most ferocious of the three metamorphoses and his desire to mate does dominate his actions. Defrance sees his behavior towards his first wife as: "Le désir masculin [est] clairement énoncé en des termes tyranniques et [il] fait peser sur elle une menace de dévoration puis une promesse de viol, auxquels elle ne pourra échapper que par le suicide" (*Les contes de fées* 121). Nevertheless, d'Aulnoy does not make him utterly bad or completely good; he is not a binary character at all. Shades of meaning, revealed by him as he talks about his feelings, reveal a complex individual, trying to come to terms with the difficulties of conforming to courtly life, being an adolescent with all the physical changes and raging hormones that that brings, and in addition, he is a metamorph. Some of the sentiments he expresses to his mother reveal not only philosophical insight into his world and his character, but also into the behaviors of those who surround him: "Il est vrai [...] que j'ai quelques défauts; mais qui n'en a pas? Je suis homme sous la figure d'une bête. Combien y a-t-il de bêtes sous la figure d'un homme?" (II: 478). The dichotomy of man's animal behavior hidden under the facade of a courtly man draws sharply into question what constitutes the conduct of a human

being, and what differentiates his behavior from that of a beast. However, this conclusion is not borne out by the tale's ending itself. Unlike Straparola's tale in which the deaths are final, the denouement to d'Aulnoy's tale reveals that the first two wives and Corydon are not dead, and their return to be with the couple can be seen as an indication that Marcassin is now fully human. He has learnt the lesson that the fairies wished to give: "il est indubitable que l'on doit suspendre son jugement sur bien des choses" (II: 493). As Seifert sees, "the correlation between being and appearances is far more difficult to achieve than fairy magic would have it. Questioning instead of reasserting the unity of *être* and *paraître*, these fairy tales cast doubt on the epistemological foundation of the civilizing process" ("Pig or Prince?" 187). This conflict is never resolved in d'Aulnoy's tale; for the prince, having been educated in nature, returns to the court, in which presumably some men still act like beasts. One might surmise that because Marcassin himself has learnt to master his beastly nature, that he will be able to teach others to do the same, but d'Aulnoy confines herself to concluding that: "il vaut mieux manquer à l'amour, /Que de manquer à la sagesse" (II: 495). Society may perceive wisdom as being much more important than love, but Marcassin, having learnt discernment, and what matters in a relationship with a woman, is able to enjoy that relationship, and find equilibrium with others, such as his parents, with whom the filial bond was damaged.

Murat has a gentler approach to the loss of the two wives. Firstly her prince, once he reaches fifteen years of age, is able to become a handsome man at night: "lui redonnant sa forme naturelle qui était la plus charmante qu'un prince puisse jamais avoir" (204). Secondly, his first two marriages are to "grisettes", women who belong to the serving class, and who work in the palace. On his wedding night, however, the first wife is replaced by "une poupée de carton" (205), and the second by "un gros chat, qui s'en fuit par la fenêtre en cassant les vitres" (206).

Murat paints a humoristic picture, further underlined by the fact that not only is the wife replaced, but it is also a fat male cat who breaks the windows as it flees.

As I have stated, Murat allows her prince to be able to return to human appearance at night, once he has reached his sixteenth year. Death will ensue if he is in sunlight in his human body. This alludes to him being some sort of vampire, which die if a beam of sunlight touches them. The word “vampire”, however, does not appear in French dictionaries until 1751 and there is no hint that the prince has any desire to drink blood.⁶⁵ Ancient Greek and Latin texts refer to creatures which stalk humans in the night, and human beings have always had, as Jacques Sirgent notes, “une croyance populaire suivant laquelle les morts peuvent sortir la nuit de leur tombeau” (21). The allusion, however, that it is a creature of the night, perhaps like a ‘loup garou’,⁶⁶ or other fearsome creature that only appears when it is dark, is removed because it is at night that the prince returns to human form, and eats and drinks then. “Il ne mangeait plus que sous la figure humaine, les aliments cochoniques lui étant interdits” (213). Although he is forced to live a nocturnal life, this is the time when he becomes human again. This prince, having been cursed, is aided by the fairy to live as normal a life as possible. He is given a magic potion, “l’eau de l’oubli” (206) to enable him to have his first disastrous two wedding nights wiped from his memory. The prince Marcassin, in d’Aulnoy’s tale, however, cannot forget, and flees the court to escape his memories.

All three tales allow the princes to regain and retain their human shape, after their third marriage. Like Marcassin, the prince in *Le Roi porc* must leave the court to find love; which he finds through an adventure. He is taken to see a princess imprisoned on an island, who has fallen

⁶⁵ Definition by Dom Calmet, cited in the *Le Grand Robert* vol. 9, 637. For a full examination of the etymology of the word see Florent Montclair, *Le Vampire dans la littérature et au théâtre* (Besançon: AFPUD, 1998) 13-23.

⁶⁶ Furetière: “loup-garou est dans l’esprit du peuple un Esprit dangereux et malin qui court les champs et les ruës la nuit.” II, sig. D2d^v.

in love with his portrait. He keeps his adventure secret from Bienfaisante, the fairy who has fulfilled the maternal role since his birth. He does not realize that she knows all about it, and that “la carpe et le nain n’agissaient que par son ordre, mais elle avait ses raisons pour garder le silence” (212). We only learn of her motives, once the prince is free from his enchantment. He, ignorant of her involvement, needs to keep his romantic, more adult life hidden from her, which shows that he is maturing, and moving from being a dependent child to becoming an independent adult. He moves from the court into nature, to find fulfillment. After the princess is rescued by the fairies, the two marry, and on their wedding night the fairies destroy his pig skin; “les fées coururent à l’étable où était la peau de cochon, elles la mirent en pieces, et la brûlèrent” (221). The fairies are much more active in Murat’s story in protecting and working for a happy outcome for their protégé.

Marcassin, however, is much more autonomous in deciding his fate. After the unhappy outcome of his first two marriages, it is he who decides he must leave the court, and like *le roi porc*, leaves the the civilised world to live in nature, as better befits his animal nature. Defrance comments, “Le retour à la nature, l’acceptation de l’animalité provoquent très curieusement un adoucissement des mœurs animales, la nature réussissant là ou l’éducation avait échoué. La forêt devient le royaume de la liberté, par opposition à la cour, lieu de contraintes déchaînant les violences” (*Les contes de fées* 122).

It is in nature that Marcassin becomes civilised in his behavior and where his third wife, Marthésie, discovers that he returns to human guise in bed at night. She imagines, however, that he allows someone else to take his place (“vous cédez toutes les nuits votre place à un homme” (II: 489)). Having been assured that this is an illusion, she accepts what he says, and after six months she is pregnant, which “quand elle se figurait que la race marcassine allait se perpétuer,

elle ressentait une affliction sans pareille” (II: 489). It is Marthésie who finds the pig skin and hides it. Harries correctly remarks on the difference from Straparola’s story as d’Aulnoy “makes the princess, rather than her father the king, responsible for the wild boar’s permanent transformation into a handsome prince” (59).

As well as making Marthésie responsible for the change in Marcassin, d’Aulnoy also shows the desire that a woman can feel. “Elle le vit si extraordinairement beau et bien fait, que jamais surprise n’a été plus agréable à la sienne” (II: 490). It is at this point that the pig skin no longer fits, and Marcassin remains “un homme infiniment aimable” (II: 494). For d’Aulnoy, love and physical desire can restore the metamorphosed creature to full humanity. She has added to Straparola’s story, in which “since he was sure he could trust his wife, he immediately shook off the dirty and stinking skin of the pig from his body, and stood there before her as a handsome and attractive young man” (55). D’Aulnoy shows us not just the body of the man, but in addition, it is the woman who is the instigator of the removal of the pig skin, and we are shown Marthésie’s reaction to the beautiful male body. Murat’s story is very different, as her prince saves the princess from an arranged marriage, and is only confined to his pig metamorphosis at night.

Murat’s story ends in order being restored to the kingdom, the two *grisettes* married to rich men, and children born to the married couple. Straparola has the pig skin destroyed by the prince’s parents, and he is crowned king. At the same time that Marcassin is able to return to being fully man, the grotto in which he and Marthésie have been living becomes a tent. Amy Vanderlyn DeGraff in *The Tower and the Well*, a study of psychological meaning in d’Aulnoy’s tales, remarks, “if the metamorphosis of the grotto into a tent can be read as a symbol of Marcassin’s inner transformation, then it suggests that the prince now has the wherewithal to

protect himself from those natural forces that might be destructive to him” (43). While this interpretation fits the psychological reading, it also underlines the theme of *être* and *paraître*, which d’Aulnoy seems to reflect in the *moralité*:

Le plus grand effort de courage
 Lorsque l’on est bien amoureux,
 Est de pouvoir cacher à l’objet de ses vœux
 Ce qu’à dissimuler le devoir nous engage (II:495)

The treatment by Murat and d’Aulnoy of Straparola’s tale shows the different emphases that these two authors wished to make. It is clear that d’Aulnoy wishes to emphasize the power that a woman has to tame the prince; he can only fulfill his function in society when he has learned to curb his animal nature. Murat emphasizes the beauty of her prince, and gives him the power to be more self-determining. He is able to regain his personal freedom quickly and does not suffer the anguish and conflict of d’Aulnoy’s hero. Both authors emphasize that it is through falling in love that the princes are able to mature and act as their royal blood demands. The two princesses are also very different. D’Aulnoy’s Marthésie becomes his wife, becomes pregnant and because she loves and accepts him as he is (II: 491), he changes into a beautiful human. Marcassin’s princess sacrifices her comfort and safety to be with him and treats him with immense kindness. She is a sensual woman whose desire and love for her prince lead to his freedom. Murat’s princess is much less autonomous, because she is imprisoned, and is rescued by fairies. It is the fairies, not the princess, who remove and burn the pig skin, and who bring both sets of parents to be present at the marriage. Her prince fits the more traditional picture of a courtly heroic male on a quest. This may be to show an example of how a man should behave, since in Murat’s tale, the other males, the fathers are dogmatic, unfeeling and selfish, caring

more for their own status than the happiness of their offspring. Although Murat and d'Aulnoy treat the roles played by the males differently, both authors show that the princes would not regain their position and get acceptance but for the intervention of females.

Comedy and Tragedy

Since one of the primary purposes of the tales was to entertain and amuse (Robert 110), even as the tales question and critique society, their message would be lost if the works were not read. By using tales in which magic and fantastic creatures appear and disappear, the writers give their works a light hearted and amusing tone. Comedy has a large part to play in the stories. Jean Mainil has examined the role of the framing stories, and shows that the theatrical comedy of these, which have elements of farce in it, and the tension between fantasy and reality, can still make us laugh. For him “dès l’origine même du genre, le conte est parodique, il est comique, il est rire” (“Le sourire des fées” 38). In addition, Mainil’s *Le Rire des fées* explores the use of laughter and irony in the stories of Madame d’Aulnoy. As well as the subversive role of ironic laughter, the story writers are adept in depicting scenes which create humorous images. The absurdity of a newly-metamorphosed human’s behavior as an animal can be funny. For example in *La Biche au bois*, the doe, afraid of the wild animals she hears around her, “oubliant qu’elle était biche, elle essayait de grimper sur un arbre” (II: 139). In *Le Prince Roger* the pursuit of Roger descends into farce, as he approaches the provost who is following him, “ayant touché son cheval de sa baguette il lui en fit un éléphant, dont le prévôt étonné se jeta par terre en criant miséricorde” (530). As Barchilon comments on this episode, “cette transformation est assez cocasse; on pourrait en faire une intéressante séquence de dessin animé” (62). In *L’Oranger et l’abeille* the humor of the situation when Linda cuts the tree, the bee’s jealousy and stinging of Linda is coupled with a hint of eroticism, as the bee flies to Arabia to fetch some ointment which

she assiduously applies to the damaged digit. In this story as well, language provides humor by the medieval language that Aimée uses to talk to Ravagio, which Jasmin calls “la teinte burlesque du passage” (357) in her edition of the *Contes des fées*. Laughter is used to entertain the reader, and to engage him/her in the fate of the hero/ heroine. As Jasmin has shown, “la pression du *happy end*” (480) usually led d’Aulnoy to have a denouement in which the couple is married. This “fin heureuse ... oriente et prédétermine le contrat de lecture dès l’*incipit*” (483). The reader has an expectation of this happy ending, where the universe is returned to its rightful order, and so will read, expecting this outcome.

Laughter, however, does not always come from the reader. Sometimes characters in the stories laugh at the metamorphosis of others. Tritonne is changed into a sow at the end of *L’Oiseau bleu* and here the laughter is contained within the story itself. Those who see this metamorphosis burst out laughing. Catherine Marin interprets this:

La réaction des personnages témoins de cette transformation indique que le plaisir éprouvé dépasse les limites du simple soulagement [...]. Les longs éclats de rire suggèrent qu’il y a un plaisir réel à voir souffrir autrui. Ceux qui viennent d’assister à cette métamorphose et se réjouissent tant n’ont pas tous été les victimes de la méchanceté de Tritonne. (“Plaisir et violence” 267)

Laughter is used both to entertain the reader, and to mock. By placing the human beings – in terms of their societal rank – into inappropriate, or ridiculous, vessels, the writers use wry humor, to indicate a questioning of the roles assumed. In other words they are indicating that high birth does not automatically confer rights, and that often those in high places behave badly.

In contrast to the subversive smiles and fun of many of the contes, some contes do not have a traditional happy ending. As mentioned in the introduction, some metamorphoses never

end, and the couples are left together, united in their metamorphosed guise. D'Aulnoy's *Le Mouton* is a tale which, unusually, does not have a happy ending. Harries comments: "D'Aulnoy deliberately thwarts our narrative desire for the expected ending" (58). The beautiful ram is a metamorphosis resulting from the King who spurned the fairy, Ragotte. Defrance comments on this phrase from the story: "Tu es un lion, à présent tu vas devenir un mouton" (I: 435). She sees that "Le prince est comparable à un lion par son orgueil qui l'a amené à repousser les avances de la fée" (*L'imaginaire féminin* 110). She further remarks that the sheep or lamb is conventionally considered as the opposite of a lion, and therefore the choice of vessel is an appropriate punishment for the king, and may be considered as a metaphor for the shift in bodily form. She concludes: "Ainsi la métamorphose est à la fée ce qu'est la métaphore à l'écrivain. Ce pouvoir particulier aux fées de transformer les corps en signes (métaphores) ou les signes en corps (symboles et allégories) n'est pas la seule illustration du rapport privilégié qu'entretient la fée avec le langage" (*L'imaginaire féminin* 110). Nevertheless, as Mouton explains his story to Merveilleuse, he reveals that he is now regarded as the King by the rest of the flock. Therefore, although he is perceived by Ragotte to show one attribute associated with a lion, that of pride, the other metamorphosed sheep recognize his innate regal characteristics.

Mouton's metamorphosis is for a period of five years. This might be a reference to the Latin sacrifice for expiation and purification, performed every five years after the census.⁶⁷ Mouton has to serve out his sentence, and do penance for his wrong doing, before being able to return to human form. He tells Merveilleuse that the members of his flock come and go: "et qu'elle [Ragotte] avait composé un troupeau; que leur pénitence n'était pas aussi longue les uns

⁶⁷ "censor" *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 26 Oct. 2012.
 "lustrum". OED Online. September 2012. Oxford University Press. Web. 26 October 2012.

pour les autres. En effet, ajouta-t-il, ils redeviennent ce qu'ils avaient été et quittent le troupeau" (I: 436). Ragotte uses this metamorphosis into sheep as a usual punishment for those who "[lui] avaient déplu par plusieurs sujets différents". The ram further reveals that others who are her enemies or rivals have suffered a different fate "qu'elle a tuées pour un siècle ou pour moins" (I: 436), they have become shades or ghosts. Mouton recounts that having observed one of the sheep "près de cette petite fantôme [une jeune esclave], j'ai su que c'était son amant, et que Ragotte susceptible de tendres impressions, avait voulu le lui ôter" (I: 436). Having heard this story, it is perhaps not surprising that Merveilleuse might be afraid of showing any affection for the ram. When she does fall in love with him, and he with her, as Harries succinctly expresses it: "Her [d'Aulnoy's] heroine, "Merveilleuse" in every other respect, does not return in time and fails as agent of transformation" (58). As discussed in the previous chapter, the unhappy ending is caused by Merveilleuse's delight at being restored to a relationship with her family and her desire to be queen. The ending is unusual because it can be considered as a critique of the woman, who is not prepared to leave her familial home to be with the man she loves.

As well as not meeting the expectation of a happy ending, D'Aulnoy also demonstrates the cruelty that jealousy and thwarted desire can evoke. In *Le Rameau d'or* a king and his beloved princess have been enchanted for two hundred years. This has occurred because an enchanter loved the princess too, and was enraged both by her preference for the king and by the king's refusal to obey his edict not to see her. As the king contemplates a portrait of his love, the enchanter appears, cuts off his hand and instantly the King was changed into an eagle, "[un] oiseau royal" (I: 303). At the sight of his wound, the princess "tomba évanouie" (I: 310) and sleeps as though dead from that moment on. Although the choices of metamorphosis are not unusual, the cruelty involved in them and the means of the release are different. The two royal

lovers are saved by a people who read their story of enchantment in stained glass windows. This reading of their stories allows the discovery of the means to free them from the enchantment.

The story could end there, if it only concerned king Trasimène and queen Bénigne, but this is ultimately the story of Torticolis and Trognon, and the cruelty that they have endured. They both have deformed bodies, but wise and loving natures; they have been rejected and mocked because of their physical ugliness. Sans Pair's father is particularly cruel in his treatment of his son, deciding to marry him to a deformed princess (I: 294). Both he and the princess reject each other in their deformed bodies, but as a reward for helping Trasimène and Bénigne, they are transformed, and receive bodies that reflect their status, and their inner beauty. They are renamed Sans Pair and Brillante. The reader's expectation might be that now they will marry and the happy ending will be the conclusion of these two love stories. In a further plot twist, however, Brillante cannot accept Sans Pair as he is disguised as a shepherd, and therefore socially inferior, and so she seeks out an enchanter to have him remove the love she feels from her heart.

In the sorcerer's castle she finds "douze chats pendus au plancher, qui servaient de lustre" and "sur une longue table douze grosses souris, attachés par la queue, qui avait chacune devant elle un morceau de lard où elles ne savaient atteindre" (I: 321). Both groups of animals are starving, the cats because they cannot reach the mice, and the mice because they cannot reach the food in front of them, and in addition are afraid of the cats. The metamorphosed animals are there because the mice, really princesses, would not love the enchanter, and the cats, really princes, were his rivals. The metamorphoses are revenge, which the enchanter recounts with almost sadistic pleasure "ce qui est de plaisant, c'est qu'ils se haïssent autant qu'ils se sont aimés, et que l'on ne peut guère trouver une vengeance plus complète" (322). Defrance sees the hunger expressed by these animals as not simply a desire for food. For her, "[l'enchanteur]

condamne ainsi les filles à fuir l'objet de leur désir, tandis que les hommes voient leurs pulsions sexuelles exacerbées par l'animalisation" (*L'imaginaire féminin* 127). This psycho-sexual interpretation of this tale is interesting, but this analysis is not borne out by the use of the trope by d'Aulnoy, in which metamorphs retain their original character traits, and mature and learn while changed. These cats and mice, once returned to human form, are reunited. It is clear that the enchanter takes great pleasure in the sufferings of his victims; this is clearly a portrait of a sadist, and may be read as a metaphor for abuses that those in power could and did inflict on those who were punished, even within the judicial system.

Brillante too rejects the enchanter, and the luxurious life he offers (I: 323). Her fate is sealed, she will be punished, but the enchanter links her metamorphosis to her life as a shepherdess. She asks to become a mouse like the other princesses, but he has other plans. "Tu ne seras donc à l'avenir ni chair, ni poisson; tu n'auras ni sang ni os; tu seras verte, parce que tu es encore dans ta verte jeunesse; tu seras légère et fringante; tu vivras dans les prairies comme tu vivais: on t'appellera Sauterelle" (I: 324) She is condemned to be constantly on the move, and to live in the fields. In addition this punishment reflects on her youth, showing that she is not ready to accept the role of wife and queen. Only through maturing will she be able to fulfil her role. Sans Pair, while searching for Brillante, meets a fairy, and rejects her advances and refuses to love her. He too is metamorphosed into "un grillon, ami de la chaleur et du feu" (I: 328). The two insects meet, and support each other, and in the acceptance of their difference, with the aid of the golden branch, they are returned to their human appearance, and status. The entire tale has metamorphs which come about because the person with magical abilities to enforce their will, whether a male (enchanter) or female (fairy), has his or her (sexual) advances repulsed. Their use of metamorphosis is an instrument for vengeance and evidence of abuse of power. The

enchanter, in particular, delights in the pain and suffering of others. This portrait of sadism and cruelty is tempered by the amusing choice of vessel for the two lovers. Although they have lost their ugliness through one transformation, they still have to learn the meaning of acceptance, which their change into insects brings about. Brillante, once she is a grasshopper, accepts the support and help of the cricket as they are both in the same predicament. When it is revealed that he is her equal in rank, the final barrier is removed, and they marry.

In her use of metamorphosis, Madame de Murat also sets out a didactic goal in many of her contes. Geneviève Patard in examining the sources that inspired her stories sees, in addition to the sources from mythology and folklore, that there is a “merveilleux ésope par le biais de multiples métamorphoses rappelant le bestiaire de La Fontaine (anguille, papillon, cochon, rossignol, lion, aigle, hirondelle)” (38). Murat’s contes can be seen to not only have elements of instruction hidden within them, but also a use of animals to intrigue and delight. She also has elements of cruelty and tragedy in her tales. Geneviève Patard has noted that Murat mixes in her contes “l’euphorie à l’inquiétude, voire au tragique, comme le suggèrent explicitement plusieurs titres de ses contes, [...] et les tristes dénouements qui s’ensuivent (suicides, enfermement, désolation)” (38). One example of this use of tragedy can be seen in *Le Turbot*. This shape-shift is the result of a fairy’s revenge and rage at being betrayed by her unfaithful husband. When she finds him with another woman, she, in a curse which in its tragic language echoes the utterance of a Cornelian heroine, consigns him to a lengthy metamorphosis: “Va, et traître, va éteindre tes flammes criminelles dans les ondes qui n’ont que trop de rapport à ton inconstance, sois turbot pour vingt ans” (321). This language reinforces the observations made by Patard; Murat does not hesitate to give her female characters negative emotions, and to highlight the grief that is caused by men. Murat’s tales are explorations of the pain of relationships and the understandable,

realistic reactions to hurt and rejection. Even if *Le Turbot* ends in the re-establishment of marriage and has a happy ending, it contains darker elements which demonstrate emotions that betrayal and discovery of adultery bring. By exposing the characters to more diverse adventures, moving them into new landscapes, the writers either amuse with humorous situations or shock by the cruelty and sadistic attributes of the powerful. Protagonists gain maturity, but the use of adversaries who embody evil, allows a critique of the paternalistic society.

In conclusion, male metamorphosis serves various purposes in the stories I have considered. The authors use it to subtly critique society, and to suggest differing ways in which men and women can have a relationship with each other. The metamorphs demonstrate character flaws in men, either by focusing on their aggressive sexual nature, or by portraying them as passive and unable to act. In particular there is a critique of the behavior of kings, who are not portrayed as wise sovereigns, but as men who damage their kingdoms. The authors all highlight the results of the misrule, and by their use of metamorphs, subtly critique their rulers. They show ways in which society might function more equitably if flaws were mastered, and also suggest that women have a part to play in this role. This is not to suggest that these are dark tales. The fantastic world that is created allows the authors to provide a setting which is entertaining. By their detailed description of the animals they choose, they provide humorous images, which entertain, and suggest allegories and metaphors which add a didactic element to the stories. As Robert points out: “Avec les contes de fées, il ne s’agira plus de divertir *et* d’instruire, mais de divertir *pour* instruire” (419). In addition, by moving their characters away from the confines of court and into nature, they allow them to experience a life which is free from society’s constraints and demands. With the use of metamorphosis, they are able to place the protagonists in situations which normally a person, and in particular a king, could not experience. The heroes

are able to mature, physically, mentally, and sexually, and explore a different environment, in which they also achieve a loving, monogamous relationship, which teaches them how to fulfill their role in life. Only when they have reached maturity are they able to return to the civilized world and succeed in the role which their birth has given them.

Chapter 4

Cross-Dressing: Identity Crisis or Desire for Other?

Cross-dressing, that is wearing the clothes of the opposite gender, is a disguise which both men and women use in the tales of the seventeenth-century to present a different identity to others. In contrast to the use of metamorphosis, this disguise is usually one which the characters elect to make; it is not imposed upon them by an outside agent. This chapter will explore why the writers choose to cross-dress their protagonists; in other words the circumstances, which may be familial, diplomatic, because of fealty, or for personal reasons, which necessitate this assumption of another gender. Attributes of the opposite sex and how far the cross-dresser assumes and demonstrates these elements are important considerations in the success of the disguise. Of particular interest in this study, since the authors seem to be examining the gender roles assigned in their society, is whether the person embodies these traits before he or she puts on the guise of the other gender, and if these behaviors are retained once the individual resumes his / her original gender. In many of the stories considered, the principal character lives as a member of the opposite sex for a considerable period of time, and the maintenance of the deception, and how or if the person is discovered to be in disguise, and his / her fate after this discovery will be the main subjects of this chapter.

Historical Aspects of Cross-Dressing

The portrayal of women dressing as men and fighting in wars has its roots in medieval literature, in hagiography, and was continued by women such as Joan of Arc in the fifteenth century and the Grande Mademoiselle and other *frondeuses* in the seventeenth century. Females

put on male garb in order to be able to fight. Joseph Harris points out that these women did not disguise themselves as men; they simply used armor, a male mode of attire, to protect themselves (*Hidden Agendas* 194). Women also dressed and fought in the lists at carousels at Versailles in 1662 and 1685, as Christine Jones notes:

Remarkably for their time, women participated in these mock tournaments as cavalières, in ways they could not overtly have done in political battles. Putting a woman through this gauntlet, as it were, entered her into a stately tradition reserved for men and also allowed her to build a reputation through the pageantry of war. (“Heroinism” 26)

In these mock battles, the female courtiers performed tournament activities which were traditionally reserved for men, but as the illustrations in Jones’s article show, they were attired as women. However, other women did conceal themselves, and appeared as fully male, and Sylvie Steinberg examines in detail the historic role of real women who became fighters in the chapter “*Saintes guerrières ou debauchees*”.⁶⁸ In addition to detailing the lives of these women, she also describes the clothing they wore and how they styled their hair in order to hide their female identity and their female body. For a woman, being clothed as a man provided a means of protection from other men, provided that her identity remained a secret. It also allowed her to enter a domain in which men had significantly more autonomy and freedom to decide their own fate. There is, however, clearly a difference between using male attire in order to fulfill a role which this other gender normally undertakes, and still being recognized as a female, as those who wore armor did, and the complete assumption of the persona of the opposite gender, and living as though the new role is in fact one which has always been his / her own. Those with

⁶⁸ *La Confusion des sexes* 55-90.

whom the cross-dressed person interacts believe the external behavior and attire that they see indicate the gender associated with them. In other words, because they see a person who looks, dresses, and acts a man (or woman), they believe that is what they are.

The Rationale for Cross-Dressing in the Stories.

Women who wear men's clothing in fairy stories continue the pastoral tradition of cross-dressing which is at its strongest in d'Urfé's *L'Astrée* (1607–27). In many of the fairy-tales the heroines put on male apparel to escape from danger, or to fight against the misfortunes that befall them. Some of the stories contain short episodes of assumption of the male gender by women in order to achieve a particular goal. D'Aulnoy's heroine, Belle Étoile, puts on male armor to go and rescue male relatives, lessening the physical risk for her. Although outfitted as a man, she retains her femininity and must wear the visor down, since "sa beauté était si parfaite et délicate, qu'on n'aurait pas cru [...] qu'elle était un cavalier" (II: 421). In d'Auneuil's stories *Les Chevaliers errants* and *La Tyrannie des fées détruite* women also don male attire in order to travel safely. Philonice is also disguised as her beauty might excite curiosity (534). Zalmayde dresses as a man to seek out the prince who has slighted her (639). D'Auneuil and d'Aulnoy recognize the necessity of concealing their female gender in order that these princesses may remain safe.

L'Héritier has a different goal in allowing her heroine to disguise herself as a man. In her story *L'Adroite Princesse*, Finette is an astute woman, who is able to read other's actions clearly and to act decisively. She clothes herself as a doctor in order to dispose of the two babies, the result of her foolish sisters' seductions. In a scene reminiscent of Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire*, she plays the role of "le médecin empirique le mieux du monde" and says she is going to get "une bouteille d'eau incomparable" (108) to cure the injured prince. Attired as a

doctor, she gains access to the prince because, “il y avait quantité d’aventuriers, sans emploi, sans talent, qui se donnaient pour des hommes admirables, qui avaient reçu des dons du ciel pour guérir toutes sortes de maux” (108). Finette is able to insinuate herself into the ranks of these people, and in doing so, to leave the babies, safely hidden in boxes, to be discovered and to be brought up in their father’s court. Her action not only returns the responsibility of his children to the prince, but also rids her sisters of the evidence of their seduction. Finette, by using this apparel, demonstrates her ability to be pro-active in finding solutions to the problems that arise. She is shown to be clever, clear-sighted, quick to comprehend situations, and to act.

In addition to depictions of women disguised as men for short-term specific purposes, both the male and female story writers in my corpus depict women living as the other gender for much longer periods. Jean de Préchac’s fairy stories show female figures who are anything but submissive, and who dress as men to achieve their freedom from the constraints of female identity. To explore this theme the following works by Préchac are examined in particular: *L’Héroïne mousquetaire* and *Le Beau Polonais*. These two stories are based on histories of real women, who had assumed the male gender in order to be able to fight. Préchac’s treatment of these women’s lives, however, examines how living as a person of the opposite sex is a reflection of personality traits and roles which would have been seen as masculine in the seventeenth century. As Lisa Brocklebank comments:

For a woman to appropriate the signifiers of masculinity, or vice versa, would call into question specifically gender categories and more generally the entire social system of categorization that included gender, class, race, and the divinely sanctioned status of the monarchy itself. Therefore, in the tales of the French

writers, the cross-dressed figure holds the potential to thwart socio-political authority. (131)

In addition to the works by Préchac, other writers who depict a woman fighting as a man are considered. The Chevalier de Mailly's tale *Constance sous le nom de Constantin* and Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon's *Marmoisan ou l'innocente tromperie* both portray females disguised as males. L'Héritier's tale features twins; the sister takes the place of her brother, to fulfill her family's obligation of fealty to the king. Madame d'Aulnoy similarly recounts Belle-Belle taking on the same sort of role in *Belle-Belle ou le chevalier Fortuné*. Each writer, however, treats their female characters in different ways, and emphasizes distinct aspects of a cross-dressed person's life, and how they maintain the deception. The variance and nuances present in each writer treatment of this trope are revealing in their perception of the female gender, and its changing function, and the differences within their society, in the roles fulfilled by males and by females.

This disparity is explored in greater depth when considering men cross-dressing as women, which is much rarer in the stories. In the contes that I consider, seven writers use cross-dressing as a means to move their character out of the restraints of their gender. There are fifteen stories which use this transformation: eleven feature female to male disguise, three consider male to female and one looks at both.⁶⁹ It would seem that the transgressive nature of a man dressing as a female influenced the writers of the tales. The most obvious reason for this may be the difficulty of disguising male physical traits such as height, beard growth, lack of breasts. Another of the main arguments given for a man not wishing to give up his male role in society is the loss of power entailed in the process of assuming a female identity. Generally speaking, women were

⁶⁹ See Appendix B for a chart detailing these tales (255).

not independent or at liberty to govern their own lives. As Nathalie Grande points out, even the physical aspects of being female were seen as inferior, by some if not many members of the Church and by the medical profession. “Les discours d’ autorité, discours à la fois légitimes et légitimants, prenaient le masculin comme unique référence de l’ humain; la médecine ignorait les spécificités du corps féminin, car le corps apparaissait au mieux comme une variante, au pire comme une dégradation physique du corps masculin” (117). The reasons why the authors depict a man dressed as a woman, and their differing attitudes to this voluntary surrender of power will be explored later in this chapter.

Cross-Dressing in Performance

The fictional descriptions of gender disguise found in the short story forms in seventeenth-century French literature, were first found in longer novels. Cross-dressing was also a common feature of seventeenth-century ballets and dramas. Julia Prest has examined in detail the role of men in female roles in the seventeenth-century French theatre, and shows how a man attired as women in Corneille’s comedies could be used to enhance the “comedic impact of a role” (20). Molière portrays many of his principals changing roles to provide comic insights and to modify the behavior of more outlandish characters, for example in *Le Malade imaginaire* (1673), when Toinette pretends to be a doctor to try to convince Argan of the foolishness of his obsession with his body and its illness. Prest comments on Molière’s use of men to play women’s roles in the original performance of his plays. In *Le Tartuffe* (1664) Madame Pernelle was originally played by Louis Béjart, a male performer in Molière’s troupe who specialized in cross-dressed roles.⁷⁰ Prest remarks “that [Madame Pernelle] was originally played by a man in a dress, probably speaking falsetto, [which] further enhances both her comical and ridiculous

⁷⁰ Béjart premiered Mme Pernelle in 1669, and Mme de Sotenville (*Georges Dandin*) in 1668 (Prest 20).

status in the play. Under other circumstances, she might have been a wise and venerable patriarch” (29). This would seem to suggest that cross-dressing for comedic effect fulfills a different function. The task is to highlight the grotesqueness and hypocrisy of this female, by having her played by a man. Prest’s seminal work, together with several other studies, has observed the phenomenon of cross-dressing in the theatre, but very little has been written about its depiction in prose.⁷¹ In addition to the work done on theater, Philippe Hourcade has examined King Louis XIV’s enjoyment of and participation in ballet. During his younger years as sovereign, he took roles which showed off his male figure and which were an opportunity for him to play the lover and gallant (262). He also delighted in taking female roles, which Hourcade remarks: “ont de quoi faire rêver à je ne sais quelle libération physique et morale ou à quelque rencontre furtive avec des cultures interdites, méprisées mais fascinantes: gueuserie, sorcellerie, merveilleux féérique” (263). From Hourcade’s comments we can conclude that wearing female costume not only allowed the king to be freed from the constraints of kingship, but also from masculine ones, and to encounter different ways of life such as lack of money, or a fantasy world, or one which involved a different gender role, all of which were baser to his experience, and therefore more exciting. The King performing as a member of the opposite sex, enjoying it, and doing it well, as Hourcade indicates (263), gave him the opportunity to divest himself of the responsibilities of his authority for a short while and outward change of gender was a permissible way to do this. The King was not the only male to enjoy the freedom that taking part in a performance, and acting a role which is diametrically opposite to life’s responsibilities, gives. The custom of men cross-dressing seems to have its roots in performance: in theater, opera, and ballet, as opposed to that of women, which has its basis in safety and a desire for equality. Rather than a response to strife, or a declaration of support for strongly held beliefs, whether those

⁷¹ “With one exception, cross-dressing in prose narrative has fared particularly badly” (*Hidden Agendas* 20).

beliefs are political or religious, men choose to cross-dress for pleasure, or to reach a female object of desire. Madeleine Kahn has recently explored cross dressing in the eighteenth-century novel. For this analysis, she has defined a concept of *narrative transvestism*:

to refer to this process whereby a male author gains access to a culturally defined female voice and sensibility but runs no risk of being trapped in the devalued female realm. Through narrative transvestism the male author plays out, in the metaphorical body of the text, the ambiguous possibilities of identity and gender. I argue that this narrative projection of the male self into an imagined female voice and experience was an integral part of the emerging novel's radical and destabilizing investigation of how an individual creates an identity and, as our society if not our biology requires, a gendered identity. (6-7)

Kahn's clear and cogent argument is eminently applicable to male to female cross-dressing in seventeenth-century French literature, and can also be applied to the reverse gender undertaking. Success of the assumption of the opposite gender calls into question what defines 'man' or 'woman'. The male authors in this dissertation, who use 'narrative transvestism' to explore the diverse issues of disposition and gender, use differing scenarios to explore a man living as a woman.

The Depiction of Transvestism: Seventeenth-Century Concepts of Gender

The most famous male French cross-dresser of the seventeenth century, because of his posthumously published *Mémoires* (1737), is François-Timoléon, abbé de Choisy. His *Mémoires* detail his life as a seducer of girls while attired as a woman, but during his life, Choisy was known as a writer of ecclesiastical and French history, spiritual works, and he also wrote fairy

tales. In these tales, he explores the functions of men and women in aristocratic society and in *La Marquise/Marquis de Banneville*, presents the topos of cross-dressing. Other male writers also look at males taking on a female role; in Préchac's *Yolande de Sicile* (1678), a male suitor of Yolande dons female garb in order to be able to talk to her in her boudoir, a female intimate space. This story, which will be examined in detail later in this chapter, has received very little critical attention, and yet the fate of this man, who invades the female space, and receives an astounding punishment for it, provides a different interpretation of the emasculation of men. The examination, critique, and conclusions from studying this work are innovative.

Joseph Harris's study of cross-dressing looks at the ambivalent attitudes to this phenomenon in the seventeenth century, and the attitudes of the Church and the Court to it. He also explores whether there is a difference between sex and gender, an important distinction in looking at how a person of one gender can successfully pass for the opposite gender. He explains the difference in the following way:

The distinction is summed up by Dekker and van de Pol thus: 'One's sex is determined by physical characteristics; one's gender is determined by clothing, behavior, speech and all the other external characteristics' (1989, 49). Sex, then, is what renders an individual biologically male or female, while gender is associated with the social connotations which sex can accrue – in its simplest terms, masculinity and femininity. (*Hidden Agendas* 22-23)⁷²

⁷² Rudolph Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *The tradition of Female Transvestism in Early Modern Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989).

This differentiation between sex and gender is examined by all the authors, as they emphasize gender attributes, or social markers, to show how successful their hero/ine is in convincingly living out the new persona which she/he has assumed. One thing that it is important to emphasize here is that the majority of characters who cross-dress have made that choice freely and of their own volition. It is a different circumstance for Mariane in *L'Histoire de la Marquise/Marquis de Banneville* as it is his mother who decides to raise him as a girl. The choice, the how and why of changing one's gender identity is important in understanding not only an individual's motivation, but also is significant in the success of the assumption of the new gender.

Perceptions of the differences between male and female bodies, in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century were defined according to their societal roles. The physical traits which differentiate male bodies from female bodies are examined and tabulated by Sylvie Steinberg in *La Confusion des sexes*. In one table dating from 1586 (177), she shows the physical differences between the two – men have attributes of strength, women of beauty – and compares them to “[un]homme efféminé.” These perceptions are of particular interest in understanding the seventeenth century authors' depiction of individuals taking on another gender; although women are able to fight as a man, clearly they do not have the physique of a fully mature man's body; most of the women who assume a male disguise are adolescents. The “homme efféminé” has certain physical traits, and a way of moving, which indicate the way in which a man would conduct himself in order to be able to pass as a woman. Steinberg also looks at the theory of humors and how it gave rise to belief in the attributes resulting from them, basing her

conclusions on work by Langeau from 1630 (185).⁷³ She argues that the dominant humor in a person would cause a certain body type; gender would not be a factor: “les caractères physiques relèvent du tempérament et non du sexe, ce qui signifie qu’un être peut participer d’un “genre” ou d’un être en fonction de son tempérament, le genre étant à la fois physique et spirituel pour les physiognomonistes” (183). This belief makes it easier to understand the ability to change the outward appearance associated with gender, if the signifiers for the majority of people are derived from types of temperament and not from the gender.

In the seventeenth century, discovering exactly how the body works, and a more modern understanding of human anatomy, were in an embryonic stage. Descartes discussed and understood in essence the circulation of the blood, but hypothesized that blood became vapor in the heart as it heated in the right chamber, and then cooled and became blood again in the left. (*Discours de la Méthode* part 5, 1637).⁷⁴ Belief in the humors, although medieval in origin, was still referred to in the seventeenth century.⁷⁵ Children have both female heat and male coldness but they change as they grow: “d’après la théorie des humeurs, plus les garçons vieillissent, plus ils se masculinisent, car c’est la chaleur qui provoque la croissance de l’individu” (Steinberg, 106). Females produced heat more quickly, and thus mature sexually more quickly (puberty is earlier and more rapid in females) and because of this speed, were considered imperfect (107).

The production of this heat was affected by what was put into the body. Food therefore

⁷³ William A Jackson notes The doctrine of the four ‘humours’ stated that the human body consisted of blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. If these were in the correct proportions in strength and quantity the body was healthy. These four cardinal humours were associated with the heart, brain, liver and spleen, respectively. In the 2nd century ad, Galen of Pergamon linked these humours to the four elements of Greek philosophy and their abstract qualities. It was thought that the balance of the humours determined the physical constitution and temperament of a person. For example, someone in whom blood was the dominant humour would be robust with a ruddy complexion and courageous optimistic temperament; however, if black bile was dominant the person would be thin with a dark complexion, thoughtful and given to melancholy (487).

⁷⁴ Descartes does not explore the differences in gender in this work; his discourse is to prove the existence of God, and as is his later work on passions (*Les Passions de l’âme* 1649), it is a philosophical work.

⁷⁵ Holly Tucker notes in *Blood Work* that this theory was beginning to lose ground as developments were made regarding the understanding of blood. Transfusions were attempted, but eventually banned.

influenced gender. Steinberg demonstrates this, referring to authors in this corpus. She cites Choisy's *Mémoires* and remarks that Olympe de Choisy, the abbé's mother, "a trouvé des recettes pour maintenir son fils dans l'état féminin" (107). She further cites Dumoret (1678–1725) who represents a fairy recommending to a girl, who wishes to change into a boy, that she take salt, cloves, and nutmeg instead of milk and fruit. She notes "il est fort possible que Dumoret ait connu ces contes traditionnels [*Belle-Belle* and *Le Sauvage*], mais il les a adaptés à ses propres désirs" (115). By restricting the diet, feminine or masculine dispositions would develop. In assuming another gender, such gender-specific tastes must be continued. *L'Héritier* also depicts her cross-dressed heroine, Marmoisan, feigning dislike for foods such as jams, patisseries, and cakes, "il feignit, autant que la bienséance le peut permettre, de trouver toutes ces choses très fades" (56). Likewise, consuming alcohol, a male soldier's pastime, might be risky. *Belle-Belle* drinks only water, but manages to join in the (male) activities associated with imbibing: "bien que je ne boive que de l'eau [...] je chante l'Amour, je chante Bacchus, sans être ni amoureux ni buveur" (269). The cross-dressed person must demonstrate tastes and inclinations which enable him or her to fit into the world of his or her new (assumed) gender.

As well as the consumption of differing foodstuffs that mark genders, Steinberg examines males' and females' sensibilities to the external, physical care of their bodies. Cleanliness is important to a female and the fact that Marmoisan likes to have clean clothes and bedding is an indication of femininity for the men with whom he is living. To remain unsuspected, the cross-dressed person must always maintain the demeanor and habits of the new person. When Marmoisan forgets that he must not show the sensibilities of his true gender—" [il] eut l'imprudence de témoigner beaucoup de chagrin, en présence du marquis de Brivas, pour du linge mal blanchi, et des habits mal pliés, [...] et sa mauvaise humeur augmenta encore,

remarquant que son pavillon n'était pas bien rangé" (57) – he risks being discovered to be a woman. However, showing female traits can be interpreted in a different way. The female love of cleanliness is remarked upon by Velay-Vallantin. She notes that contemporary writers, looking at Monsieur, the brother of the King, comment: "On disait de Monsieur: "sa toilette ressemblait plus à celle des dames qu'à celle du général d'armée" ("Femmes Travesties" 338).⁷⁶ She concludes, however "S'il est une conduite que la lecture de la propreté permettait de signifier, c'est celle de l'homosexualité et non celle de la femme" ("Femmes travesties" 338). The validity of such a reading is reinforced by the same-sex attraction which is shown in the cross-dressed stories, where many of the characters have to defend themselves from the attention or overt interest that persons of their own original gender show them. This happens to Belle-Belle in d'Aulnoy's story, and to Constance in Mailly's. The writers, by using an attribute which can be considered the marker of one gender, suggest that such behaviors can be interpreted, by those who seek same-sex partners, as a marker of same-sex attraction. Thus the person who assumes the identity of the other gender must also face the challenge of those who are attracted to him or her, believing him or her to be of the same gender as themselves.

When looking at this question of same-sex desire, Harris proposes that transvestitism was seen as symptomatic of social disorder. "During the seventeenth century in general, the figure of the cross-dresser became metonymically associated with political upheaval, and thus could appear as a recognizable symbol or symptom of a general social rather than a personal disorder" (*Hidden Agendas* 66). In his book, he differentiates between taking on another gender's clothing as a disguise, and the incidence of sexual desire associated with transvestitism. Harris does not

⁷⁶ *Les caractères des personnes les plus illustres de la cour de France 1702*, réimp in *Nouveaux Portraits et caractères*, ed. E Barthélémy, *Revue française* (1863): 226 cité dans éd. Coirault, 2 1189.

suggest, however, that there is an element of homosexuality in male to female cross-dressing. In the stories, there are elements of same-sex attraction in the people who interact with the cross-dressed person, which lead to either a suppression or denial of such feelings, or an inability to live with the feelings, once the cross-dressed person resumes their original gender, which will be examined later in this chapter. The examination of the use of cross-dressing in this chapter will be divided, firstly into a study of how the female authors treat the subject, and then the male authors. This division will permit an examination of the different treatments of this trope, and show that the gender of the author frequently has a bearing on the reasoning and understanding of the subject.

Female Authors' Views: Cross Dressing and Power

A woman who takes the role of a man, in addition to having to change outward appearance, the manner in which she now interacts with people, and daily life issues such as cleanliness and food, also has the opportunity to exercise more freedom and therefore more power over her own life. Adrienne Zuerner, in her article examining how monarchy is portrayed in Madame d'Aulnoy's story, remarks "*Belle-Belle ou le chevalier Fortuné* represents a fantasy of feminine power; cross-dressed, the heroine conquers evil, travels, and achieves public renown precluded by the norms of female decorum" (195). D'Aulnoy's story is not the only one in which a female is empowered by the freedom of male disguise, which can also be used as a subtle critique. Sophie Raynard as a way for a woman to gain access to the male domain: "la thèse de la supériorité féminine défendue par Mme d'Aulnoy dans ses contes touche même la politique. Dans "*Belle-belle et le chevalier Fortuné*" l'héroïne a recours au travestissement pour accéder à l'héroïsme guerrier, prérogative exclusivement masculine" ("*Le défi des conteuses*" 62).

Women who take on the role of a soldier enter a domain which gives them more power and greater freedom, but they are also more skilled in the tasks that the male traditionally takes. They are better swordsmen, archers, and courtiers. Critics have read the role of a female cross-dressing as male as a way to critique the role of the male in society, and in particular, the role of the King. Lisa Brocklebank considers that *Belle-Belle* shows an emasculated king who can only regain power with the help of a cross-dressed female, who cleverly manages the dragon's capture and brings it to the king, allowing him to be acclaimed as he kills it. ("Rebellious Voices" 135). Velay-Vallantin in her article on cross-dressing sees Léonore's taking of her brother's role as a sign the King's power is under attack and that only a cross-dressed woman has the power, and the means, to restore it. In looking at the rich history of female to male cross-dressing, she remarks: "Ces contes présentent tous un pouvoir royal mis en difficulté par des désordres moraux comme par des attaques extérieures. Seule une jeune aristocrate ruinée, travestie en homme, parvint à restaurer le trône: elle est porteuse des valeurs chevaleresques que la cour a dénigrées" ("Femmes travesties" 330). Women's physical prowess is not only the means by which power returns to the king, but they also prove to be moral guides for loyal behavior, through their own fealty and moral integrity. Marmoisan and Belle-Belle in d'Aulnoy's *conte* fulfill this function in taking the role of a man. They answer the King's call to defend their country, and undertake to fight for him. This necessity to provide combatants can be seen as a criticism of Louis XIV, who as William Church points out: "As[the King]'s wars became more costly and the traditional, voluntary system of recruiting for his vast armies proved insufficient, Louis took the momentous step of initiating compulsory military service"(380). Thirard notes that *Belle-Belle* mirrors the reality of this period as the heroine's father has been conscripted, and since he is old, and has no son to send, will be impoverished by the fine ("De l'Allée du roi" 66). The allusion is necessarily

oblique, and not all depictions of kings can be considered a reflection of real-life events. Clearly, the tales provide models of the best in society, whether that be man, woman or sovereign.

A common element in the story of a woman going off to take a male role is that there is a difficulty which has to be surmounted. Financial ruin or bad morals, hinting at bad governance, by either the king or the father, necessitate the girl stepping in to fill the void which no male is available to do. In *Belle-Belle* the king is a “roi dépouillé” (248), and her father “réduit” (248). In *Marmoisan*, however, there is no indication that the family is in financial difficulties. Rather, Léonore takes her twin brother’s role as he has been killed while trying to seduce a married lady of his father’s estates. The fact that she is a twin and takes her bad sibling’s role reveals the originality of L’Héritier’s work, as, according to Velay-Vallantin, “la présence de jumeaux est symboliquement associée aux crises politiques, aux changements de pouvoir, aux monarchies stériles” (“Femmes travesties” 330). Billaud, however, interprets Léonore’s taking of her brother’s role as a literary device: “l’illusion repose entièrement sur la substitution du vêtement, tandis que le motif de gémellité permet d’éluder tout développement relatif à la confection du travestissement” (213). It is possible that L’Héritier is alluding to the political symbolism associated with twins, but it is also probable that the change of gender and acceptance of this is more possible if the person who is replaced is a twin. The twin element also raises the binary nature of this role assumption. Even though it is impossible that *Marmoisan* and Léonore are identical twins, they are obviously very similar physically. Léonore exemplifies the good qualities of a person, whereas the male that she replaces is shown as not knowing how to fulfill his societal role of a powerful aristocrat, nor does he behave as a good man; he is a sexual predator. L’Héritier does not confine her critique of this family to solely the male sibling. All the female members, apart from Léonore, and her sister, who is removed to a convent at a very early

age, embody vices: prudery, false piety, a love of gambling, of flirtation, and affairs, which prevent them from fulfilling their roles. Most of the family lacks the skills and good behaviors necessary to be good members of society. In contrast, Léonore is shown to be the embodiment of female virtue with her application to her womanly tasks: “elle trouvait le temps de remplir tous ses devoirs, de lire, de travailler la tapisserie” (46). In addition to this ability, Léonore is loved by her father (46), as is D’Aulnoy’s cross-dressed heroine Belle-Belle. The loving relationship that a woman has with her father fosters not only the womanly side of her nature, but also gives her self-confidence and independence.

Not all cases of female to male cross-dressing involve a loving father, and a dead mother. In Murat’s story *Le sauvage*, Constantine takes the role of a man because she is going to be forced into a marriage by her father. This need to be disguised as a way to escape an arranged marriage is a leitmotif, which finds its origins in the legend of Saint Wilgefortis, who, to keep her vow of chastity, and to be repulsive to her fiancé, prayed to be covered in facial and body hair (*From the Beast to the Blond* 361). Hirsute, with a beard, the young woman assumes the physical characteristics of a man. Constantine’s father wishes to make her marry a man who not only is of a lower rank than her – he is one of the king’s officers – but is also “sans biens, sans mine et sans esprit” (283). In contrast to Marmoisan and Belle-Belle, Constantine seeks and obtains her mother’s help to escape the future planned for her, asking her to: “donnez-moi un habit d’homme, et sous ce déguisement je chercherai dans un pays éloigné une mort honorable, que je préférerai toujours à une vie honteuse” (284).

Whether the reason for the assumption of male disguise is to please the father, or to escape his control, the paternal role is crucial to enabling a daughter to cross-dress, and as youngsters, the women who succeed as men demonstrate male qualities and strengths which

enable them to successfully live as men. Apparently, those women who have strong loving relationships with their fathers are more able to be warriors. Their innate skills and abilities enable them to forge a bond which is profounder than that experienced by very 'feminine' princesses, who can also have a close and loving relationship with their father, for example Finette in *L'Adroite Princesse*, and Merveilleuse in *Le Mouton*. The 'warrior' princesses' ability to be fully feminine, and also to embody masculine traits of courage, determination, and fighting skills does not result in rejection by their fathers. Their relationship with their fathers appears to be particularly strong because of their ability to be both feminine and masculine. They are not simply confined to a female domain of domesticity and reproduction, but have a more equal role with the patriarchal society. However, the motif of the female warrior is nuanced within the tales. Constantin embodies a different facet of this dynamic. She, like her fellow female to male cross-dressers, is able to serve a king, but her role is much more one of a graceful, skilled, courtier taking part in the distractions and amusement at the court, and her male persona is much more of a disguise, enabling her to live safely. Also Belle-Belle has seven gifted men who complete the dangerous tasks she is given and a horse, Camarade, who gives her advice and is to be considered as her friend (II: 253).

Unlike Léonore, Belle-Belle is the youngest of three sisters. When the King asks for soldiers, the two older girls first set off to fulfill the role of a son; they fail at the first test, set by the fairy. Belle-Belle, in addition to showing kindness and compassion to the fairy, is also able to embody traditional masculine qualities. "Il remportait le prix aux tournois, il tuait à la chasse plus de gibier que tous les autres, il dansait au bal avec plus de grâce et de propreté qu'aucun courtisan; enfin c'était un charme de le voir et de l'entendre"(265). The use of the word 'charme', with its roots in the Latin word *carmen*: charm or magic, is interesting, as it suggests

that Belle-Belle has also learnt how to please and charm her peers, while at the same time she exerts power over them. As Domna Stanton remarks in her chapter on *l'art de plaire*, courtly power is “synonymous with *enchanter* (< *incantare*) and *charmer* (< *carmen*), in their etymological sense, the connotational semes of *plaire* suggest ideas of magical control over the other” (*The Aristocrat as Art* 120). Belle-Belle’s proficiency as a man is not only based on her physical skills, but also on her ability to behave in courtly manner, enhanced by the power to enchant. This concept aids us to understand how she is able to convince others of her assumed gender. L’Héritier prepares us to accept Léonore’s assumption of a male identity, by showing that she embodies competencies that can be considered the attributes of a male. She finds time “s’exercer à monter à cheval, à tirer des armes, et à chasser” (47). As well as having the physical abilities of a male, she also possesses what might be considered male mental abilities. She has “l’esprit vif, solide et bien réglé” but she is also “à la fois généreuse et économe” and completes “de bonne grâce [...] tous les petits soins domestiques, où le caractère de son sexe l’engageait.” She considers it “un plaisir et une étude de bien remplir tous ses devoirs” (46). L’Héritier demonstrates that her heroine incorporates the best of not only the female role, but also that of the male. Murat’s cross-dressed heroine also excels in both spheres. Constantine demonstrates excellence in manly arts such as science, horse-riding, archery, and hunting, but Murat underlines that “ces occupations héroïques ne l’empêchaient pas d’exceller en toutes les qualités de son sexe. Elle brodait, elle dessinait, elle découpait, et tout en perfection. Jamais l’on n’a mieux chanté, mieux joué des instruments, ni mieux dansé” (283).

In understanding why the portrait of such abilities is unusual, Velay-Vallantin’s study is enlightening. She notes that since the beginning of the sixteenth century: “Les rôles des hommes et des femmes se définissent d’une manière plus tranchée: les hommes sont plus étroitement

associés à des valeurs de raison, de tempérance, d'activité et de souveraineté, tandis que les femmes se voient davantage identifiées à l'irrationalité, la versalité [versatilité], la passivité et la déviance subversive" (*La Fille en garçon* 69). Because of their gender, men and women had roles assigned to them, and were taught certain skills, to fulfill their gender-assigned place in society. Behavioral and cognitive functions were also assigned to gender; men being associated with qualities of logic and intellect. This raises the question of whether the attributes, whether they are those of a male, or those of a female, which define a person's role in society, can be reduced entirely to those of acquired skills. It would seem to be more probable in the *conteuses'* world view, that they are putting forward a theory of equality of the sexes, and demonstrating, through these cross-dressed heroines, that men are not the only gender capable of feats of strength, governance, loyalty, and courage. The women also show physical prowess and stamina. By allowing the female to take on the persona of man, d'Aulnoy, Murat, and L'Héritier further the scope of women's role in society. Duggan recognizes that, when d'Aulnoy writes about women, she "contests the image of the threatening woman, demonstrating time and time again that noble women can play an active role in the constitution of a more perfect society – for both women and men. But this more perfect world is mere chimera without the complicity of noble men" ("Feminine Genealogy" 203).

If this thesis is applied to cross-dressed women, Duggan's idea is taken further, for the "noble men" in these tales, the embodiment of male virtues in society, are females. On her return to her female role, she takes up a more elevated position in society, where she is able to exercise her talents, and use them to help her husband govern the kingdom. There is an equality of competence; females are equally able to behave chivalrously. Duggan's perception that real "noble men" are necessary to hone this world would not seem to be borne out in the tales; the

men are generally regarded as flawed beings, who can only become good rulers when they are joined to the woman who has demonstrated competence in both spheres.

As well as highlighting the competence that women show, L'Héritier, in particular, demonstrates men's shortcomings. She apparently advocates a loss of female gentleness in order for a woman to be accepted as a male. Léonore, or Marmoisan as she is now called, is suspected by other knights of being a female in disguise, not because of her physical attributes but because of her behavior. Marmoisan endeavors to act as a true courtly knight, fulfilling his oath of fealty to his king, and dealing equitably with both prisoners and with other knights. Richevol, a count who constantly requests favors from the King, is publicly mocked by Marmoisan, and as a result decides to seek revenge on him. Thus, he articulates "pour moi, je crois que ce beau comte si scrupuleux est une femme qui se cache, tant il est tendre et pitoyable" (53). Harris remarks that "Richevol [...] spreads the rumour – significantly *without* believing it himself – that "Marmoisan" is actually a woman dressed as a man" (*Hidden Agendas* 137). Marmoisan has to ensure that this suggestion is dismissed and must act to save himself. Since he cannot immediately leave the court, he behaves in a more overtly aggressive way. Seeing two men carrying off a young woman, he kills one, and seriously wounds the other. He then takes the young woman under his protection. The others interpret these acts as a sign of his masculinity and of an ulterior motive: "car par les soins que prit Marmoisan de la santé et de l'honneur de la belle prisonnière, on ne douta point qu'il n'en voulût faire sa maîtresse; ainsi on le crut très cavalier" (56). The observers interpret Marmoisan's actions according to how they themselves would behave. Marmoisan learns to imitate such behaviors. Learning that men should not like clean linen nor treat those who serve them with good humor, Marmoisan refuses jewels and pretty gifts and expresses a desire for weapons and a horse. In demonstrating how Marmoisan

modifies her tastes, in order to remain undetected, L'Héritier does not only scrutinize the more extreme, unrefined aspects of male behavior. When the mask slips and Marmoisan does behave like a woman, female indulgences are also assessed: "il marqua parfaitement bien, en cette occasion, le caractère ordinaire des femmes, dont la plupart affectent dans leurs habits et dans leurs meubles une propreté qu'elles portent jusqu'à la bizarrerie la plus ridicule" (57). Through her critique, L'Héritier would seem to be advocating for moderation in both genders; males and females are viewed as having excesses in their behavior, which can be moderated by copying the other. Perfection comes from the combination of the best, noblest features of both genders.

While there is an advocacy for the male and female abilities, the cross-dressed woman usually returns to her female persona at the end of the tale. This revelation is not through any demonstration of feminine sentimentality or weakness, but through something that cannot be hidden or changed, that is, female sexual characteristics. The moment of *anagnorisis* for Marmoisan comes when he is injured, taking part in a courtly activity of jousting in the lists. Her return to the female gender is not without difficulty, however. When the prince declares his love, Léonore cannot accept him. "Elle ne partagerait jamais les sentiments qu'il venait de lui témoigner, puisque l'intervalle de leurs conditions empêchait qu'elle pût répondre sans blesser sa gloire" (64). It is interesting that Léonore's reluctance to marry is caused by the difference in their rank, which she sees as a barrier to their relationship, but that she also reveals that it would harm her "*gloire*", her worldly honor, an attribute associated more with men.⁷⁷ It is also important to notice, however, that in becoming a wife, Léonore could surrender her freedom, and her power to act freely. L'Héritier gives an ending which enables Léonore to continue to exercise her abilities and talents. The King, recognizing her "caractère élevé, tranquille et raisonnable,"

⁷⁷ Furetière: *gloire*: de l'honneur mondain, de la louange, ou de l'approbation qu'on donne au mérite, au sçavoir, et à la vertu des hommes (II, sig. S3^r.)

decides that she is the ideal wife for his son. His reasons are not only based on the virtuousness of Léonore, but also on his perception of the prince's disposition "croyant le jeune prince assez facile à prendre les impressions de ceux qu'il considérait, le roi aimait mieux qu'il s'abandonnât aux conseils d'une épouse chérie [...] qu'à ceux de quelque favori ambitieux" (65). Léonore's ability to retain power in the relationship is not only because she has innate skills, but also because her intended spouse is weak, and could be influenced by courtiers. In addition, there is a hint that his leanings might be towards a same-sex relationship, with the mention of "favori". This heroine's return to her own gender does not necessitate the loss of the power, or influence that her assumed gender gave her. As Velay-Vallantin notes, "son travestissement lui confère le pouvoir d'offrir au royaume un véritable programme de gouvernement" ("Femmes travesties" 335). Although Léonore ostensibly resisted marriage because of the difference in rank, she gains influence because her skills and reputation are recognized and rewarded.

Apart from L'Héritier's Marmoisan, who does achieve a sort of equality with her husband, other women do not. Grande considers the return to the normal societal order at the end of the tale as confirmation of male superiority: "Ce travestissement, [...] finit néanmoins par confirmer objectivement la validité de l'ordre de prééminence du masculin sur le féminin, comme en témoigne le fait que le dénouement couronne un retour à l'ordre des choses" (120). Particularly in the fairy stories, where a female takes on a male role, there is always a return to a 'real-life' society, where the couple which has fallen in love, but have remained chaste, are able to marry, and the patriarchal order is restored. The woman returns to a life of domesticity, as a spouse, although she may well have gained a more pre-eminent status in society. This return may be considered as a means of making the story acceptable; if the writers subverted the accepted norms too much in their tales, then they risked censorship and no publication. By having an

ending where the societal status quo is maintained, they are able to ensure readership, where those who were alert, could see the underlying message of women's abilities.

In addition to considering societal exigencies regarding women's competence, the authors also address women's sexuality. The necessity for the heroines to remain chaste, both because of their garb, and because of society's demands, does not mean that the female cross-dressers are insensate. Belle-Belle, in contrast to Marmoisan, while disguised as a man, is much more sexually aware. She falls in love with the prince, and d'Aulnoy reminds her reader that this is a woman in the apparel of a male: "Belle-Belle qui n'avait point renoncé à son sexe en prenant l'habit qui le cachait, ressentait un véritable attachement pour lui" (II: 264). D'Aulnoy's cross-dressed female never forgets that she is a woman, and is still subject to the hierarchy that exists within society. Belle-Belle has to endure a superior, in her case the Queen, sister to the king, revealing her sexual attraction for her, believing that she is a man. The attraction that the queen feels causes embarrassment and a dilemma for this woman. The Queen probes 'his' feelings, outraged that her love (and position) could result in rejection (II: 269). Belle-Belle is unable to respond, dumbfounded by the Queen's passion, and her own subordinate position. The Queen has the right to demand love from her subject, but the love that this courtier is offering, is not what the Queen desires. Cross-dressing clearly brings problems to the concealed person. In addition to being in a socially inferior position, they must also deal with same-sex attraction.

All three female authors who use female to male cross-dressing as the major element in their stories deal with the difficulty of same-sex attraction, but in different ways. Murat's heroine, Constantine, is able to interact and form relationships with her own and also the opposite gender. Constantine, like Belle-Belle, attracts the king's sister while attired as a man. In this tale, the princess guards against revealing her feelings, and conducts herself in a regal and

controlled manner, not allowing her feelings to alter her behavior and comportment. Her attraction to Constantin, however, does cause her to refuse to marry the ugly prince Carabut (288). Even though she does not act upon her attraction to Constantine, it makes her evaluate what is acceptable to her in her husband. This is remarkable not only for the insights that she has into her own need for a life partner, one that she loves, but also because she refuses the choice of husband that has been made for her.

More problematic in this tale is the attraction that the king feels for Constantin, who the narrator remarks “[il] aimait passionnément” (290). His emotions, after Constantin has killed Carabut in self-defense and has fled, cause the King to instruct his soldiers to let Constantin escape if he is found (290). Although the reader knows that Constantin is really a woman, the King believes she is a man, and she is able to serve him as such. Michael Shapiro observes, “the writers of the novelle, like the authors of earlier narratives and later adaptations with female pages, used disguise to energize or empower the female character within a tale, without placing her in direct conflict with patriarchal social norms” (217). This reflection on the use of female concealment is equally applicable to this tale. Constantine is vigorous, defends herself, and as a result has to flee. The King’s reactions are more questionable. It is possible to argue that the King is merely showing the regard appropriate for the relationship between a king and a valued courtier, but the adverb “passionnément” and the fact that the King wishes him to escape punishment for killing a prince, indicate that the King’s feelings are very strong, and they are for a member of the same sex. Murat is able to avoid having to address this issue of same-sex attraction, as once Constantin has left the court, he reverts to woman’s attire and becomes Constantine once again. The only reference to her former garb is when the King meets her in her true gender, and loves her because “il reconnut dans la plus belle les traits du beau Constantin”

(300). The attraction is explained away, since in this fairy tale, the king has been attracted to “celle que les dieux vous destinent pour épouse” (300), and so his deep feelings are acceptable.

Murat, by removing Constantine from those who are attracted to her when her true gender was hidden, avoids the problem of continuing same-sex attraction. At the same time, by allowing the love story between the king and her to have started when she was disguised, the physical attractiveness of the heroine is shown to transcend the gender that is assigned to her. D’Aulnoy’s treatment of same-sex attraction differs from Murat’s; much stronger feelings are evoked in the persons who are attracted to Fortuné, and the regal personages who feel this desire are not able to exercise the same self-control as Murat’s characters. In d’Aulnoy’s tale, having tried to rid herself of Fortuné, because of his indifference to her, the queen then decides that she will marry him “secrètement” (II: 292). When she makes advances to Fortuné, the latter “fut vingt fois près de déclarer son sexe à la reine” (295), but instead reacts with horrified silence, and “une froideur extrême” (295). The queen, out of control with rage, attacks Fortuné, injures herself, accuses him of attempted rape, and demands punishment, his death. Nadine Jasmin interprets this as demonstrating that the queen’s love is a plot-moving device, but also considers that her emotion reveals “les dessous psychologiques d’une passion trouble qui convertit l’amour en haine, et finit par tourner à la fureur destructrice” (307).

At the point of Fortuné being brought to the stake, the queen, in her chariot, views the spectacle as closely as she can, “voulant, s’il se pouvait, que son sang rejaillît sur elle” (296). It is possible to read this desire for blood not only as an expression of the queen’s cruelty and savagery, but also as a symbol of loss of virginity, of innocence in a female. Although the queen does not know that Fortuné is a woman, her rapaciousness is symbolized in this allusion. Trost interprets the role of the queen “as a foil for Belle-Belle; both of these very strong women mix

elements of the masculine and feminine in their characters, but the queen demonstrates lesser qualities stereotypical in both sexes” (65).⁷⁸ The contrast of these two women (in much the same way as step-mothers and birth mothers are antitheses, delineating the good versus bad qualities in mother figures), enables d’Aulnoy to explore the consequences of power and passion when they become obsessive. The queen is unable to show moderation in her desires, and does not consider the effect on her brother, or on the court. Her only consideration is the satiation of her feelings.

The moment of revelation of the true gender of Belle-Belle, in the same way as that of Marmoisan, – her breast is bared at the point of execution – not only shows her female gender, but also her beauty. She has “la gorge d’albâtre” (II: 296). Everyone watching knows “que c’était une fille innocente injustement accusée” (II: 296). The queen who also witnesses the unmasking is “émue et confuse” (II: 296), and with the poison given her by her servant acting faster, “[faisant] des effets surprenants” (II: 296), falls into convulsions “dont elle ne revenait que pour pousser des regrets cuisants” (II: 297).⁷⁹ D’Aulnoy does not reveal what causes the queen’s acute emotional pain, and it is left to the reader to decide if she is distressed because of her cruel actions, or because of her love for a now-revealed woman. What the author does make clear, however, is that nobody else, including her own brother, regrets her passing (II: 297).

The role of the king, who falls in love with Fortuné and then marries Belle-Belle once she is returned to her real gender, provides Trost with a more difficult problem. Whilst she can accept that females can have markers of both genders, she finds the king’s attraction to Fortuné

⁷⁸ Trost argues that “the queen has other bad “feminine” characteristics, particularly her penchant for manipulation, and masculine characteristics as well: she is an insistent and impolite lover (“amant” in the masculine)”(65). However, the reference to ‘amant’ is made by Floride, and could equally refer to the queen’s lover, i.e. Fortuné. “Floride inconsolable de l’état où l’on réduisait son amant, prit une résolution de la dernière violence: c’était d’empoisonner la reine ... et elle-même” (II: 296).

⁷⁹ Furetière; *regret* Douleur, tristesse, déplaisir, affliction, chagrin qu’on a d’avoir fait, d’avoir perdu quelque chose. III sig. Mm3^v.

indicative of a same-sex attraction: “there is [...] a homosexual element in the affection of the king for Fortuné which once again puts in question the king’s character. His haste at the end to marry Belle-Belle suggests that he has been in love with Fortuné all along. Now that he knows she is a woman, this love is legitimated” (65). Anne Defrance also addresses the problem of the same-sex attraction in this story. She, however, considers that the king turns away from his desire “au refoulement” (315); when things are getting too intimate in his conversation with Belle-Belle, he changes the subject. Defrance comments on a passage from *Belle-Belle*, in which Fortuné responds to the king’s assertion that Fortuné would rather reveal his feelings to the queen than to him: “S’il était permis à un sujet d’avoir son souverain pour confident, je me ferais une joie bien délicate de vous déclarer tous les sentiments de mon cœur”. Le roi l’interrompt pour lui demander où il avait laissé la reine” (280). Defrance notes:

Le roi, après avoir ouvert la voie à la confidence, en barre l’accès, il n’est pas négligeable sans doute que ce refus d’entendre soit accompagné d’une parole sur la reine. Ce faisant, le discours-écran masquant l’interdit s’appuie sur celle qui, dans le conte, occupe la place d’un objet d’amour plus convenable que le roi, puisque celui-ci croit Fortuné du même sexe que lui. (*Les contes de fées* 318)

The King hides his feelings by reverting to a relationship where he is the superior, and by stopping the conversation, controls expression of feeling. Since Fortuné is regarded by him as a man, it is possible to interpret his change of subject as an attempt to extricate himself from a favorite who he regards as making an unwanted sexual advance, in offering to declare all his feelings. Zuerner’s examination of the portrait of monarchy in this tale also sees the relationship between the King and Fortuné as an expression of homoerotic desire. Her analysis of the discourse between these two men considers that: “the text infuses the king’s speech with

conventions of amorous discourse common to seventeenth-century novels: yet because it occurs in the context of two reputedly male characters, this discourse engenders a homoerotic subtext” (202). The men esteem and confide in each other, which could be seen as an implicit desire, but as Zuerner also points out, the search for a young man, to be a confidant, can be seen as an expression of the needs of the king in seventeenth-century society.

By exploiting the homoerotic possibilities of the king’s predilection for his handsome and courageous courtier, the disguised Belle-Belle, the tale focuses on the ways in which the monarch’s dependence renders him vulnerable and complicates the distinction between [the monarch as private individual and as incarnation of the State]. (201)

Certainly the king’s isolation as a person, and the difficulties of being a monarch, are clearly delineated by d’Aulnoy. She describes the King’s obvious delight in the person who goes into battle for him, and restores the fortunes of his kingdom. The sharp contrast with his distress at the punishment that his sister metes out to Fortuné, however, reveals a depth of emotion that goes beyond that of king and soldier. One interpretation of the King being “enfermé dans son cabinet, afin de plaindre le sort de son cher favori” (296), is the regret of a king anticipating the loss of a valiant warrior. The king, like his sister, is absorbed by the protection of his kingdom, and is sorry to lose a champion. Such an interpretation does not fully explain the confusion that the King evinces. Christine Jones considers: “their union is not explicitly sexual, but it is traditionally homosocial” (“Heroism” 25), which to some extent explains the reliance the king has on this courtier. The nuance in the language used to describe the union when Belle-Belle is returned to her true gender, suggests that she marries for love, having “toujours ressenti une tendresse extreme” (II: 297). The king enters the union because “il voulait lui payer par une

couronne les obligations infinies qu'il lui avait" (II: 297). Therefore, there is little inference, on his part, of feelings which go beyond those between courtier and King. Fortuné, like the strong (disguised) woman who helps the King in *Marmoisan*, eventually causes some stirring of feelings in the King, as in the last sentence of the *conte* he is described as "amoureux" (II: 298), His intense emotions, however, are not expressed either for his family members, or for his future wife, but for the cross-dressed courtier.

In addition to the detachment that this king displays in his personal life, he is also considered to be a weak ruler. His behavior is interpreted as effeminate by several critics (Jasmin 377; Defrance 318; Trost 65; Zuerner 203), but Zuerner develops the argument and considers the King to be emasculated: "the stripping of the king's "jewels" emphasizes the king's "feminine" vulnerability. The adjective "dépouillé" reiterates this phallic loss, which symbolically transforms the king into a woman, who is "ravished" by the conquering male emperor" (200). Therefore the kingdom needs Belle-Belle, who embodies masculine strengths. Jasmin summarizes her capabilities as, "endossant les qualités viriles qui font cruellement défaut à ce monarque efféminé, Belle-Belle ne se dépouille pas pour autant de ses vertus féminines. Supplément d'âme, en quelque sorte, qui assure à l'héroïne la complétude dont provient son pouvoir de séduction sur les deux sexes" (377). Jasmin sees that her ability to have both the physical prowess of a man, as well as his mental capacities, makes her in some way a complete man and also a woman, therefore able to attract both sexes.

Both d'Aulnoy and L'Héritier are putting forward a theory of androgyny, or hermaphroditism in which a person is fully rounded when 'it' contains both male and female

characteristics.⁸⁰ This amalgam of the two genders is examined by Velay-Vallantin in her book. She suggests: “Le travestissement permet la vue simultanée de deux figures contraires, ce qui abolit la distance qui les sépare: chacun d’elles semble participer à la nature de l’autre” (*Fille en garçon* 86). By creating characters which blur the lines between the two sexes, the *conteuses* assiduously question the limited roles that society assigns women. The women who are able to take on warrior roles never lose their femininity, and embody the best of both genders. They are capable of being more than limited to a domestic sphere. Kings need the strength of a valiant woman, in particular in their status as private individuals, so that they may govern and perform effectively in their public lives. D’Aulnoy, and L’Héritier, rather than emphasizing homoerotic aspects, are showing the necessity for kings to be strong and to rule well, and suggest that this task is better achieved with marriage to an accomplished woman.

It would be comforting to discover in a perfect fairy-tale world, with its expectation of a happy ending, a royal couple who reigned and governed with mutual reliance on each other’s talents. For the cross-dressed woman, however, the return to the female role does involve a loss of power. Seifert, commenting on Murat’s tale, notes that the marriage disenfranchises Constantine both socially and sexually, an argument that can be applied to all female to male disguises. As Seifert conclusively argues:

As a phantasmic figure, Constantine cannot remain powerful in marriage. The threat of her actions prompts a final disempowerment in the tale’s closure and denies her an active erotic function. It is precisely to eliminate the “specter” of the empowered woman resisting her role in a phallogocentric economy that active

⁸⁰ Mitchell Greenberg considers that in examining “the drive behind the myth [of androgyny] the drive towards a union that abolishes sexual difference, we are perhaps getting closer to a desire that is more primitive and more pervasive than the portrayal of either hetero- or homo-sexuality” (“Absolutism and Androgyny” 96). He argues that there is a desire to “melt away from one’s own fixed sexual identity [...] to free gender from sexuality” (96).

heroines such as Constantine are reduced to passive wives. In this respect they are the reverse of the *femme forte*, who is desexualized because of her heroism.

Whether or not the empowered woman marries, this masculinist figure created a fundamental incompatibility between female heroism and love. (“Female empowerment” 22)

This loss of power as the woman returns to her ‘correct’ gender role is evidence that women can assume a more active role in society. While those that surrounded ‘him’ in society had no difficulty in accepting the manly accomplishments ‘he’ embodied, once the disguise is removed, so is the acceptance of ability to act outside the home. The *conteuses* are clearly demonstrating that the seventeenth-century desire to place women firmly in the domestic sphere is not something they agree with. With their use of transformation into the male gender, the writers highlight masculine designations of courage, fealty, and service, and show that these are not just the preserve of men. Depicting these particularities in a woman, together with manifest female skills in the domestic realm, established a portrait of women who desire and are capable of equality with men. Women, in the tales, whether they are cross-dressed or not, are clearly able to be affective beyond domestic confines.

Male Authors’ Views: Liberation or Condemnation

Lewis Seifert also examines the role of male writers in seventeenth-century French society, and suggests that men had as much of a problem as women in finding a gendered role in society, and that they constructed a masculinity, or masculinities dependent on normative expressions of maleness such as rank, marital status, profession, and patrons. Some writers “had to project personae that compensated for, reacted to, or were otherwise conditioned by these marked identities” (“Male Writer” 126). In investigating how these critics examine the question

of why a man chooses to cross-dress, I will consider whether cross-dressing in the *contes* can be seen as a theatrical act used by the writers to demonstrate a point of view or if it is a reaction against gender and societal constraints. I will also examine the question of whether male writers suggest that a cross-dressed figure can ever entirely belong to the other sex, as explored by L'Héritier and d'Aulnoy.

Individuals in the early modern period considered this concept of male cross-dressing, and explored it, and not solely in their writing. It was necessary to provide an entry into one of the main dictionaries of the century; Furetière defines hermaphrodite as “celui qui a les deux sexes, ou deux natures d’homme et de femme” (II, sig.Cc2v). Various authors use the trope, and one author, the abbé de Choisy, might be considered to embody both sexes. An aristocrat and courtier, he worked in occupations which were exclusively for men. If, as many accept, his posthumously published *Mémoires* are a true account of his early life, then he dressed and lived as a woman.⁸¹ Choisy’s father was an absent figure, and he was the youngest child, with a close relationship to his mother. In examining his adult role in society, Harris underlines Choisy’s acceptance of female authority, both in his mother, and also in famous literary figures such as Madame de Lafayette, whom Choisy recounts encouraged him to dress as a woman.⁸² Nonetheless, Harris also remarks: “That said, despite attributing authority to women, Choisy often displays more typically patriarchal attitudes towards femininity, per se, presenting it as a weakness and flaw” (“D’Eon and Choisy” 183). This ambivalent view of women, displayed by a man who, according to his *Mémoires*, was able to be accepted as a woman during his own life, might be considered, at first, a surprising perspective. Given that Choisy was a member of both

⁸¹ There is no corroboration in songs, letters, or any other existing document which confirms the stories written in the *Mémoires*.

⁸²François Timoléon de Choisy. *Mémoires de l’abbé de Choisy*. Ed Georges Montgrédien. (Paris: Mercure de France, 1966). 429-522. “Il arriva même que Madame de Lafayette [...] me dit en bonne amie que ce n’était point la mode pour les hommes et que je ferais bien mieux de m’habiller en femme” (476).

the clergy and the Académie française, institutions which did not admit women, such attitudes are more understandable; women are beautiful objects in Choisy's eyes, but he used female dress as a means to seduce women, and did not use femininity to exercise authority in society. The dominion of women in his environment is restricted to matters of beauty and dress. The other male authors, Mailly and Préchac, are not so binary in their perspectives on gender. Their heroines function in the society in which the reality of patriarchal values is depicted and do their best to circumvent the strictures that being female places upon them. Préchac, in particular, seems to have a positive view of women, and displays them in a favorable way, in which their femininity is a strength, enhanced by their cross-dressing, and their male personality traits.

In a fairy-tale depiction of female to male cross-dressing, the woman lives as a man, undetected until unmasked, at which point she returns to female dress and a female role in society. Préchac's *L'Héroïne mousquetaire* is subtitled "histoire véritable" and is ostensibly the true story of Christine de Meyrac, a young woman who fought during the Spanish wars for the French. As Hipp points out "[une] histoire véritable est le plus souvent une 'histoire apocryphe'" (50), but she does note the historical facts which are present in Préchac's tales: "Le Beau Polonais relate l'élection de Jean Sobieski au trône de Pologne (mai 1674), les troubles hongrois de 1676. Christine de Meyrac est mortellement blessée au siège d'Ypres, en 1676" (418). Chupeau in the book *Romanciers du XVII^e siècle* analyses all of Préchac's work, and notes the veracity of the story of Christine, and that Préchac diverts from her story in order to tell the story which he wishes to tell (284). Although containing elements of truth, this tale allows Préchac to explore gender issues, and to consider what being masculine or feminine signifies.

Harris interprets the emphasis on male behaviors in Christine as a "natural 'masculinity' [that] will prove to be the cause of both her heroism and her downfall" (*Hidden Agendas* 197).

This interpretation is borne out by the text, but simplifies the complexity of Christine's character; she is able not only to fight and live as a man, but also is accepted in society as a beautiful and accomplished woman. She succeeds in living both as a man and as a woman. Préchac's plot depicts Christine constantly changing between the two genders. He demonstrates that those who know Christine are able to recognize her when she is disguised, and when she is not. When she is 'recognized' in her real gender, the assumption is made that she is in fact a man, now masquerading as a woman. Her true gender is blurred for those who regard her. Nathalie Grande sees the changing of attire from female to male, and then sometimes back to female garb, as having two elements: "le travestissement, pour amusant qu'il soit par ses conséquences grivoises, apparaît ainsi comme un puissant moyen de mise en question de l'ordre social et sexuel" (122-23). Certainly this complicated changing of gender has its own humorous and at times licentious moments, but by allowing Christine and those who know her story to discuss and either condemn or defend her actions, Préchac questions societal assumptions.⁸³

Préchac constantly provides situations so that whenever Christine is considered to have transgressed the society's rules, she is able to convince her inquisitors by her delicate manners, good behavior, and refinement that she is not promiscuous. She does not behave in a libidinous way, always acting virtuously and asexually; she does not demonstrate sexual desire. She uses her disguise either to support always the King, or to educate those with whom she comes into contact. Thus she dresses as a man when in Spain, and visits a prudish widow, who is judgmental and critical of other women (304-05). She succeeds in making her fall in love with 'him'. When she is questioned about her motives for this, she explains: "je veux luy faire voir, répondit Christine, que pour vertueuse que soit une femme, elle a du merite à resister aux attaques d'un

⁸³ Nathalie Grande also remarks on this in *Le Rire galant*. "[Préchac] apprécie aussi de raconter les conséquences intimes ultimes et le trouble social que le brouillage social des apparences entraîne" 121.

homme de bonne mine, et qu'il faut avoir plus d'indulgence pour celles qui y sont tous les jours exposées" (307-08).

It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that Christine conceals her gender solely with the goal of educating people in society. Préchac makes it clear that she has the competences of a male from the very beginning of the story, summarizing her as "une héroïne qui semble avoir oublié toute la foiblesse de son sexe pour prendre la vigueur et la generosité du nostre" (3). From her earliest childhood, she has loved shooting and hunting. Her accidental killing of her brother leads her to take his gender, as a means to escape safely. It is also possible to see this story as a *Bildungsroman*, in which, as Christine matures, she is able to accept her female role in life. By being able to successfully take on a male role when she pleases, she is able to fulfill the needs of both sides of her psyche. Although she loves the Marquis d'Osseyra, and plans to marry him, her dealings with him are virtuous. Harris comments that "by having her gradually fall in love with the marquis, the novel clearly encourages the possibility that it will end with a marriage – a conventional conclusion to an unconventional work" (*Hidden Agendas* 198). Préchac clearly shows that when the marquis proposes, he is in love, but Christine has been won over by him: "Christine de sa part qui n'avoit jamais esté sensible à l'amour, et qui ne s'étoit laissée toucher qu'au merite, et par la longue perseverance du Marquis, ressentoit toute la joie imaginable, et sa passion ne luy donnoit plus d'inquietude" (271).

Préchac emphasizes that Christine is virtuous in all her dealings with the man and woman with whom she interacts as do the writers of the fairy tales which contain the taking of another gender, whether male or female. However, another seventeenth-century short story treats female cross-dressing in a very different way. Eustache le Noble's story, *La Fausse Comtesse d'Isamberg* (1697), features a young woman, Caliste, who runs away with Ponsac, a tutor in her

father's household. Two reasons are given for this flight: she is in love with Ponsac, and her father has arranged a marriage for her, with a much older man. Caliste first dresses as a man to travel to meet Ponsac, and subsequently when necessity, and the life they are leading, demand it. She and Ponsac take advantage of the gullibility of others to gain riches and social standing in the communities that they frequent. They use the desires that others feel for them to get what they want. Le Noble makes it quite clear that they have a sexual relationship, which is kept hidden from others; they are able to live together as Ponsac pretends he is Caliste's brother. "Ponsac passoit pour le Frère de Caliste, et avoit son appartement séparé, mais avec une communication discrète" (190). Each partner does make a commitment to each other: "avec [Ponsac], [Caliste] avoit conclu une espece de mariage, qui ne valoit pas mieux au Tribunal du Ciel qu'à celui de la Terre" (197). This would seem to suggest that in addition to their marriage not being sanctified by the Church, it is not valid as a 'worldly' relationship. They cannot form any union which unites them as a couple. Their 'marriage' is not recognized legally and it also has no standing on a spiritual level either. Their relationship is not permissible in any sphere.

This is very different from fairy-tales for if the heroines form relationships without parental or ecclesiastical approval, they are permitted to gain both at the end. Caliste's relationship with men and her interactions with society, where she uses others' credulity to gain advantage, do not give a portrait of an admirable woman. Her status as a heroine comes from her military exploits, where she is portrayed as noble and valiant, and she serves in armies, particularly in battles for Louis XIV, with skill which often surpasses that of men. This story contrasts sharply with the idealized stories of the writers studied in this dissertation, for example, d'Aulnoy, Mailly, and L'Héritier. If they let the real world enter into their tales, they only do so

in subtle and veiled ways.⁸⁴ Any attempt to critique society is done in a suggestive, not overt, manner. The *Le Noble* story is interesting because it shows a different treatment of cross-dressing, and characters whose actions in society are neither noble, nor altruistic but have the desired aim of duping people, gaining riches and status for themselves.

Both *L'Héroïne mousquetaire* and *La Fausse Comtesse d'Isamberg* end with the young woman being denied the power that dressing as a man gave them. Christine dies, and Caliste repents of her defiance of her father and goes into a convent. The fairy-tale-ending in which women are able to achieve equality and power with their kingly partners, as Sophie Raynard notes (*La Seconde Préciosité* 464), is not present in these short stories. The male writers, particularly Préchac, are not anti-feminist in their views, but deal more with the realities of life. They acknowledge women can be as physically strong as men, and as brave, but show in society which is not at war, the patriarchal system forces conformity onto females. Raynard notes in her analysis of other stories by the *conteuses*, that they are always careful to respect the *bienséances*, but grant freedoms and power to their heroines.⁸⁵ The male writers of the two particular stories studied depict a realistic view of seventeenth-century life. Their characters cross-dress and revert to their own gender as necessity dictates. Christine is shown to be virtuous, and to be able to use her masculine fighting skills in the service of the king, in much the same way as Belle-Belle and

⁸⁴ D'Aulnoy's tales usually end with the marriage of the couple, and blessing of the union by the parents. Where the couple has a child before this happens, as in *Le Dauphin*, they have previously 'married' and had the marriage blessed by her parents (II: 518). Although the king rejects and punishes the family, they remain together, are eventually restored to their correct status and married (II: 543). Mailly's *Le Prince Roger* uses invisibility to enter into ladies' bedrooms and seduce them, although these seductions are not detailed: "comme le jeune cavalier n'aimait pas à dire les particularités de ses aventures, on ne sait pas ce qui s'est passé entre lui et la dame, ce qu'on sait est qu'il sortit le matin avec son écuyer fort satisfait apparemment de la nuit" (525). He gives up his seduction of women when he falls in love. L'Héritier's *L'Adroite princesse* features a father who locks up his daughters to protect their virginity when he travels. When he returns, he arranges the marriage of his remaining virginal daughter, and the narrator comments: "dès ce temps l'inclination était la moindre chose qu'on considérait dans les mariages" (111). Seventeenth-century reality is there, but the author gives her heroine a love match.

⁸⁵ See "Le message féministe", *La Seconde Préciosité*, 381-406.

Léonore, but since her way of life is considered scandalous by the society in which she lives, the author makes the choice not to allow her to marry the man who loves her. There is no happy ending to this tale, which ends in death in battle.⁸⁶ Le Noble's heroine could almost be considered an anti-heroine, since the behaviors she and her lover display are not noble, and they take delight in duping and stealing from those they meet. Since Caliste is neither chaste, nor virtuous, the author does not allow her to gain equality with men in society. The male writers conform to accepted societal norms, and therefore laud their female persona's appearance as 'warriors' or *femmes fortes*, but reject behaviors which are harmful to others in that society.

Banneville: Double Cross-Dressing

Choisy's choice to have two cross-dressed people in his story differs from the other cross-dressed stories because his characters decide to remain in the genders which they have assumed. As noted earlier, Mariane had no choice in her assumption of her role, her mother having been haunted in her pregnancy by the death of her husband, and foreseeing "la même aventure pour ce cher enfant" (4) announces that she has a daughter. Choisy points out that, although her mother has her taught maidenly skills of music, dance, and the harpsichord, "une si grande facilité de génie força sa mère à lui faire apprendre les langues, l'histoire et même la philosophie, sans craindre que tant de sciences se rangeait dans une tête où tout se rangeait avec un ordre admirable" (94). Harris, using a different edition of this story, gives "la philosophie nouvelle" as the text. He remarks on Mariane's upbringing, and on her education, noting:

This educational regime is strangely emancipated, particularly in its inclusion of "la philosophie nouvelle"—that is, the new Cartesian philosophy which had

⁸⁶ Harris points out that the ending is Préchac's own invention, and that Christine was still alive at the time of publication (*Hidden Agendas* 198).

gained currency in seventeenth-century salons in part because it could be used to support arguments of intellectual equality between the sexes, most notably in Poulain de la Barre's claim that "L'Esprit n'a point de Sexe." ("Education and Gender" 8)⁸⁷

Choisy was very interested in the education of women and he wrote *Histoires de piété et de morale* for Madame de Maintenon's school for young women. Harris's comment is interesting as it gives insights into the world in which Choisy believes a girl should be educated and brought up. New theories and ideas were not to be kept away from girls, who should be encouraged to think and question. The word "nouvelle" is only in the very first edition, and may have been removed for reasons of censorship. Every work that was published had to pass the King's censors; writers developed ways of framing their thoughts in ways which would allow them to avoid punishment. As Claudia Carlos remarks, "writers during the Ancien Régime risked fines, imprisonment, banishment and, after 1665, also forced military service and penal servitude if their works failed to pass the review of the royal censors" (197). It is also possible that the word was removed to simplify the ideas that are expressed, but clearly Choisy seems to allow for a girl to receive as good an education as a boy, and acknowledges that a good mind merits education, and this is not limited to males.

Having dealt with the education of Marianne, and indicated that intelligence is not limited to gender, Choisy then considers the female appearance. He recounts that Mariane is put into

⁸⁷ Harris uses the following edition, based on the February 1695 edition of *Le Mercure galant*: Choisy, "Histoire de la Marquise/Marquis de Banneville", in *Nouvelles du XVII^e siècle*, ed. Jean Lafond and others (Paris, Gallimard, 1997), 971-88. The quotation is on page 973. A note by Lafond in this edition further comments that "La philosophie cartésienne, sous Louis XIV, avait fait des adeptes dans les cercles féminins" (1682). Joan DeJean's edition is based on the August and September 1696 versions published in *Le Mercure galant*: "[the second version of the story[is] three times as long as the first and with a more developed plot" (xxvii). DeJean's editions also includes two later additions to the 1723 edition as appendices. The first of these "provides a detailed defense of cross-dressing" (xxvii).

corsets “de fer” to give a womanly shape to the hips and a bosom. “Il est vrai qu’on l’avait un peu contrainte dès l’enfance avec des corps de fer, afin de lui faire venir des hanches, et de lui faire remonter la gorge” (5). Harris comments on the description of feminizing the boy child’s body, comparing it to *La Princesse de Clèves*: “The process of cultivating beauty discreetly passed over in La Fayette’s account is here rendered burlesque both by Choisy’s reference to iron bodices, and by the ironic understatement of ‘un peu’” (“Novel Upbringings” 8). As well as gently mocking the effort to which women will resort to achieve the fashionable or desired shape, Choisy provides an explanation of how a person with the physical characteristics of one gender, can be altered so that they appear outwardly to have the shape of the other gender. If there is no attempt to do this, then the reader would be left with a real sense of doubt that such a transformation is believable. Harris remarks that the *Marquise / Marquis* “can be considered as an affectionate and lighthearted parody of *La Princesse de Clèves*” (“Novel Upbringings” 5), and the comparison of the two is revealing of Choisy’s perspectives on women, and demonstrates his belief that gender is manufactured by society.

In the detailed preparations that Mariane gives to her appearance, before being in public, it is also possible to see an echo of Choisy getting ready to present himself as the Comtesse de Barres (475, 487), described in his *Mémoires*. The listing of Mariane’s beauty spots, earrings, ribbons, and simple dress (10-11, 13) reflects the care which everyone took at the time when appearing in public, but the concentration on the fabrics and adornment in the subsequent descriptions are much more lavish than are found in other male to female cross-dressing descriptions. Seifert considers that each of the three cross-dressers, Sionad, Mariane, and Bercour, “réservent une place importante au soin qu’ils donnent à leur toilette, leurs vêtements, et divers accessoires (boucles d’oreille, mouches, coiffes, etc.) non pas afin de tromper le regard

d'autrui mais bien plutôt pour l'attirer sur la beauté intrinsèque de chacun/e" ("*Les topoï* du corps travesti" 474). Seifert's cogent insight reveals that the cross-dressers in this story enjoy the voyeurism of others; they delight in their attire and are pleased that their accessories provoke comment and interest. In this they are no different from other members of society. Through his characters' delight in their apparel, it is possible to see that Choisy is gently mocking the societal norms of dress and appearance, and *mondain* attitudes. He shows that the urbanity which popular mores demanded is frequently a retreat from reality; a mask. Not only have his cross-dressed characters disguised themselves, but people hid their feelings and true character behind a persona that they put on.⁸⁸ Since these characters are cross-dressed, Choisy is also suggesting that gender is more a societal construct, in which a person learns to perform what is expected of a gender rather than such behaviors being innate.

As well as being observed, Choisy's protagonists also comment on what they see, continually raising the question of what defines a man and a woman in their public roles. The young man, Bercour, and his wearing of diamonds shows that he is the epitome of modernity.⁸⁹ In addition to the young man being up-to-date with fashions, the use of this stone denotes that he is also a man of means, and that his wearing of both the diamonds and beauty spots make him stand out in the theater, and be remarked upon. However, when Mariane remarks on his beauty to the countess it is clear that such extravagant apparel does not please her. Her response to

⁸⁸ The term *mondain* became a key element in the concept of an *honnête homme*. A man had to know how to behave in society, and to show a gracious, courtly persona, which would please those with whom he came into contact. Seifert considers one of the foundational principles of *mondain* society "to be the system of giving and receiving (poems, letters and other writing)" – *potlatch* – which "provided salon participants a means of conspicuously displaying their (social and/or sociable) gifts" ("Homme de ruelle" 106).

⁸⁹ Joan DeJean in *The Essence of Style* devotes a chapter to King Louis XIV's use and promotion of this gemstone, and the new setting and cutting techniques that were used, and how "for all other occasions [apart from mourning] he made sure that he and his courtiers glittered with all the diamonds the French treasury could afford" (164). The King's sparkling appearance was produced by a large diamond on a ribbon around his neck, and the use of diamonds as buttons, on his shoe buckles, and garters (173).

Mariane is: “mais il fait le beau, et cela ne sied bien à un homme. Que ne s’habille-t-il en fille?” (28). The inference would seem to be that only women should wish to draw attention to their beauty, and that if a man wishes to pursue female customs, then he should dress as one. Mariane is constantly presented with accounts of people who successfully cross-dress. The play that is presented in the theater is by Quinault, and DeJean notes that, in this play, “the female lead ... decides that she will continue to cross-dress and pass for Alcibiade” (29, note 14). Before she meets the marquis, Mariane also has met Sionad, who dresses as a woman for a play, and subsequently appears as the princess de Garden in society (22-23). Grande comments that Sionad is an anagram for Adonis, and is a reference to Philippe, duc d’Orléans, the King’s brother, who was a notorious cross-dressing homosexual. She remarks: “Si le frère du roi ne juge pas indigne de paraître publiquement vêtu comme une femme, il faut accepter de rire de ce “jeu” et non plus s’en scandaliser” (127). This remark is applicable to Mariane, and to the reader. All these references show the reader the normality and acceptance of taking the role of the opposite gender, and so when the marquis and marquise are revealed to both be cross-dressed, and prefer to maintain their disguises once married, the reader is not shocked or surprised.⁹⁰ The only slight criticism made of Sionad taking the role of a woman, is that the countess regrets that he was made aware of his beauty: she comments “Hélas! je me reproche de lui avoir mis dans la tête l’amour de lui-même. Il ne savait pas qu’il était beau” (17). Self-love would seem to be a greater crime in the countess’s eyes, and therefore those of Choisy, than a penchant for dressing as a member of the opposite sex. Seifert remarks that both Sionad and Mariane are beautiful and have

⁹⁰ Gary Ferguson explores the transgendered aspects of this relationship, commenting: “Later, following the lovers’ marriage, the moment of revelation of their respective anatomical sex, and their decision not to change their accustomed genders, when Bercour offers to become more conventionally masculine by eliminating all signs of effeminacy, Mariane urges hir not to do so, since it is precisely this ambiguous mixture that s/he finds charming” (152). (Ferguson uses the word hir, a gender neutral pronoun for him and her). “Early Modern Transitions: From Montaigne to Choisy.” *L’Esprit Créateur* 53.1 (2013): 145-57.

to transform their body shape in order to appear as female. However “what Sionad’s example shows and what the hero/ine’s will confirm is that one’s own body image does not necessarily correspond to one’s anatomical sex” (“Border Crossings” 239). In other words being and living as one gender is not dependent on the physical traits of that gender. It is perfectly possible, if a person is raised with no knowledge of sexual characteristics, as Mariane is, and learns the skills which society assigns to that gender, to live as she does.

Cross-dressing Difficulties: Crime and Punishment

The assumption of the female gender by a male is not always one which takes place in a courtly setting. Several authors use the trope of an Amazon to explore gender. In d’Aulnoy’s *Le Prince Lutin*, the prince Léandre is changed into a sort of hobgoblin, and assumes various personas in his attempt to win the heart of the princesse de l’Île des Plaisirs tranquilles. In one of the disguises he uses, he dresses as an Amazon. In order to serve the princess and to free her from the oppression, the neighboring king who wishes to subjugate her kingdom, the prince puts on female garb. This dressing as a female warrior raises several issues. Here, the male warrior, traditionally the stronger sex, takes on the female warrior’s attire in order to outwit the aggressor. The king is very desirous of besting this amazon woman, and as Marlies Mueller points out this was a theme in early modern literature:

Conquering an amazon who excels in military prowess validates the glorious hero. On the other hand, if she remains ‘unsubdued’ and leads powerful armies or rules over splendid civilizations, she is seen as symptomatic of the author’s misogynous fears. (Unless she is presented by a female writer. Then she voices the author’s desire for emancipation and alternative life styles). (201)

The fate of the Amazon clearly reflects the dichotomy presented by the differing attitudes by males and female writers. By making her male protagonist a cross-dressed Amazon, d'Aulnoy subverts the expectations of the reader, and questions the accepted delineation of the female role. By making a male become a female aggressor, she also draws on, and gently mocks historical depictions, and the heroic knight setting out to defend his lady, raising a smile at the absurdity of the image of prince Lutin.

D'Aulnoy was not alone in changing the gender of the Amazon. Joan DeJean examines in detail paintings of bellicose women in the seventeenth century. She notes that Claude Deruet, in his first drawing, "*Mounted Amazon with a Spear*" (?1620) and a later painting *Alberte d'Ernecourt, dame de Saint-Baslemont, défendant son château de Neuville* (ca. 1640), depicts the female Amazon as a man. She subsequently analyses art works owned by Marie de Cossé Brissac, maréchale de La Meilleraye, and the literary works by Jacques Du Bosc (1645) and Pierre Le Moyne (1647), which clearly show the Amazon warrior as a woman.⁹¹ Leander outwits the king in his disguise, and as a true Amazon cuts off his head. As DeJean points out it was generally felt that the threat of women's violence had to be "corrected" and the way to do this was to behead them. She notes that cartoon engravings of women being decapitated appeared in all types of literature. D'Aulnoy, in reversing the gender of the person beheaded, underlines that men who wish to take what they want by violence and threat are as erroneous as men believed women to be. In addition, by having a cross-dressed male do the act, she also avoids the act of violence being committed by a woman.

⁹¹ A full analysis of the seventeenth-century depiction of women who fought, or were violent is given in the article. Joan DeJean "Violent Women and Violence Against Women: Representing the "Strong" Woman in Early Modern France", 117-47.

Préchac tells two stories which feature men who take on female disguise, though they are very different in personality. In *Le beau Polonais* and *Yolande de Sicile* Préchac gives his cross-dressing males different nationalities. The assumer of the female role in *Le beau Polonais* is Polish, and Dom Augustin in *Yolande* is Spanish. This may be to allow the characters to act in ways that would not be acceptable in French men. As Seifert points out, French court life, “with its etiquette and *préséances*... made for a constrained and restrained environment” (“Homme de ruelle” 96), and salon life allowed men to interact with women. “Feigning love and yet strategically distancing themselves from the “serious” courtly love model they would be able to regain the upper hand, to assert the dominant and active role in salon exchanges” (106).

Préchac details some of the rules governing the behavior of the men at the Spanish court, for example: “c’est un crime en Espagne de parler d’amour à une fille de la reyne” (45). These rules and the foreign milieu add an element of exoticism and mystery to the settings of the story. Both male cross-dressers are described as being exceptionally beautiful. Dom Augustin stands out because, as the narrator recounts: “il est rare en Espagne de voir des jeunes hommes d’une si grande beauté” (*Yolande* 100). The young count is “d’une beauté si surprenante que tout le monde le regardait avec admiratio[n]” (*Le beau Polonais* 2). Their physical exquisiteness helps in their assumption of the female gender, but unlike Choisy’s detailing of how the male form is changed to appear female, with minutia of clothing, hair, and accessories, Préchac does not delineate how the costuming works. He simply presents his characters in their new gender. This demonstrates the differing attitudes of the two authors to the female attire of the men. For Préchac it is a device to facilitate telling his story, and he is not interested in detailing how the man conceals his gender or maintains the deception. He expects his reader to accept that the disguise works.

Préchac also narrates real historical events in which his hero hides in female apparel in order to evade capture and execution. Rioters did this to avoid recognition and as Orest Ranum explains, put on all kinds of disguises in order to get out of Paris as the *Fronde* was ending: “they exchanged clothing with their servants” (331), and one man, Séguier, “found his way out of the city in monk’s garb”; others disguised themselves as ‘bourgeois’ (335). There was a tradition of men “donning female clothes [...] and [the] adopting of female titles for riots [...] beginning in the seventeenth century” (147), according to Natalie Zemon Davis. It is possible to conclude that this practice was not unknown, and that disguise was used either to afford escape, or to permit the wearer to go to places where a man would be regarded with suspicion. In Préchac’s tale, it is not, however, the young man’s idea to take on female guise, it is the decision of one of his servants, who tells their capturer that he is a young woman “d’une grande naissance qu’un desespoir amoureux avoit engagée à chercher la mort” (68). So the servant pretends that his male master is a female disguised as a man. Such an explanation seems reasonable to the captors, and he is spared. One might wonder as to why such an excuse is so readily agreed to. Certainly the soldier’s beauty helps persuade the general of the veracity of the statement, and of course the young man convinces with his disguise, because that is what he is. At this first declaration of his femaleness, the Polish man has never cross-dressed. Having had his ransom paid, he promises to put on female dress, and to help the baron by serving the woman he loves, and finding out the reason for her delaying her marriage to him, the baron. It would appear that in this story a man has no problem in using the ability of another man to cross-dress in order to gain access to other women for sexual motives. This is a leitmotif, found in Choisy’s *Mémoires*, Préchac’s *Yolande de Sicile*, and also in the *Mille et une nuits*.⁹² The baron, in this story, contrary to the seductions

⁹² In one of these stories, ten slaves are disguised as women so they can enter into the women’s quarters. (*Conte du roi Shâhriyâr et de son frère le roi Shâh Zamân*). *Les mille et une nuits*, trans. Jamel Eddine Bencheikh and André

carried out by the other males, seems to have no fear of impropriety on the part of the prince, a (disguised) man with a woman and acting as her maid.

The promise, however, does lead to complications, as in his female role as Eugenie he meets his former love, Beralde, who recognizes him. This leads to him sleeping in her wardrobe. Since he sees her in such intimacy, even getting in and out of bed (102), they must find some way of protecting her reputation and his position. Thus they decide that she must consider him as her husband (103), but out of respect for her “elle lui permettait de continuer le personnage d’Eugenie, à condition qu’il oublieroit celui du Palantin” (104). This allows them to maintain their relationship, and because the prince loves her, he puts aside his male garments to remain beside her, at the same time, since as they regard themselves as a married couple, he may be with her, without offending any proprieties. The young man returns to his male mode of dress, when he is taken to Poland; he puts on male apparel in order to leave, and travel safely. Once there, he meets up with Beralde and they are permitted to marry. Thus this cross-dressing episode is a tool which enables the hero to escape death, and to meet up with the woman he loves, and to establish a relationship with her. It is also clear that the person who knows the prince, and loves him, is not taken in by his garb; recognition by Beralde is immediate.

In *Le beau Polonais*, the prince takes on female dress to afford him access to a woman’s private space. In *Yolande de Sicile*, Dom Augustin wishes to see Yolande, and so he takes on the disguise of a young lady from Spain. Thus, he may live in the female part of the court and see Yolande. Préchac underlines that it is not only his good looks which allow him to play this role. He is also able to mimic the behavior of an ingenue, “dom Augustin soutenait si bien son

Miquel, Vol. 1 (Paris : Gallimard, 2005) 7. These tales first appeared in France 1717-20.

personnage par sa beauté et contrefaisait de si bonne grace l'innocence et la naïveté d'une fille qui commence à paraître à la Cour que tout le monde y fut trompé" (108). When Dom Augustin's deception is discovered, he is removed from the court and punished. The sentence is banishment from the court, a limited judgement, because the queen is convinced by some of the women that he has acted out of love, so she is persuaded to lessen the punishment "à condition pourtant qu'il serait ramen     Messine, dans le m  me   tat qu'il avait   t   surpris au Palais, et qu'il serait gard   un mois dans le Ch  teau de S. Sauveur, toujours sous l'habit de fille, sa Majest   voulant le punir par la honte que ce d  guisement lui ferait dans son propre pays" (I: 125- 26). The sentence is designed to humiliate and shame the perpetrator, and to indicate that such behavior cannot be tolerated. The story of Dom Augustin might have ended there as a successful ruse, which caused no real harm to anyone, but in the second part of the tale, he reappears in the harem where Yolande finds herself after a ship wreck. Having been shipwrecked, and admitted to the harem in his women's disguise, Dom Augustin has suffered a further punishment as a result of his taking on a different gender: he is now a eunuch in the seraglio. Yolande's innocence is underlined in the description of meeting up again with him; she does not understand what has happened to him.

Yolande l'ayant enfin reconnu pour Dom Augustin, quoi qu'elle lui trouvait le visage fort chang  , et la voix toute diff  rente, t  moigna d'abord de la joie de le revoir, et ne comprenant peut-  tre pas, qu'il y   t une si grande diff  rence d'un Eunuque    un autre homme, elle lui reprocha son d  sespoir, lui disant, qu'il fallait avoir des sentiments plus Chr  tiens, et esp  rer que le Ciel le d  livrerait de cette servitude, en lui procurant les moyens de retourner en Sicile. (2: 106-07)

Having revealed himself to Yolande, Dom Augustin tells her his story as he traveled in his disguise. One of pirates tried to seduce him, but left him alone, once he revealed his true identity. Nevertheless, he is punished with fifty lashes on the soles of his feet for his cross-dressing. He was then sold as a slave, and his new master made approaches to him, wishing to take him as a wife. One of the master's other wives spends time with him, trying to persuade him that he should become a wife, but during the time spent with her, listening to her arguments, he is attracted to her, and reveals his true sex. "Elle fut quelque temps sans me répondre, et feignant de ne pas croire ce que je lui avais dit, je me servis de son ignorance affectée, et pris des libertés avec elle, qu'on souffre des personnes d'un même sexe" (2:151). Caught *in flagrante delicto* with Salma, Dom Augustin is made a eunuch. This departure from the fairy-tale world, containing punishment for cross-dressing, and a foretaste of the more libertine stories, and stories involving oriental settings which were to come in the following century, gives this story a very different nuance. Cross-dressing is not the light-hearted, innocent disguise which is acceptable, and undiscovered until the moment of revelation. In this story hiding in the clothes of the opposite gender leads to punishment, and then to removal of the original gender. Unfortunately, this story by Préchac was not finished, and so there is no denouement, or conclusion to the story. Nevertheless, Préchac wrote a series of stories and as Jacques Chupeau remarks "les intrigues du sérail ont permis à Préchac d'inscrire ses thèmes favoris – déguisement et rencontre galant – dans un cadre dont la couleur orientale donnait à la ruse, à la violence et à la sensualité un caractère de vérité" (283). Thus in *Yolande* these themes are clearly demonstrated: the ruse of a man disguising himself as a woman, with the purpose of seduction, and his punishment which is violent and shocking.

The suggestion that the violence of the punishment could be the result of the abhorrence, which male to female cross-dressing causes, is addressed by Daniel Maher. He points out “la femme travestie semble posséder des qualités qui la rendent aimable aux yeux des autres femmes et capable de leur plaire, mais c’est beaucoup moins vrai pour les hommes travestis, peut-être parce que l’homosexualité masculine choquait encore plus les bienséances de l’époque” (88). There is a perception that a male dressing as a female does so because of same-sex desire. However there is no suggestion of homosexuality in this story. Dom Augustin is punished because he is heterosexual and seduces women. Since men still have the ability to be sexually dominant while in disguise, this makes them objects of suspicion and fear for those who encounter them. This would lead to a greater reluctance to accept males attired as women. In addition, if a man is able to dress, and act, as a female, and is accepted in this role, then this suggests that there is already an element of femininity in his behavior. The authors who describe the phenomenon of males attired as females in seventeenth-century stories present their characters as fully heterosexual and not homosexual. They may wear female clothing to gain access to the desired female, or be raised as a girl to avoid the tribulations of being a male as in Mariane’s case, but they are never allowed to attempt to consummate a same-sex relationship.

In conclusion, the use of cross-dressing in the stories I have examined does not involve elements of sexual transgression or prurience, as might be expected at first glance. The acceptance of cross-dressing would appear to be based on the motivation of the individual who assumes the other gender. Female heroines take on the male persona to please their fathers and as a service to their king. They are rewarded by elevation in rank and higher status but mostly through their marriage, they lose the freedom that their cross-dressing gave them. Both men and women who disguise for selfish reasons or for sexual desire are treated differently, and either

receive punishment, or regret their behavior and withdraw from the world. Only Choisy's story allows the protagonists to remain in their cross-dressed roles, because Mariane has known no other role, did not choose to be raised as a girl, and has a heterosexual relationship with her 'husband'. The authors do not avoid the difficulties of having their hero/ines being attractive to both genders, and they do address the question of same-sex attraction. This desire is never allowed to succeed, and the tales describe two outcomes for this same-sex attraction. The person who is attracted either recognizes their love object when they return to their real gender or is shown to be a flawed character, and his or her sexual behavior, selfishness and lust is a part of his or her inherent bad character, and punishment or death ensues. In their treatment of cross-dressing the authors certainly call into question the accepted mores. The women writers clearly suggest that women are equally capable of fighting and governing, and the king that they support needs their skills. These kings manifest weaknesses, which others recognize, and need the strength of the woman to be able to rule. Male writers also use women who are capable, and who teach others in society by critiquing their assumptions, as well as being able to fight alongside their male counterparts. When it comes to men cross-dressing, the women writers rarely use this disguise, and when they do, the male is an almost stereotypical depiction of an Amazon, whose disguise provokes amusement. Male writers use female garb for their males as a means to let them approach females and gain access to them in private. There is much more of an opportunistic goal of seduction in these tales, but the writers do not allow the protagonists to do this without some sort of punishment resulting from their acts. They clearly cannot and do not condone such behavior. Thus all the writers who deal with cross-dressing make a commentary on the roles assigned by society's understanding and interpretation of gender. Men who behave in a

brutish or aggressive manner are criticized as much as men who use disguise to be able to satisfy their lust.

In conclusion the tales which were written more than three hundred years ago still provide many layers of enjoyment. On the surface the writers of seventeenth-century fairy tales depict a sumptuous regal environment filled with cultural artefacts and beautiful characters, who will probably undergo some sort of adversity, but eventually find true love and marry. Rarely do the writers recount the subsequent events in this marriage; the couple's union is the denouement of the tale, and it is possible to regard them as romances. The genre contains these common elements, and carries its readers to the realm of the *merveilleux*, filled with magical beings, resplendent settings and struggles between good and evil. This is not to say that the stories are formulaic, there is a wide variety of tales and original perspectives. What are revealed through deeper study are core undercurrents which show dissatisfaction and frustration with the way that society is organized. These are not confined to those who may have felt resentful or frustrated by their own circumstances – although this may color their writing – but are expressed by the authors for many years. As Greenblatt has demonstrated with Lucretius's work, the poetry and symbolism of a work can hide truths about the world, which both those with contemporary insights and those with subsequent knowledge can perceive.

Some authors are overt in their flattery of the hierarchy. Préchac gives a panegyric of Louis XIV in *Sans Paragon*, but other pictures of kingship are less flattering, and rulers are shown to be greedy, rapacious, and cruel. The appraisal of dominion is not limited to kings; the relationship that fathers have with their offspring, their autocratic treatment of the children, and their resulting rebellion all subvert the idea of a perfect world. Nor is this critique limited to males: many of those who have power over others are shown to abuse it. The behaviors of

sisters, mothers, and stepmothers are all scrutinized and their shortcomings are highlighted. The stories would be very depressing, if all the characters were evil, but as well as demonstrating harmful relationships, the writers also depict wonderful examples of good. There are wise kings who govern well, and whose countries are fiscally sound, fathers who treat their offspring in a loving equitable manner, and other successful, happy kinships. Frequently, a bucolic setting is the place for supportive familial links, reflecting the need for development outside of the falseness of flattery and self-aggrandizement of the court depicted in some tales. Any evaluation of tyrannical behavior is not overt; the use of metamorphosis permits the authors to hide their critique, losing it in a fantasy world, where the magical can be taken as the reason for the narration. Metamorphosis is also a didactic tool in the tales. The most common use of it is for adolescents, who are wishing to break free from parental control, and demonstrate the rashness and impatience caused by their raging hormones. Their removal from court life and the adventures they undergo as a metamorph enable them to mature and to learn to control their impulsive – at times bad – behaviors. The diverse choices made by the authors add to the richness and comedic elements in the tales. The sheer absurdity of the situations in which these metamorphs find themselves makes the tales entertaining, but this very ludicrousness expresses criticism. If those in authority are treated in a farcical manner, it surely calls that dominion into question.

As well as metamorphosis, the other transformation that the writers use is cross-dressing. The pre-wave of writing which I have defined also shows men and women who are struggling to find a place in society, and using cross-dressing as a means to do this. In these stories, the taking on of the disguise of another gender allows the women to fight for their country, and to find equal status with men. This trope is carried on in the fairy tales; and not only shows the ability of

women to have status outside the home, but also to be necessary to kings and to their domains for their good governance. As might be expected, in the earlier tales the treatment of men dressed as women is more transgressive. They assume female garb for the purposes of seduction, and receive punishment for their acts. It is not until Choisy's tale that the cross dressed male is shown to question the premise of women's inability to find a societal role outside the domestic sphere. This tale also challenges assumptions of what the construct of gender means in the whole of society since both protagonists are able to live in society in the garb of the other gender. More than that; they are believed to be the gender that they have assumed. Choisy seems to advocate a parity of roles, which is not confined to the anatomical sex of the person.

The writers of the *contes de fées* used the fashionable pastime of salon writing to enjoy their lives at court. They created their stories using folk tales they knew, as well as drawing on Greek and Latin writers' works, such as those written by Apuleius and Ovid. By using these tropes, they activated their reader's interest, but treated the subject matter in a vibrant way that changed and challenged possible pre-conceptions. The elegant and opulent world they depict, with its magical beings, hides a critique of the construct of society. This is not confined just to the hierarchy and constraints that life at court would bring. The authors are challenging and questioning the functions that men and women fulfill in society, and suggesting that a different, more equitable construct is possible.

Appendix A

Madame d'Aulnoy	Mlle L'Héritier
Babiole	L'Adroite Princesse ou les aventures de Finette
Belle-Belle ou le chevalier Fortuné	Les Enchantements de l'éloquence
Belle Étoile	Marmoisan ou l'innocente tromperie
La Belle aux cheveux d'or	La Robe de sincérité
La Biche au bois	
La Chatte Blanche	Madame de Murat
Le Dauphin	Anguillette
Finette Cendron	L'Enchanteur
Fortunée	L'Île de la magnificence ou la princesse Blanchette
Gracieuse et Percinet	Jeune et belle
La Grenouille Bienfaisante	L'Heureuse peine
Le Mouton	Le Palais de la vengeance
Le Nain jaune	Le Parfait amour
L'Oiseau bleu	Le Turbot
L'Oranger et l'abeille	Peine perdue
Le Pigeon et la colombe	Le Prince des feuilles
Le Prince Lutin	Le Roi porc
Le Prince Marcassin	Le Turbot
La Princesse Carpillon	Le Sauvage
La Princesse Printanière	
La Princesse Rosette	L'abbé de Choisy
Le Rameau d'or	Madame de Guercheville
Le Serpentin vert	L'Histoire de la Marquise/ marquis de Banneville
	La Princesse Aimonette
Madame d'Auneuil	Dom Alvar del Sol
Agate, princesse des Sythes	
Les Chevaliers errants	Mailly
La Princesse Léonice	Le Bienfaisant ou Quiribirini
L'Histoire de Cléonice	Blanche-Belle
L'Histoire de la princesse Mélicerte	Constance sous le nom de Constantin
La Princesse des Prétintailles	Fortunio
La Tyrannie des fées détruite	Le Prince Arc-en-ciel
Zalmayde	Le Prince Guérini
	Le Prince Roger
Mlle de la Force	La Reine de l'île des fleurs
La Bonne Femme	Le Roi magicien
L'Enchanteur	
Persinette	Préchac
Plus Belle que fée	Le Beau Polonais
Vert et bleu	L'Héroïne mousquetaire
	La Reine des fées
	Sans Paragon
	Yolande de Sicile

Appendix B⁹³

Author	conte	disguise
D'Aulnoy	Belle-Belle ou le chevalier Fortuné	FM
	Le Prince Lutin	MF/ FM
	Belle Etoile et Le Prince Chéri	FM
D'Auneuil	Histoire du prince Elmédore	FM
	Zalmayde	FM
	La Tyrannie des fées détruite	FM
Choisy	La Marquise-Marquis de Banneville	MF/ FM
	L'Histoire turque	FM
L'Héritier	Marmoisan	FM
	L'Adroite Princesse	FM
Mailly	Constance sous le nom de Constantin	FM
Murat	Le Sauvage	FM
Préchac	L'Héroïne mousquetaire	FM
	Yolande de Sicile	MF
	Le beau Polonais	FM

⁹³ I am indebted to Joseph Harris's table in *Hidden Agendas* which inspired the layout and categorization of this chart (242- 44).

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