

The Island of Happiness

TALES of MADAME D'AULNOY

Drawings by

 NATALIE FRANK 



The Island of Happiness



For Linda Nochlin, with love
—Natalie

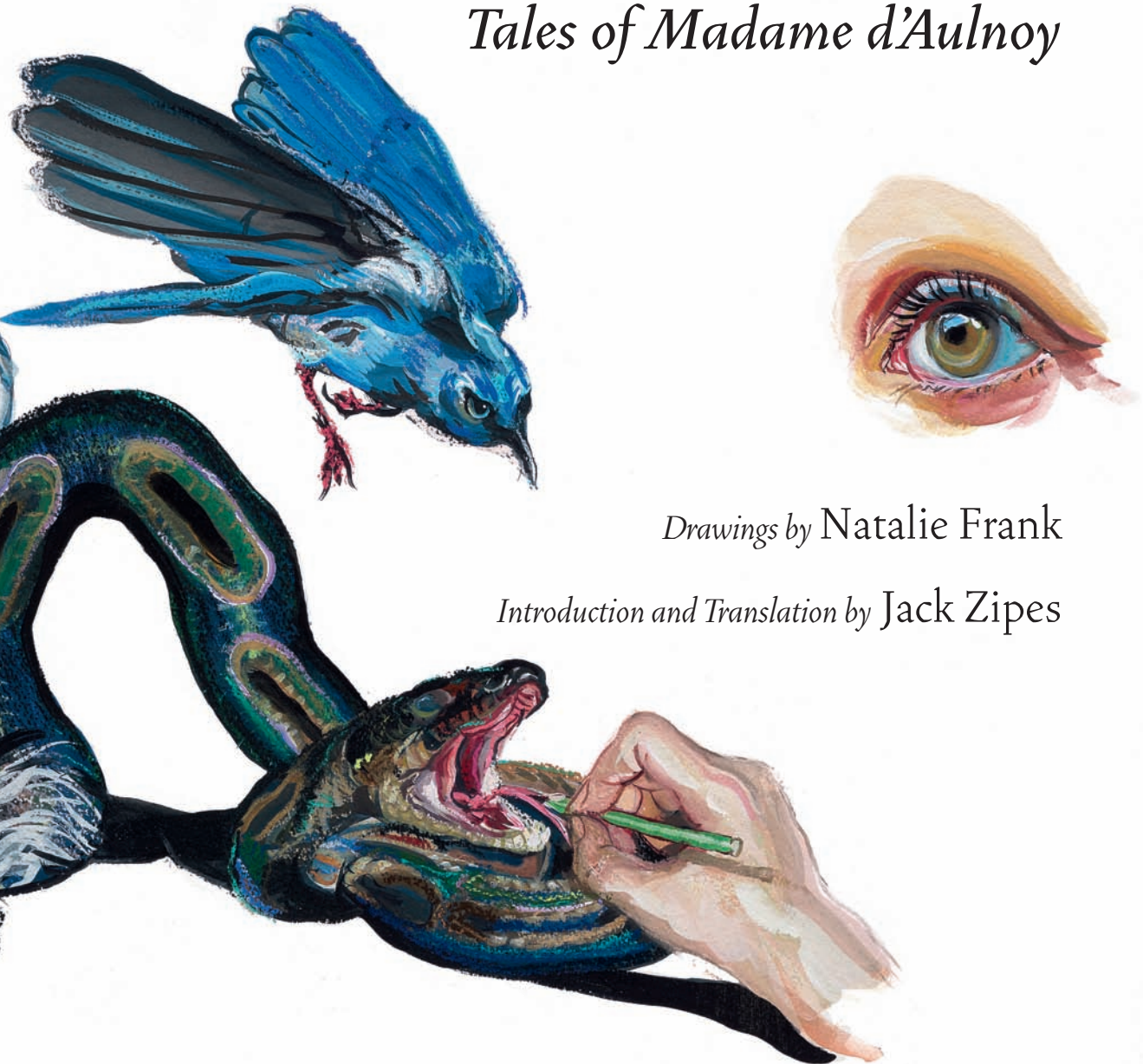


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Tales of Madame d'Aulnoy

Drawings by Natalie Frank

Introduction and Translation by Jack Zipes



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The Hopeful, Hyperbolic Countess d'Aulnoy

Who was this exceptional woman, Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Comtesse d'Aulnoy, pioneer of the literary fairy tale in France? Why is much of her life a mystery, even though she was a major writer and socialite in Paris during the 1690s and the beginning of the eighteenth century? What brought her to write what she allegedly considered trifling tales, “bagatelles,” which nevertheless drew the admiration of aristocratic and bourgeois readers and were turned later into popular chapbooks and books for children? Why did she coin the term *conte de fées* and more or less initiate a fairy-tale vogue during the absolutist years of Louis XIV?

Born in 1652 into a wealthy aristocratic family in Barneville-La Bertrand, Normandy, Marie-Catherine had a close relationship with her mother and her maternal aunt, who educated her and told her numerous folk tales. More than likely, she also heard stories from her nannies and servants. In addition, she became proficient in English and Spanish and demonstrated a broad knowledge of medieval French and Spanish literature. Her mother married her off at age thirteen to François de la Motte, Baron d'Aulnoy, thirty years her senior and a notorious gambler and libertine. By the time Marie-Catherine turned eighteen, she had given birth to three children.

In 1669, due to the baron's financial difficulties and dissolute character, his relationship with Marie-Catherine and her mother, Madame Gudanne (who had remarried after her first husband's death and changed her name), deteriorated to the point that mother and daughter implicated Baron d'Aulnoy in a crime of high treason (*lèse majesté*), punishable by death. They recruited two accomplices, Jacques-Antoine de Courboyer and Charles de

la Mozière, and the baron was arrested. The plot backfired, however, when the baron proved his innocence: Courboyer and Mozière were charged with calumny and executed. Mme Gudanne escaped charges by fleeing France, while her daughter, young Mme d'Aulnoy, was briefly imprisoned with a newborn daughter—her two other children had died in infancy. By 1670, Mme d'Aulnoy was pardoned because her role in the conspiracy could not be proved. After she was released from prison, she separated from her husband and temporarily entered a convent for refuge, which she left by 1672. During the next thirteen years, she traveled a great deal and allegedly spent time in England, Flanders, and Spain, where her mother lived and worked as a double agent for the French and Spanish governments. Otherwise, Mme d'Aulnoy would occasionally return to Paris, but there are no records or clear evidence about what she did during this period of her life. It remains a mystery.

What we do know is that around 1685, she bought a house on the rue Saint-Benoît, and was gradually accepted into Parisian high society. By 1690, she published her first important novel, *Histoire d'Hypolite, comte de Douglas* (*The Story of Hypolitus, Count of Douglas*), which was a great success and contained her first major fairy tale, “L'Île de la félicité” (“The Island of Happiness”). She followed this book the same year with a pseudo-memoir, *Mémoires de la cour d'Espagne* (*Memoirs of the Spanish Court*), and in 1691 with her travel/epistolary narrative, *Relation du voyage d'Espagne* (*An Account of a Journey to Spain*), which included another fairy tale, “L'Histoire de Mira” (“The Story of Mira”).

Once fully settled in Paris, d'Aulnoy became one of the most popular and notable authors of her time. She was invited to various literary salons and established her own salon on the rue Saint-Benoît, where she often read her fairy tales aloud before they were published. It became customary at d'Aulnoy's salon to recite fairy tales and, on festive occasions, to dress up like characters from fairy tales. She was regarded as a talented storyteller and published her fairy tales in several volumes: *Les Contes des fées*, I–III (1696–97); *Les Contes des fées*, IV (1698); and *Contes nouveaux ou les fées à la mode*, I–IV (1698). Altogether, she published twenty-five fairy tales during her lifetime. She was the first to establish the literary fairy tale as a genre. Indeed, she was more responsible even than Charles Perrault for the extraordinary vogue of French literary fairy tales that swept Parisian cultural circles from 1690 through 1705.

On the basis of her writing—in addition to fairy tales, d'Aulnoy published historical romances, novels, devotional books, and memoirs—she was elected a member of the *Accademia dei Ricovrati* in Padova, and she continued to be active in the literary field by publishing such works as *Sentiments d'une âme pénitente* (*Sentiments of a Penitent Soul*, 1698) and *Le Comte de Warwick* (*The Count Warwick*, 1703). In addition, d'Aulnoy managed to make time for intrigues. In 1699, she is said to have assisted her friend Mme Ticquet, who attempted to assassinate her husband, a member of Parliament, because he allegedly had abused her. He survived the attempt, and Mme Ticquet was beheaded. D'Aulnoy was not charged with any wrongdoing.

In 1700, d'Aulnoy's husband, the notorious baron, died. Although he had never divorced her, he had disinherited her before his death. Nevertheless, she continued to maintain her salon and participate in the cultural life of Paris until her death in 1705.

Many mysteries about her life remain unsolved. She published nothing until 1690, at age thirty-nine, and there are no reliable records about what she did during her years of travel, from 1672 to 1685. In fact, it is unclear how she supported herself or who fathered two of her daughters, born in 1676 and 1677. It is possible, since she was an only child, that she inherited a good deal of money and received support from her mother from 1670 to 1685, when she bought her house in Paris, and that she later earned money through her writing. What seems clear is that she was an independent young woman of thirty-five when she left Paris, and that she began writing her first three works toward the end of the 1680s. Moreover, these works, *The Story of Hypolitus* (1690), *Memories of the Spanish Court* (1690), and *An Account of Travels in Spain* (1691), were highly diverse. Her first fairy tales, "The Island of Happiness" and "The Story of Mira," are very different from her later ones and yet foreshadow many of the themes and concerns found in the later stories. Both are surprisingly dystopian narratives and stem from oral traditions, so the style and language are not as hyperbolic or euphemistic as in the later tales.

By 1690, d'Aulnoy had become an idealist and moralist. She was exclusively interested in the aristocratic classes and how they suffered from the decline of the nobility—that is, she believed that the upper classes were declining because of the corruption of civil manners. What interested her most of all was the status of women, the power of love, ethical behavior, and the tender relations between lovers. Without love and the cultivation

of love, she believed, an ideal and just society could not exist. In even her earliest fairy tales, d'Aulnoy was a severe judge. King Adolph dies in "The Island of Happiness" because he chooses pride and glory over his love for Princess Felicity; the princess dies in "The Story of Mira" because she is too proud and narcissistic and must be punished by the gods. In these tales, d'Aulnoy's privileged king and princess could have lived ideal lives if it had not been for their character flaws.

It is evident from "The Island of Happiness" and "The Tale of Mira" that d'Aulnoy had not yet conceived a plan to write a series of fairy tales or to experiment with the genre. In fact, it was not until 1697 and 1698 that she was to make a name for herself as the writer of *contes des fées* when she published *Les Contes des fées*, fifteen tales within two frame narratives, *Don Gabriel Ponce de Leon* and *Don Fernand de Tolède*, followed by *Contes nouveaux ou les fées à la mode*, nine tales within the narrative frame of *Le Gentilhomme bourgeois*. If she had particular reasons and causes for writing these tales, it is likely that they were prompted by her disillusionment with the court and politics of Louis XIV, as well as by her experiences in the literary salons of Paris.

France endured a major crisis around 1688, and conditions began to deteriorate at all levels of society. Indeed, even the aristocracy and haute bourgeoisie were not exempt. As Louis XIV waged costly wars and sought to annex more land for France, taxes for all classes became exorbitant. At various times during the latter part of his reign, terrible weather led to years of bad harvests, and the continued wars added to the devastation. The steady increase of debt, taxation, and poor living conditions resulted in extreme misery for the peasantry and austerity for the bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Moreover, as Louis XIV became more orthodox in his devotion to Catholicism, he became more rigid in his cultural taste, and more arbitrary and willful as absolutist king. His reign, which had begun during an "Age of Reason," turned reason against itself to justify his desires, tastes, and ambition for glory, and this solipsism led to irrational, destructive policies that were soundly criticized by the highly respected Fénelon, the archbishop of Cambrai, who became the moral conscience of the ancien régime during its decline. Given these dark times, and the censorship that prohibited writers from criticizing Louis XIV directly, the fairy tale became a means to vent criticism and at the same time to project hope for a better world. D'Aulnoy clearly was drawn to imaginative literary works by educated writers as well as to magical folk tales from the common people, and adapted them for members of her social class.

From the late Middle Ages up through the Renaissance, peasants told a variety of folk tales, legends, and fables among themselves at the hearth, in spinning rooms, and in the fields. Priests also used vernacular tales in their sermons to reach the peasantry. Literate merchants and travelers transmitted these tales to people of all classes in inns and taverns. Storytelling was popular at royal courts. All kinds of tales were told to children of the upper class by servants and governesses. They were remembered and passed on in different forms and versions by all members of society and told to suit particular occasions—as *talk*. Gradually, however, this talk became elevated, cultivated, and, by the seventeenth century, considered acceptable in Italian and French salons. By 1696, printed fairy tales were in vogue: the literary fairy tale had come into its own.

Though it is impossible to fix a date for the rise of the literary fairy tale in France and the exact reasons d'Aulnoy was attracted to this genre, it originated in the conversation and games developed by highly educated aristocratic women in the salons of Paris, beginning around 1610 and remaining popular through the beginning of the eighteenth century. Deprived of access to schools and universities, French aristocratic women organized gatherings in their homes to which they invited other women and men to discuss art, literature, and other topics important to them, such as love, marriage, and freedom. These women, called *précieuses*, tried to develop a manner of thinking, speaking, and writing to reveal and celebrate their innate talents and to distinguish them from the vulgar elements of society. Most important was their emphasis on wit and invention in conversation. The women who frequented the salons constantly sought innovative ways to express their needs and to embellish the forms and style of speech and communication they shared. The folk tales they had heard as children became a source of amusement and served as models for the occasional lyric and the serial novel. Speakers in the salons endeavored to portray ideal situations in the most effective oratory style, which set the standards for the *conte de fées*, or what we now call the literary fairy tale.

By the 1690s, the “salon” fairy tale became so acceptable that women and men began writing down their tales for publication. Most of the notable writers of the fairy tale learned to develop this literary genre by going to the salons or homes of women who wanted to foster intellectual conversation. D'Aulnoy based her stories on the oral tales she had heard as a young girl or read in Giovan Francesco Straparola's Italian collection, *The Pleasant Nights* (1550–53). She might also have known Giambattista Basile's *The Tale*

of *Tales* (1634–36) and other French and Spanish literary works that circulated in the salons.

The transformation of the oral folk tale into a literary fairy tale was not superficial or decorative, however. The aesthetics that the aristocratic women developed in their conversational games and in their written tales varied in style and content, but these tales were all anti-classical and written in opposition to the literary establishment that championed Greek and Roman literature as models for contemporary French writers to follow. Instead, early French fairy-tale writers used models from French folklore and the medieval courtly tradition. In addition, since the majority of the writers and tellers of fairy tales were women, these tales displayed a certain resistance toward male rational precepts and patriarchal realms by conceiving pagan worlds in which extraordinarily majestic and powerful female fairies had the final say.

Until the publication of *Les Contes des fées*, no French author had used the term *conte de fées*, which is key for understanding the unique quality and appeal of d'Aulnoy's tales. Translated literally into English, the term means "tale about fairies" or "tale of the fairies." In other words, the fairies were to become the central figures or protagonists of magical tales, replacing the gods and goddesses of Greco-Roman myths. Moreover, d'Aulnoy never refers to religious principles of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Her tales are entirely secular, and the destinies of aristocratic heroes and heroines are determined by the fairies, who uphold the moral principles of the French civilizing process. These somewhat arbitrary principles of the civilizing process are generally summarized in quaint moral poems at the end of each tale. They are the laws of the fairies, and woe to anyone who defies them, even though d'Aulnoy and her friends could not enforce them in reality.

D'Aulnoy and many other gifted women authors of fairy tales, such as Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon, Catherine Bernard, Charlotte Rose de Caumont de la Force, Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat, and Mlle de Lubert, developed fairy tales that pronounced their social views of civility. The aristocratic writers often used the term *fée* among themselves and created an atmosphere in the salons in which they could freely exchange ideas that challenged the hypocrisy and immorality of Louis XIV's court. Of course, they did not direct all their criticisms at the court, but it was clear that their strange metaphorical language and codes, filled with hyperbole and euphemisms, were intended to create utopian narratives in opposition to the status quo.

Of all the women writers, d'Aulnoy was the most critical and judgmental. For example, "Finette Cendron" and "Belle-Belle, or the Chevalier Fortuné"

reveal how conspiracies and corruption ran rampant at royal courts, and how courageous young women with integrity could withstand abuse and betrayal to become queens in their own right. D'Aulnoy was fond of transforming traditional folk tales into long, sophisticated literary tales intended for upper-class readers. In "Finette Cendron," for example, which could be translated as "Clever Cinderella," she begins by alluding to the abandonment motif of "Hansel and Gretel" and then also includes her own version of "Cinderella." The dissolute villains are Finette's parents, who lose their kingdom because of their decadent characters. Concerned only about their own fate, they abandon Finette and her sisters in the woods. In addition, her malicious sisters constantly betray her, and ogres threaten to kill the three princesses. All are greedy and treacherous, but they are not punished in the end, because Finette, encouraged by her fairy godmother, believes that a magnanimous soul gains more vengeance through generosity than through punishment.

This is not the case in "Belle-Belle," in which a cross-dressing and multitalented young countess, six extraordinary peasant types, and a talking horse add a great deal of humor to a tale about another king who loses his kingdom to a brutal emperor. Once again, the source for this fairy tale is a folk tale about "How Six Made Their Way through the World," in which a soldier and his lower-class compatriots gain vengeance on an unjust king through magic and force. In d'Aulnoy's tale, however, the major conflicts are fought by aristocrats. Instead of punishing an incompetent king, who is always described as the most handsome and charming in the world, d'Aulnoy decides to make the king's sister and Floride, her lady-in-waiting, the evil characters. Both are in love with Fortuné, whom they think is a young man. Blessed by a fairy and her extraordinary companions, Fortuné accomplishes numerous difficult tasks to assist the king, whom she loves, and she becomes even more desirable in the eyes of the king's sister, the dowager queen, and Floride. When they are rejected by Fortuné, because she is in love with the king, they plot her murder. When their plan fails after Fortuné is exposed as a young woman, Floride poisons the queen and then commits suicide. Here we have vipers at the center of the king's court, and an incompetent king whose kingdom is restored to him by an androgynous heroine.

D'Aulnoy showed no mercy when displaying the negative side of the so-called nobles and gallants of the aristocracy. In "The Blue Bird," for instance, the poor King Charmant is punished brutally by the vicious queen/mother-in-law because he refuses to wed her ugly and slovenly daughter, Truitonne ("trout"), and seeks instead to marry Florine, the queen's stepdaughter. The

malicious stepmother asks the evil fairy Soussio to transform Charmant into a blue bird and has Florine imprisoned in a tower. Using her characteristic hyperbole and melodrama, d'Aulnoy brings Florine and Charmant together as the princess desperately contemplates suicide:

The blue bird listened attentively, and the more he did, the more convinced he became that it was his charming princess who was doing the lamenting.

"Adorable Florine," he cried, "wonder of our days, why do you desire to terminate your life so hastily? Your misfortunes can still be remedied."

"Ah! Who's that speaking in such a consoling way?" she asked.

"An unfortunate king," replied the bird, "who loves you and will never love any other than you:"

"A king who loves me!" replied Florine. "Is this a trap set for me by my enemy? But what would she gain by it? If she seeks to discover my sentiments, I'm ready frankly to own up to them."

"No, my princess," replied the bird. "The lover who's speaking to you is incapable of betraying you"—and as he uttered these words he flew to the window.

At first, Florine was alarmed at the appearance of such an extraordinary bird, who spoke with as much sense as a man and yet had the small, sweet voice of a nightingale. The beauty of his plumage, however, and the words he uttered soon reassured her.

"May I be permitted once more to behold you, my princess?" he exclaimed. "Can I taste such perfect happiness and not die with joy? But, alas, how this happiness is troubled by your captivity, and the condition that the wicked Soussio has reduced me to for seven years."

"And who are you, charming bird?" the princess inquired, caressing him.

"You've pronounced my name," said the king, "and you pretend you do not know me?"

"What? The greatest monarch in the world, King Charmant?" cried the princess. "Can the little bird I hold in my hand be you?"

"Alas, beautiful Florine, it is but too true," the bird replied. "And if anything can console me, it's the feeling that I chose this pain instead of renouncing my love for you."

This is a high comic scene, and yet it signifies how much emphasis d'Aulnoy placed on tender love and faithfulness just as the scene, in which Charmant is trapped and wounded by swords, knives, razors and daggers, reveals d'Aulnoy's fondness for sadistically testing the integrity of her heroes and heroines. Many of her tales involve the metamorphosis of her

protagonists into animals, and here the influence of Apuleius's second-century story "Cupid and Psyche" in *The Golden Ass*, in which a prince is turned into a donkey for insulting Isis, plays a major role in d'Aulnoy's works, as do the beast/bridegroom variants widespread in Europe.

The plot of this popular tale type generally begins with a childless royal couple, desperate to have a child even if it is an animal. Consequently, the queen gives birth to a hideous beast (pig, donkey, boar, serpent, hedgehog) who demands to marry a young woman when he grows up. Once the beast weds a young woman, she is put to all sorts of tests to prove that she is worthy of him, for he is a handsome prince at night and a ferocious beast during the day. She has no idea what he actually looks like because they sleep together in the dark. His bride must swear to keep his secret but succumbs to the questioning of her curious sisters and/or mother and divulges it. They encourage her to see what he looks like. Then she either burns his animal skin or drops wax from a candle on him as she tries to see him. The beast/bridegroom is enraged because he must continue to live a dual existence as animal and man, and flees. To prove her love for him, his "true" wife must travel the world for three or seven years to win him back.

The French writers played a significant role in popularizing this tale type, especially Mme d'Aulnoy, who was evidently familiar with different versions of beast/bridegroom folk tales and reworked the "Psyche and Cupid" story in several fairy tales: "The Ram," "The Beneficent Frog," "The Green Serpent," "Gracieuse and Percinet," and "Prince Lutin." The two most important versions are "The Ram" and "The Green Serpent," and it is worthwhile to examine some of the basic changes in the motifs and plot that break radically from the male tradition of "Psyche and Cupid." D'Aulnoy, after all, prepared the way for the standard literary version of "Beauty and the Beast," written by Mme Le Prince de Beaumont in the eighteenth century. D'Aulnoy wanted to make the fairy tale part of the living practice of the aristocratic salon, and her tales were elaborated in the parlor games that she and her contemporaries (mainly other women) played before they were composed. In the conscious composition of the tales, she clearly intended to present a woman's viewpoint on such topics as tender love, fidelity, courtship, honor, and arranged marriages. She contributed to a discourse on manners that she shared with an intimate group of people whom she hoped would embrace her ideas.

Mme d'Aulnoy was by no means a rebel, but she was definitely an outspoken critic of what we would now call patriarchal values. As a member of the aristocratic class who had experienced the benefits of changes in education

and social roles for upper-class women, d'Aulnoy's tales placed women in greater control of their destinies than they were granted in fairy tales by men. It is obvious that the narrative strategies of her tales, like those she told or learned in the salon, were meant to expose decadent practices and behavior among the people of her class, particularly those who degraded independent women.

"The Ram" and "The Green Serpent" are d'Aulnoy's two most interesting commentaries on the manners a young woman should cultivate in determining her own destiny. The power in all her tales is held by fairies, wise or wicked female figures who ultimately judge whether a young woman deserves to be rewarded. In "The Ram," the heroine is punished by a relentless fairy. Based on the King Lear motif, this tale has Merveilleuse, the youngest daughter of a king, compelled to flee the court because her father believes mistakenly that she has insulted him. She eventually encounters a prince who has been transformed into a ram by a wicked fairy: she is gradually charmed by his courteous manners and decides to wait five years, until his enchantment is over, to marry him. She misses her father and two sisters, however, and through the ram's kind intervention, she is able to visit them twice. The second time, she forgets about returning to the ram, who dies because of her neglect.

In "The Green Serpent," the heroine Laidronette acts differently. She runs away from home because she is ashamed of her ugliness. Upon encountering a prince, who, as usual, has been transformed into a monstrous creature, in this case a serpent, by a wicked fairy, she is at first horrified. Gradually, after spending some time in his kingdom of the pagods, exquisite little people who attend to her every wish, she promises to marry him in two years, when his bewitchment will end, but she cannot see him until then. Even though she reads the story of "Psyche and Cupid," however, she breaks her promise and gazes upon him. This enables the wicked fairy Magotine to punish her, and only after Laidronette performs three near-impossible tasks, helped by the fairy Protectrice, is she able to transform herself into the beautiful Princess Discrète, and the green serpent back into a handsome prince. Their love for each other persuades the wicked fairy Magotine to mend her ways and reward them with the kingdom of Pagodia.

The issue at hand in both fairy tales is fidelity and sincerity, or the qualities that make for tenderness, a topic of interest to women of the time. The focus of the stories is on the two princesses, who break their promises and learn that they will cause havoc and destruction if they do not keep their

word. On the other hand, the men have been punished because they refused to marry old and ugly fairies and seek a more natural love. In other words, d'Aulnoy sets conditions for both men and women that demand sincerity of feeling and constancy, if they are to achieve true love. Nothing short of obedience to the rule of "fairy" civility will be tolerated in d'Aulnoy's tales.

Of all her tales, "The White Cat" is perhaps d'Aulnoy's greatest declaration of respect for the aristocratic woman and also female autonomy that challenges the power of the fairies and retains "fairy" utopianism. Combining two well-known oral tale types of "The Frog Princess" and "Rapunzel," d'Aulnoy recalls the idyllic setting of the "Island of Happiness" when she transports the youngest prince, in search of a little dog for his father, to the white cat's realm. Her castle is the most magnificent castle ever seen. The gate to the castle is made of gold covered with carbuncles, and he is pushed onward by invisible hands and voices that sing:

*Be not offended by the hands you see.
Have no fear in this beautiful place.
There's nothing here except a lovely face,
Nothing at all that your heart might flee.*

The young prince is dazzled by the white cat, who has astonishing powers and great dignity. He falls deeper in love with the white cat each time he encounters her, and actually wants to stay in her kingdom, unlike Adolph in "The Island of Happiness." In short, he is willing to wed an animal just as the princesses in d'Aulnoy's tales are ready to marry beasts. (Ironically, the beasts generally have better manners and tenderness than "real" people do.) The white cat has her own tale to tell before she agrees to marry the prince, however, and we learn about her mother's betrayal of the fairies when she, as princess, fell in love with a king who climbed the tower in which she was imprisoned after rejecting the terrible dwarf whom the fairies had chosen for her husband. In her hyperbolic manner, d'Aulnoy has the fairies order the king to be devoured by a ruthless dragon in front of the princess's eyes. Then they change the princess into a cat, who must remain this way until she finds someone who resembles the king she had once loved. In the comic ending, the young prince must cut off the white cat's head and tail so that she can become a ravishing queen who is so rich, powerful, and generous that she divides the six kingdoms that she rules among the young prince's father and two brothers.

Magical transformation and magical justice are never explained in d'Aulnoy's tales. The exaggeration of the imagination for just causes is celebrated. Moreover, the hyperbolic and euphemistic style of d'Aulnoy's language is intended to stun and surprise readers. Though originally designed for aristocratic and bourgeois readers, d'Aulnoy's tales have had a stronger and wider appeal than she anticipated because her incredible stories demonstrated how social and political conditions could change, especially if the fairies roamed and ruled the universe. In short, d'Aulnoy imbued her fairy civilizing process with a strong dose of compassion, tenderness, and ethics, and perhaps the moral of all her fairy tales comes down to one blunt statement: Don't mess with the fairies!

Jack Zipes

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A Note on the Translation

With the exception of “The Tale of Mira,” all the translations of Mme d’Aulnoy’s tales originally appeared in my book *Beauties, Beasts, and Enchantment: Classic French Fairy Tales* (1989), in which I used James Planché’s somewhat anachronistic translation, *Countess D’Aulnoy’s Fairy Tales* (1885), as the basis for my work. Though I believed Planché’s work to be dated, his renditions contained a certain idiomatic style that captured the highly mannered style of Mme d’Aulnoy. Moreover, as an expert in clothes, customs, and architecture, Planché provided accurate descriptions of the garments, buildings, and manners of late seventeenth-century France.

Consequently, his translations provided an excellent reference point for my work as I honed and tightened the tales. One of my major challenges involved translating the verse morals that appear at the end of d’Aulnoy’s tales. In most cases, I sacrificed meter and style to meaning and tempered the lavish tone. In this book, I have carefully revised all the tales and corrected minor errors.

Since I first translated d’Aulnoy’s tales, Professor Volker Schröder of Princeton University has uncovered important documents about Mme d’Aulnoy’s life in *Anecdota*, an online source for rare texts and images. I have used his invaluable work to correct certain facts about d’Aulnoy’s life. In addition, I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers of my text for their suggestions and corrections in both the introduction and translations.

Jack Zipes

Drawing Mme d'Aulnoy

I came to the world of Madame d'Aulnoy because I wanted to draw tales that I read as unequivocally feminist. The wily heroines of d'Aulnoy's stories test the limits of acceptable behavior for women and appropriate roles for female characters in fairy tales.

Women in d'Aulnoy's tales are smarter and more vibrant than in those of her contemporaries and more active and unusual than those of her antecedents. They flirt with boundaries and power dynamics between men and women, frequently connected to the relationship between animals/gods and humans. Love and power, intertwined, enable women to seduce, triumph, change form, and tell their own stories. They undertake active pursuits: saving kingdoms, embarking on journeys, speaking their minds. They also fall prey to human complexities: hubris, jealousy, disgust, and vengeance. They test physical and emotional frontiers in their journeys and conflicts. A suitor's arrogance destroys happiness; kindness and cunning, combined with perseverance, triumphs; jealousy poisons families and separates lovers. Frequently, women activate their lovers' metamorphoses from animals to humans, and humans to animals. Women's virtue often is rewarded, and conversely, men's vice often is punished. In traversing class lines and in interspecies love, d'Aulnoy uses the humor of cross-dressing and animal-smitten women to overturn then-conventional ideas of femininity. D'Aulnoy engages her female characters in many types of performance: they perform as animals, as women, as men, as fairies, as nature, and as stepsisters, lovers, wives, daughters, and mothers. They possess self-knowledge, and this ownership is tantamount to power.

Depicting the stories of d'Aulnoy, in drawing and painting with gouache and chalk pastel, is the culmination of my exploration of fairy tales with my mentor and collaborator, Jack Zipes. I first worked with fairy tales in *Tales of the Brothers Grimm. Drawings by Natalie Frank* (Damiani, 2015). Though these tales are the original versions prior to their twentieth-century sanitizing, they are avowedly not feminist. Instead, they are firmly rooted in a nineteenth-century mindset favoring princesses waiting to be wed and little girls punished for veering from the forest path. My drawings for this series imbued a feminist perspective that reimagined these tales. I recast the heroines with more agency and, at times, more threat. Amplifying their attributes made them bolder and more in control of their own stories. My work with Zipes on *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (Princeton University Press, 2017) deepened my fascination with fairy tales, the role of women in them, and the tales' evolution as memes. Drawing d'Aulnoy's stories was a departure from my previous work. The tales have boldly imagined heroines and a brightened palette that allow my role as artist to be more personal. In d'Aulnoy's work, I see connections with my own twenty-first-century ideas about femininity, sexuality, and power: her themes are timeless and her heroines, daring.

Performance and role-playing are pivotal to the ways in which women challenge power dynamics, engage with transformations that straddle human and magical worlds, and provoke revelations that spur character development. D'Aulnoy creates female characters that play out a full range of women's actions and reactions, striking in their depth and complexity, especially among traditional and current conceptions of what a fairy tale is. Just as d'Aulnoy's female characters develop from pivotal moments—transfiguration, falling in love, despair, shots of courage—my female figures are defined at fulcrums, under physical and emotional duress. Just as her heroines cross between the banal and the spectacular, I also am drawn to times when unexpected change collides with everyday life. In these images, I can capture a figure in motion. I am also captivated by the complex ways that violence and sexuality are performed by and on women's bodies, an undercurrent of these stories.

As author, d'Aulnoy inhabits other bodies, simultaneously acting as voyeur and participant in her characters' stories. I undertake a similar and sensual pursuit: drawing itself is a performance. I bring forth life by squeezing, rubbing, creating, and destroying bodies; casting characters; constructing images; and building scenes. When I draw, I begin with the form, a sketch

in a single color, that delineates the movement of the figures, the interplay between them, and the composition as a whole. I enhance the figures and their space, again and again, until a scene emerges, akin to d'Aulnoy's verbal aggregation. My drawings, like her stories, arise out of the layering of drawn and painted passages both representational and surreal. An abundance of animals, magical transformations, fairies, and jewels are her paint; the layering of chalk and gouache are mine. D'Aulnoy's stories read as combinations of painterly scenarios in sequence. As I read them, vivid images come; color sensually floods over me.

I first became aware of my synesthesia, a neurological interconnectedness of words and colors, when I began to read the Grimms' tales. Literature always had elicited images and colors for me, but the Grimms' brought forth complete compositions: drawing became a direct record of images in my head. When I drew d'Aulnoy's tales, which are lengthy, developed narratives with baroque flourishes of writing, her florid prose manifested in evocative color. Her sentences are melodic and bursting with description.

D'Aulnoy's stories are lush with objects that emit movement of pigment and light: jewels, ribbons, sunsets, flowering meadows, dew and rainbows. My associations with words and language are hyper-colored daydreams—ones that I am able to manifest immediately through my own hands. I create movement, bright, sumptuous, and nonsensical juxtapositions of color, teasing the eye with a visual hum. Much of my pleasure in reading comes from this translation of d'Aulnoy's and her characters' performances into my drawing, which feels like the retelling of a secret.

Performance and play, in the magical and natural worlds, unmask larger themes of self-reliance and human vulnerability; these manifest in distinctive ways in my thirty-three drawings. In "Finette Cendron," "Belle-Belle," and "The Blue Bird," I am interested in the heroine's strong sense of self and comfort with vulnerability, which ensure success; conversely, in "The Island of Happiness" and "The Ram," Adolph and Merveilleuse's human weaknesses are their undoing. In drawings with assertive heroines, I focus on scenes in which these women demonstrate their individuality. My Belle-Belle is dressed as a man; her clashing feather vest, vivid cowboy boots, riding pants, and tied-back hair mark her as the antithesis of blasé femininity. In the second drawing, she dances with a male version of herself. Her lower body, bare and feminine, embraces her upper body, clothed and masculine. I focus on the fluidity of her gender and identity. Whatever might belie her gender, I erase or negate. In the subsequent drawing, various superheroes

become actual parts of her body, and in the next drawing, she transforms into a new hybrid of king and queen. Last, I draw Belle tied to a stake, her torn-open shirt exposing her breast; her confrontational stare defies both the king and queen. Her image is far from that of a typical fairy-tale heroine. With her pose, I evoke the image of Saint Sebastian, martyr and symbol of steadfast courage and justice. Belle's most potent characteristic is her own vulnerability.

Finette Cendron's success revolves around her constant state of active wakefulness. In the first drawing, she rides, and in the second she lies awake, while one unpleasant sister sleeps and the others stares upward, light in hand, unable to see. I picture Finette looking at the viewer, aware, even in repose. Next, Finette conjures the magic of the acorn tree, leading her stepsisters to the ogre and ogress's kingdom. Her head and patterned dress dominate the space; her less compelling sisters pictorially recede. In the fourth drawing, Finette dangles her foot on the threshold of the page's border, stepping into the viewer's space, testing the boundary of the image. Like the savvy one-eyed ogress who continually outsmarts her husband, Finette outwits her stepsisters. It is Finette who plants the decisive ax blow in the ogress's neck; she becomes even bolder as the story continues. In the final image, Finette assumes the crown of a leopard with a border of spots, royal purple because she is queen. An underdrawing of black gouache reveals her jagged grin. One snaggletooth juts out against her rouged lips; she is both a lady and a stealth huntress, regal in her patience and fidelity to herself.

"The Island of Happiness" juxtaposes the natural and eternal with the human and ephemeral. To begin, I present Felicity with a soft, floral palette. She is at one with the natural world. Her rose-colored dress, garland-laden hair, and pink skin unite her with the beds of flowers among which she stands. I put forward Adolph, a mere mortal, naked, ashamed, and covering his genitals. Uncloaked, he reveals his human frailty. In the joint portrait of Felicity and Adolph, her head transforms from pink and alive to blue and cold: there is an air of death in her eternal life. He is a caricature. I focus on her face and body throughout: I am interested in the devastating effect that mortality and human weakness, despite her eternal youth and beauty, will have on her body and spirit. In the final drawing, she lies on a yellow ground with black staccato lines. The ground is barren, despite its lushness, and the hand of time, purple and greedy, reaches over her. A black entryway into a