

## *Introduction*

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### *The Other Voice*

Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Countess de Murat, was in her day an esteemed writer of poetry and fiction whose works represent a willingness to experiment with both form and content. A noted participant in the late seventeenth century's salon circles, from which emerged a large number of important literary figures, she was one of the young female authors whose initial encouragement to take up the pen came from this milieu. The salons, semiprivate intellectual gatherings hosted by cultivated aristocratic women, allowed male writers the chance to read and discuss their works in progress with a sympathetic audience while enabling women to participate directly in the cultural life of the time and to add their own perspectives. Murat was not the only noted female author of the era to get a start in the salons; others included the poets Henriette de La Suze and Antoinette Deshoulières, the playwright Françoise Pascal, and the novelists Marie-Catherine de Villedieu and Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy.

Like others in this milieu, Murat frequently used her writing to highlight matters of importance to women. She was opposed to forced marriages and to the prevailing view, especially in aristocratic circles, that women were little more than socioeconomic pawns. She also emphasized the value of female solidarity and female friendship, the very possibility of which was typically denied by male authors. Likewise, at a time when "learned ladies" were viewed with suspicion by many religious and social conservatives, Murat was outspoken in her belief that women should be allowed a good education and unfettered access to cultural life. She also shared the position of the salon participants that the chivalric code derived from the Middle Ages, in which men were required to practice self-control, display good manners, and treat all women with respect, retained both aesthetic value and moral relevance as an ideal for a refined modern society.

When we examine Murat's engagement in the early stages of her career with the newly introduced genre of the literary fairy tale, her feminist outlook comes to the fore. Like other female practitioners of the form, she shows a preference for heroines who are energetic and capable of filling traditional male roles with distinction. She displays skepticism about the "happily ever after" convention, sometimes choosing to have her protagonists end up sad and disillusioned, having learned that love and desire do not always last. In addition, her participation in polemical discussions about the origins of and target audiences for fairy tales indicates her recognition of the need to find a "modern" art form bound neither by the legacy of the Greeks and the Romans nor by the literary rules promulgated by male-dominated academies and appropriated by the king and court.

## 2 Introduction

When in 1699 Murat turned from the fairy tale to the leisure novel, a highly popular subgenre at that time, the more realistic setting did not prevent her from retaining elements of her feminist agenda. In her novels, heroines who have already been pushed into forced marriages or are currently threatened with them are ultimately given the chance to pick their spouse based on affection and compatibility. Salon-like gatherings are formed in which the female participants are properly valued and allowed to exercise their talents, and all the sympathetic male figures fully embrace the chivalric code. Female solidarity and friendship are given a key role in the development of the plot, and female characters who refuse to model such behavior are ridiculed and sometimes excluded. Murat presents aristocratic leisure, liberated from social and religious constraints, as a positive value for men and women alike, both as a means to achieve a happy and fulfilled life and as a carefully veiled protest against the rigid conformity demanded by Louis XIV's absolutist regime.

Murat's feminism was also evidenced in her own life, when she defied prevailing norms and expectations by engaging in a series of lesbian relationships, and she suffered the painful consequences of flouting aristocratic conventions on multiple levels: she was disowned by her family and sent into a multiyear exile by the king. Throughout this ordeal, she maintained a defiant attitude, as indicated in her diary of 1708–1709, which was not intended for publication, and in her final novel, where she combines the concepts of exile and freedom through leisure in an original way.

The current volume presents the first-ever English translation of that final novel, *Les Lutins du château de Kernosy* (*The Sprites of Kernosy Castle*), first published in 1710 and reprinted at least three more times over the course of the eighteenth century, though not since. The novel is generally considered to be the best short-form leisure novel of the French tradition, and many critics call it her masterpiece. It constitutes the last public statement of freethinking from a writer willing to suffer for her refusal to bend to the established rules.

### *Early Life and Works*

It should come as no surprise that one of the finest practitioners of the leisure novel was herself a product of the aristocratic society that she depicted. Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Countess de Murat (1668–1716),<sup>1</sup> who would become one of the most popular and influential authors of her generation, had a highly respectable

1. Although Murat's early biographers often give the birthdate of 1670 (actually the birthdate of Murat's sister), Frédéric Lemeunier's research in the archives of La Buzardière establishes that she was in fact born in 1668. Her death date can be established by an announcement in the October 1716 issue of the Parisian periodical, the *Nouveau Mercure Galant*, which states that Murat died of dropsy on September 29 in her chateau La Buzardière, located in the Maine region of France. Her death certificate states that she was buried there on October 1. See further, Geneviève Clermidy-Patard,

background: both of her grandfathers had been marshals of France and members of the high aristocracy, and her father had been the governor of Brest until his death in 1672.<sup>2</sup> Although her nineteenth-century biographers maintained that Murat's family was originally from Brittany and that Henriette-Julie remained there until she was presented to Queen Maria Theresa, the wife of Louis XIV, in 1686,<sup>3</sup> historians have since confirmed that Murat's family did not have Breton origins, and testimonies from Paris's elevated literary circles (among them the famous letters of the Marquise de Sévigné) attest that Murat spent the majority of her childhood in Paris in the company of her mother and sister.<sup>4</sup> Accounts of her adolescence paint the picture of a young noblewoman who understood her role in society and who accepted this role at least publicly, attending social functions with her mother and eventually marrying, in 1691, Nicolas de Murat, Count de Gilbertez, a well-respected colonel of an infantry regiment, who had previously been married to Marie de la Tour d'Auvergne, one of Henriette-Julie's cousins.<sup>5</sup> The union was the talk of the social papers of the time, as it served to unite a number of the most ancient and illustrious French noble families, including the Castelnaus, the Caumonts, the La Tour d'Auvergues, the Foucaults, the Daugnons, the Dampierres, and the Murats. The following year, Murat gave birth to a son, César, who was the couple's only child and who did not survive into adulthood.<sup>6</sup>

During the early years of her marriage, Murat made a name for herself in Parisian high society on account of her ability to entertain her salon contemporaries with poems and with short stories in verse. Salons were informal gatherings where writers, artists, intellectuals, and members of the social elite had the opportunity to meet, socialize, and share their literary creations with one another, usually on a regular basis and at the home of a female intellectual. Although the majority of Murat's poetry from this period has been lost,<sup>7</sup> her renown in this

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*Madame de Murat et la "défense des dames": Un discours au féminin à la fin du règne de Louis XIV* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012), 14.

2. He died on December 2, 1672, as a result of wounds suffered near Utrecht during the Franco-Dutch War (1672–1678).

3. These rumors were debunked in the mid-1970s thanks to the work of A. P. Ségalen, who pointed out, among other errors, that in 1686 Queen Maria Theresa of Austria had been dead for three years. See further, "Madame de Murat et le Limousin," *Le Limousin au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Limoges, "Trames," 1976), 77–94.

4. See, for example, the letters dated May 16, 1672; January 5, 1674; August 12, 1675; and January 10, 1689 (Pataré, *Madame de Murat et la "défense des dames,"* 15–16).

5. Marie de La Tour d'Auvergne had recently died in childbirth.

6. César de Murat, seigneur de Vareillettes, is listed in the Geneanet-Pierfit online database as being born in 1692: <https://gw.geneanet.org/pierfit?lang=fr&p=nicolas&n=de+murat>. For a reprint of his death certificate, see Sylvie Cromer's *Edition du Journal pour Mademoiselle de Menou*, np.

7. A sonnet by Murat appeared in the *Recueil de pièces curieuses et nouvelles* (A collection of new and interesting pieces), published in Amsterdam in 1695, and several other poems appeared after her

medium is attested to in the *Oeuvres meslées* (Mixed works, 1695) of her fellow salon contemporary Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon. Lhéritier's collection contains three letters to Murat, along with letters to two other well-known female poets of the time: Marie de Razilly, famous for her alexandrines on heroic subjects, and Charlotte de Melsons Le Camus, whose poetry would eventually earn her induction into the prestigious *Accademia dei Ricovrati* (Academy of the Sheltered) in Padua on the same day as Murat.<sup>8</sup> In her first letter to Murat, Lhéritier expresses admiration for some short tales in verse that the former had recently penned and tries to convince her to branch out into prose writing.<sup>9</sup> In the second two letters, Lhéritier discusses the literary merits of bouts-rimés (rhymed ends), a type of poetry that was popular in late-seventeenth-century salons in which one person creates a list of words that rhyme with one another and gives these rhymes to a second person, who must compose a sonnet using those words as the rhymes. In addressing these letters to Murat, Lhéritier clearly intended to encourage her friend to participate in a salon game that had recently resulted, for Lhéritier, in the composition of a bouts-rimés that had won the Floral Games Prize from the Lanternists Society of Toulouse earlier that year.<sup>10</sup> According to a journal that Murat composed between April 1708 and June 1709, the *Journal pour Mademoiselle de Menou*, Murat would be awarded the same prestigious poetry prize for one of her eclogues, likely either in late 1700 or early 1701.<sup>11</sup> In addition to describing the author's daily activities, Murat's journal contains a substantial number of both new

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death. For eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publications, see the bibliography.

8. The Academy of the Sheltered was one of the few literary societies to accept women at that time. Charlotte de Melsons Le Camus (also referred to as “de Melson Le Camus” or “Le Camus de Melsons”) was inducted on the same day as Murat (February 9, 1699). See further, Geneviève Clermidy-Patard, ed., *Madame de Murat: Journal pour Mademoiselle de Menou* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2016), 88n2. Other members of Murat's literary circle who were accepted into this society include Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard, Charlotte-Rose Caumont de La Force, and Lhéritier herself; see Lewis C. Seifert and Domna C. Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers* (Toronto: Iter and the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), 231. On the other members of the Academy, see Fabio Blasutto, David de la Croix, and Mara Vitale, “Scholars and Literati at the Academy of the Ricovrati (1599–1800),” *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae – RETE* (2021) 3:51–63. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v3i0/Ricoverati>. On Razilly, Le Camus, and the other members of Lhéritier's literary circle who are mentioned in the *Oeuvres meslées*, see Allison Stedman, “Le rôle de la poésie dans la société mondaine de la fin du XVIIe siècle,” in *Le poète et le joueur de quilles: Enquête sur la construction de la poésie (XIVe–XXIe siècles)*, ed. Olivier Gallet, Adeline Lionetto, Stéphane Loubère, Laure Michel, and Thierry Roger (Mont-Saint-Aignan, France: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre [PURH], 2023), 169–178.

9. Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon, *Oeuvres meslées* (Paris: Jean Guignard, 1695), 229, 297–298.

10. Lhéritier, *Oeuvres meslées*, 399.

11. *Madame de Murat: Journal pour Mademoiselle de Menou*, ed. Geneviève Clérmidy-Patard, 86–88.

and previously composed poems (including a number of bouts-rimés), three fairy tales, two short stories, and a variety of other short works in prose and in verse.<sup>12</sup>

Although during the early years of her marriage, Murat may have appeared content to compose poetry and to frequent respectable salon gatherings, such as those of the Marquise de Lambert,<sup>13</sup> she nonetheless had a subversive streak that would manifest both in her actions and in her fiction in the years that followed. Rumors circulated as early as 1694 that she was involved in a libel against the king's morganatic second wife, Madame de Maintenon,<sup>14</sup> and by 1697, she was already taking on some of the most prominent male authors of her time, establishing herself as a feminist social theorist *avant la lettre* with the publication of a two-volume collection of pseudo-memoirs, titled *Mémoires de Madame la Comtesse de M\*\*\** (Memoirs of the Countess of M\*\*\*, 1697). Murat published this novel as a response to the *Mémoires de la vie du comte D\*\*\* avant sa retraite* (Memoirs of the life of Count D\*\*\* before his retirement, 1696), a work that was publicly attributed to the exiled essayist Charles de Saint-Évremond (although authored by the moralist critic Abbé Pierre de Villiers)<sup>15</sup> and that portrayed women as being fickle and incapable of virtue. In her pseudo-memoirs, Murat responds to Villiers with an explicit defense of women and of the female sex in general, arguing that women's failings are more often the result of misfortune than of moral weakness and that it is thus the responsibility of women to protect and to defend one another's reputations. Noting that the majority of female tribulations occur because of a "pitiful lack of solidarity among women,"<sup>16</sup> Murat exhorts her female readers to consider the consequences to the female sex as a whole before initiating rumors about other women and before perpetuating behaviors that have the potential to set women against one another.

The importance of female solidarity would go on to become a dominant theme in almost all of Murat's subsequent literary production and would take on particular significance in the context of her leisure novels, which provided

12. Murat, *Journal pour Mademoiselle de Menou*, 12. It is not clear if Murat and Lhéritier were still on good terms at the time of the composition of the *Lutins* (any mention of Lhéritier is conspicuously absent from the *Journal*). However, Murat appears to pay a kind of homage to her former salon contemporary in volume II of *Les Lutins* when the characters who compose bouts-rimés recycle the same rhymes that had previously appeared in Lhéritier's *Oeuvres meslées*, using them to create new poems. See Lhéritier, *Oeuvres meslées*, 394–396. See further, translated text, note 73.

13. Anne-Thérèse de Lambert (1647–1733). See Roger Marchal, *Madame de Lambert et son milieu* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991), 226–227. See also Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence*, 232.

14. According to Geneviève Clermidy-Patard, these rumors were later determined to be unfounded.

15. The Villiers attribution is corroborated by the editor Barbier (quoted in the BNF database). See further, Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence*, 320. Madame de Murat, *Mémoires de Madame la Comtesse de M\*\*\** (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1697), 2:395–396.

16. Murat, *Mémoires de Madame la Comtesse de M\*\*\**, 2:395–396. Translations of the French quotations are our own.

models for how supportive female relationships could result in positive outcomes for women in situations that mirrored those of Murat's contemporary reality. While in *A Trip to the Country*, for example, the happy resolution to the novel's love plot takes place largely because the friendship between the female narrator (Mademoiselle de Busansai) and Madame d'Arcire is shown to be impervious to outside manipulation, in *The Sprites of Kernosy Castle*, the solidarity between the three main female characters—the Kernosy sisters and their close friend the Marquise de Briance—is shown to play a key role in the ability of all three women to achieve their amorous objectives at the novel's conclusion. By the same token, women who resist involving other women in networks of mutual support find themselves both outwitted and excluded from the central group in the context of these novels. Such is the case for Mademoiselle de Busansai's rival Madame de Talemonte in *A Trip to the Country* and for the viscountess in *The Sprites*.

### *Murat and the Development of the Literary Fairy Tale*

In 1695, when Lhéritier first encouraged Murat to try her hand at prose fiction, she did not have in mind the collection of pseudo-memoirs that ended up constituting the latter's official literary debut. Rather, she had hoped that Murat would assist her in the creation and proliferation of an emerging literary genre, the *conte des fées* (fairy tale).<sup>17</sup> The literary fairy tale was a genre that first came to prominence in France in the 1690s, having begun as a salon entertainment.<sup>18</sup> It was cultivated mostly by female authors, who found it amenable for many reasons, including increasing dissatisfaction with stories from classical mythology, which could be linked to absolutist propaganda, and the fascination with imaginary worlds where female figures like fairies wielded power, usually in a benevolent way. The genre also became a useful vehicle for making indirect criticism of the reigning social and political institutions. Between 1690 and 1710, 112 literary fairy tales were

17. Lhéritier, *Oeuvres mêlées*, 297–298. Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy is credited with inventing the term (*Contes des fées*, [Tales of the fairies]) for her first collection of fairy tales, published in 1697. Murat would use a similar title for her first collection of fairy tales (*Contes de fées*, [Tales about fairies]) in 1698. See further, Allison Stedman, "Henriette-Julie de Murat, *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques*," in *Marvelous Transformations: An Anthology of Fairy Tales and Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. Christine A. Jones and Jennifer Schacker (Toronto: Broadview, 2013), 201. Murat had a lot of admiration for d'Aulnoy and made frequent intertextual references to her works. See further, Rori Bloom, *Making the Marvelous: Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Henriette-Julie de Murat, and the Literary Representation of the Decorative Arts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022).

18. See, for example, Sévigné's letter dated August 6, 1677, where she describes listening to Madame de Coulanges tell a fairy tale that lasted over an hour; see Allison Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France, 1600–1715: Seditious Frivolity* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 130–131.

published in France, sixty-eight of which were authored by women and forty-one by men; three remain anonymous.<sup>19</sup>

At the time that Lhéritier reached out to Murat, however—dedicating the fairy tale “L’Adroite Princesse” (“The discreet princess”) to her and urging Murat to compose a fairy tale of her own in the context of her *Oeuvres meslées*—the genre was still in a state of initiation and theorization. Following Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy’s publication of the first literary fairy tale of the French tradition, “The Island of Happiness,” which was written in a descriptive and digressive style similar to that of its framing novel,<sup>20</sup> Charles Perrault, a member of the French Academy and relative of Lhéritier’s,<sup>21</sup> took it upon himself to steer the nascent genre in a different direction, composing a series of short moralistic tales in verse and in prose. In 1695, the same year as the publication of the *Oeuvres meslées*, he appended a preface to the fourth edition of his 1691 tale *La Marquise de Salusses, ou la patience de Griseldis (Patient Griselda)*, in which he made a case for the fairy tale as the “modern” (and superior) iteration of the kinds of moralistic fables and short tales that the “wisest and most learned” authors of antiquity had relied upon to educate their children.<sup>22</sup> However, in contrast to the model advanced by d’Aulnoy, who had envisioned the fairy tale as an extension of the novel, Perrault maintained that fairy tales were a pedagogical genre, suitable for children and originating from the folktales of wet nurses and peasants. As a result, not only should such tales strive to replicate the simplicity and concision of the original oral stories, but also they should eliminate any plot details that might distract the reader from the central moral truth that the story proposed.

19. Nathalie Rizzoni and Julie Boch, eds., *L’âge d’or du conte de fées: De la comédie à la critique (1690–1709)*, Bibliothèque des Génies et des Fées, vol. 5 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), 613–616. For a list of individual fairy tales by female writers, see Seifert and Stanton, *Enchanted Eloquence*, 311–313. For a bibliography of works containing fairy tales, see Raymonde Robert, *Le Conte de fées en France de la fin du XVII<sup>e</sup> à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Nadine Jasmin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 493–506.

20. “L’île de la félicité” (The Island of Happiness) appeared as an interpolated story in d’Aulnoy’s novel *Histoire d’Hypolite, comte de Douglas* (Paris: Louis Sylvestre, 1690), 2:143–181. The majority of French fairy tales appeared as interpolations within novels or in mixed collections that contained a variety of genres. On this publication strategy, see Stedman, *Rococo Fiction in France*, 3–4.

21. Lhéritier’s mother’s maiden name was Françoise Le Clerc, and Perrault’s mother was also a Le Clerc, but the exact relation between the two is unclear. See further, Lewis Seifert, “Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandon (1664–1734), *The Teller’s Tale: Lives of the Classic Fairy Tale Writers*, ed. Sophie Raynard, 75. We are grateful to Volker Schröder for this clarification. Perrault is often referred to as Lhéritier’s uncle.

22. Charles Perrault, “Préface,” *La Marquise de Salusses, ou la patience de Griseldis* (Paris: J.B. Coignard, 1695). See further, “Perrault’s Preface to *Griselda* and Murat’s ‘To Modern Fairies,’” ed. and trans. Holly Tucker and Melanie R. Siemens, *Marvels and Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 19, no. 1 (2005): 125–128. In his original version of the tale, Perrault alternated between the forms *Griselde* and *Griselidis*; in the later version, he standardized the name to *Griselidis*.

This was not the vision for the genre that the original, salon women writers had intended, and Lhéritier's argument for enlisting Murat's help in its development accordingly included the following three reasonings. First, in an effort to support d'Aulnoy's conception of the fairy tale as a form of worldly literature, Lhéritier retheorized the genre's "modern" origins, claiming that fairy tales were descended not from the common folktales of peasants and wet nurses but rather from the poetry of the medieval troubadours. As such, Lhéritier maintained, the reading and composition of such stories was as suitable a pastime for upper-class aristocrats as the novels and other salon-generated literary forms that had evolved from the courtly literary traditions of the medieval French feudal nobility.<sup>23</sup> Second, although Lhéritier agreed with Perrault that modern fairy tales could achieve the same moral objectives as the fables of antiquity, she took issue with his claim that the goals of such tales were uniquely pedagogical and destined for an audience of children. Instead, Lhéritier asserted that the fairy tale, as an extension of the novel, was highly suitable both for metaphorical social commentary and for the entertainment of adults. Third, Lhéritier maintained that fairy tales provided an ideal way for modern writers (like Murat) to attract the attention of "the finest minds in France" because of the genre's ability to accommodate a degree of innovation and creativity that was not possible in most other literary contexts due to the mandates of verisimilitude and propriety that governed the majority of contemporary literary production. As Lhéritier assured Murat, although fairy tales certainly deserved their current reputation for pleasing children and adults alike, "these fables would be pleasing to the greatest minds, / If you would wish, beautiful Countess, / To adorn such narratives with your happy talents."<sup>24</sup>

If Lhéritier's plea to Murat did not sufficiently convince the latter to try her hand at the genre in 1695, then it appears that a shift in Murat's personal circumstances, combined with the publication of Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (*Tales of Times Past*, 1697), achieved the desired result. Perrault's collection, also known as the *Contes de ma mère l'oye* (*Mother Goose Tales*), was introduced by a preface that insisted to an even greater degree than his introduction to *Grise-lidis* that the fairy tale was a form of children's literature whose origins could be traced to the tales of common people—even going so far as to announce that the present collection was in fact composed by a child (Perrault's youngest son, Pierre Perrault Darmancour) as a gift to another young person of his son's generation (Élisabeth-Charlotte d'Orléans, niece of Louis XIV).<sup>25</sup> Following the publication

23. On the broader implications of this argument, see Allison Stedman, "Proleptic Nostalgia: Longing for the Middle Ages in the Late Seventeenth-Century French Fairy Tale," *Romantic Review* 99, no. 3–4 (May–November 2008): 363–380.

24. Lhéritier, *Oeuvres meslées*, 297–298.

25. Pierre Perrault Darmancour (1678–1700), Perrault's youngest son, would have been nineteen at the time of the publication of the *Contes*, while Élisabeth-Charlotte d'Orléans would have been fifteen

of this preface, the Abbé de Villiers, the moralist critic whom Murat had previously debated in the context of her pseudo-memoirs, published *Entretiens sur les contes de fées* (Inquiries on fairy tales, 1699), a multi-volume treatise that gave a scathing critique of the kind of lengthy, digressive, and descriptive fairy tales penned by the majority of the female authors, concluding with a brief defense of Perrault's model of fairy-tale composition. For Villiers, the lengthier novelistic tales composed by women in recent decades had resulted in what his Parisian narrator describes as "piles of fairy tales that have been annoying us to death for a year or two." He adds, "If we didn't have any of those ignoramuses who stubbornly desire to write books, we would never have seen so much nonsense published."<sup>26</sup> In contrast to these works, which constitute some of "the worst merchandise in the world,"<sup>27</sup> according to the Parisian, the recently published tales by Perrault prove that it is still possible to effectively apply the rules of eloquence, even to the most trivial or amusing subject matter, provided that the author has a sufficient command of the French language and is thoroughly instructed in its terms. As Villiers's Provincial narrator sums it up, although most of the recently published fairy tales fall short, one still needs to acknowledge "that the best tales we have are those that best imitate the style and simplicity of nurses. For this reason alone, I am quite pleased with the tales attributed to the son of a celebrated member of the French Academy."<sup>28</sup> While both the Provincial and the Parisian narrators concede that nurses may be ignorant, they agree that their folktales can still be transformed into meritorious stories, provided that the author of these stories is "clever enough to imitate the simplicity of their ignorance deftly,"<sup>29</sup> as Perrault has recently done in the work that he publicly attributed to his son.

Both in anticipation of and in retaliation against points of view resembling Villiers', Murat published three collections of fairy tales between 1698 and 1699: *Contes de fées* (Fairy tales, 1698), *Nouveaux contes de fées* (New fairy tales, 1698), and *Histoires sublimes et allégoriques* (Sublime and allegorical stories, 1699), all of which were written in the digressive and descriptive novelistic style decried by Villiers. Although the first collection makes no direct reference to the ongoing

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or sixteen. The *Contes* were circulating in manuscript form by 1695. The degree to which Perrault's son was involved in the creation and publication of the tales is unclear. On the varying accounts of his involvement, see Christine A. Jones, *Mother Goose Refigured: A Critical Translation of Charles Perrault's Fairy Tales* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2016) 24–27; and Natalie Froloff, "Preface," *Contes de Perrault* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 7–10.

26. Pierre de Villiers, "Conversations on Fairy Tales and Other Contemporary Works, to Protect against Bad Taste (1699), from the *Second Conversation*," in *Enchanted Eloquence: Fairy Tales by Seventeenth-Century French Women Writers*, ed. and trans. Lewis C. Seifert and Domna C. Stanton (Toronto: Iter and the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), 294.

27. de Villiers, "Conversations on Fairy Tales and Other Contemporary Works," 295.

28. de Villiers, "Conversations on Fairy Tales and Other Contemporary Works," 309.

29. L'héritier, *Oeuvres meslées*, 297–298.