



HAL
open science

Les Contes des fées

Volker Schröder

► **To cite this version:**

| Volker Schröder. Les Contes des fées. 2018. halshs-02320582

HAL Id: halshs-02320582

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02320582>

Submitted on 18 Oct 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial 4.0 International License



About

Anecdota

Rare texts and images from early modern France

Les Contes des fées

VS

The term “fairy tale” originated in 1697, when Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, baronne d’Aulnoy, gave the title *Les Contes des fées* to her first collection of wonder tales. Published in Paris by Claude Barbin, this seminal work has become extremely rare and is often described as “lost” or “untraceable.” Recent editors (Philippe Hourcade in 1997, Nadine Jasmin in 2004, and Constance Cagnat-Deboeuf in 2008) were unable to locate a single copy of any of the four volumes and had to rely on eighteenth-century editions to establish the text of the fifteen tales and two frame narratives.

At least one complete copy seems to have survived in private hands. It first appeared in 1737 at the sale of the [books belonging to the comtesse de Verrue](#) and again, 160 years later, at that of the [library of the baron Jérôme Pichon](#); in 1979, it resurfaced at an auction in Paris.¹ According to the catalog descriptions, this set includes two engraved frontispieces; the title pages of volumes 1-3 show the date 1698, whereas volume 4 is dated 1697. These divergent dates do not necessarily indicate different editions: publishers routinely updated their title pages to re-issue unsold copies and make them appear more current. Conversely, volumes with identical titles and dates may actually represent distinct editions, as we shall see below.

A similarly complete set of *Les Contes des fées* is in fact preserved intact in a public library, the Württembergische Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart, Germany, where I consulted it last December. Each of the four volumes bears its original owner’s signature, which appears to read “JH Böhm.” The books entered the collections of the WLB some time in the 18th or 19th century. Just like in the Verrue-Pichon copy, the first three volumes are dated 1698, and the fourth 1697. The “achevé d’imprimer” (indicating the day when the first printing of the work was completed) shows April 29, 1697, for volumes 1 and 2, and August 31, 1697, for volume 3. Volume 4 does not contain an “achevé d’imprimer.”

Information

This entry was posted on April 10, 2018 by [VS](#) in [Book Illustration](#), [Printed Books](#) and tagged [Editions](#), [Fairies](#), [frontispieces](#), [Tales](#).

Shortlink

<https://wp.me/p8rKtd-bC>

Navigation

[Previous post](#)
[Next post](#)

Recent Posts

[The birth and beginnings of Madame d’Aulnoy Bussy-Rabutin’s Book of Hours](#)
[More Madame d’Aulnoy Barnett redivivus](#)
[Les Contes des fées Marie-Madeleine Perrault \(1674–1701\)](#)
[Rubens and the King of France](#)
[Only in Lyon](#)
[Ex bibliotheca R. Toinet Saving Madame de Graffigny](#)

LES
CONTES
DES FÉES.

Par Madame D**.

TOME QUATRIÈME.

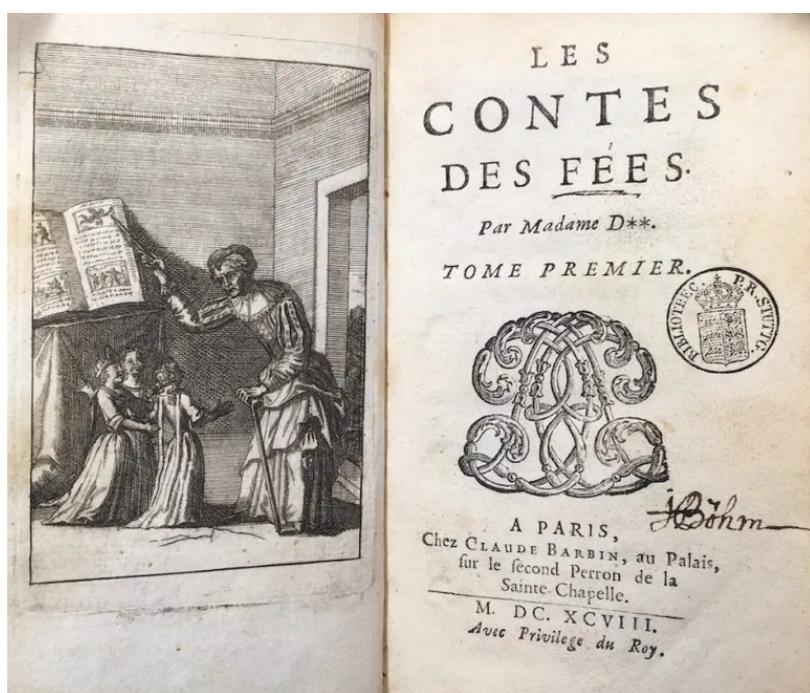


A PARIS, *J. Böhm*
Chez CLAUDE BARBIN, au Palais,
sur le second Perron de la
Sainte-Chapelle.

M. DC. XCVII.
Avec Privilège du Roy.

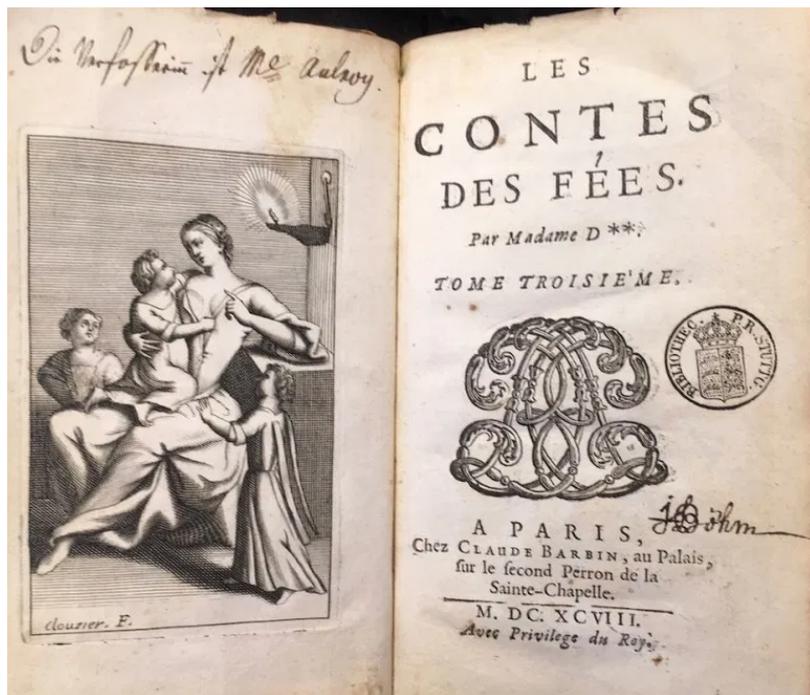
Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Fr.D.oct.1816-4

Engraved frontispieces face the title pages of volumes 1 and 3. The first of these images has already been known from another copy of volume 1, which was sold on eBay in 2008; fortunately, it was captured and [posted online](#) on the blog of “Le Bibliomane moderne” (the French bookseller Bertrand Hugonnard-Roche). In her excellent study of early fairy-tale illustrations, Daphne Hoogenboezem doubted the authenticity of this frontispiece and suggested that it was a later addition by an individual owner of the book.² Its presence in the WLB copy, however, confirms that at least some of the copies sold by Claude Barbin were indeed issued with this frontispiece. Whether the author had any control over its design and execution is another matter; none of d’Aulnoy’s earlier books were illustrated, and Barbin may well have proceeded without consulting her. Whatever its origins and intentions, this frontispiece must now be taken into account as the earliest visual representation accompanying and introducing *Les Contes des fées*.



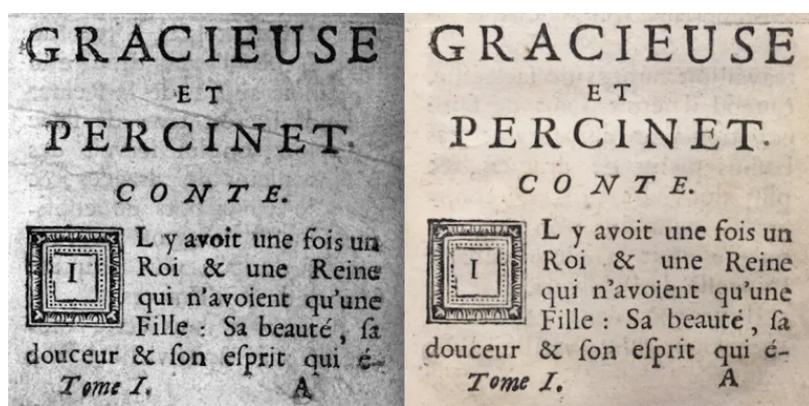
Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Fr.D.oct.1816-1

It is perhaps in reaction to this rather frightening image of a stern matron or mistress that volume 3 opens with a much gentler vision of female storytelling. This frontispiece (reproduced here for the first time) is signed "Clouzier. F." – with "F." being not a first name initial but the abbreviation of "Fecit." The same signature appears in three of the five vignettes in volume 4. It probably refers to the engraver Antoine Clouzier, who often worked for Barbin and also executed the famous frontispiece to the tales of Perrault, published the same year. (The comparison between these two frontispieces signed by Clouzier lies beyond the scope of this note.) By contrast, none of the illustrations in volumes 1 and 2 are signed; on stylistic grounds, I would question their traditional attribution to Clouzier.



Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Fr.D.oct.1816-3

Another copy of volume 1, also dated 1698 but lacking the frontispiece, was acquired by the University of Colorado Boulder in 2007 and digitized in 2011. While at first it looks identical to the WLB copy, closer examination yields a surprise: the two books were actually printed, for the most part, from different settings of type and thus represent (bibliographically speaking) two different editions. Their non-identity is almost imperceptible on some pages, but conspicuous on others:



left: University of Colorado Boulder / right: Württembergische Landesbibliothek



left: University of Colorado Boulder / right: Württembergische Landesbibliothek

The presence of the same engraved vignettes and woodcut ornaments in both copies shows that we are confronted not with a piracy but with two “original” editions, both published by Claude Barbin and printed by the same printer (probably Jacques Langlois). Such cases of duplicate editions are surely more frequent than bibliographers have realized; in fact, Barbin’s 1697 edition of Perrault’s tales exists itself in two versions, which have often been erroneously described as two “states” or “printings” (*tirages*) of a single edition, when in reality most of the text was reset.³

In the case of Perrault’s tales, an errata leaf helps distinguish the first edition from the second. No such supplement differentiates the UCB and WLB copies of volume 1 of *Les Contes des fées*, and a more thorough comparison will be needed to determine which of the two may have been printed first. As far as volume 2 is concerned, the three currently known copies (preserved in Stuttgart, Gotha, and Madrid) all seem to belong to the same edition, but one can hope that additional copies will surface and shed more light on the publication history. In the meantime, the newly located volumes present d’Aulnoy scholars not only with two new frontispieces, but also with hundreds of (small but not insignificant) textual variants awaiting identification and critical appraisal.

Volker Schröder

April 10, 2018



Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Fr.D.oct.1816-3

Footnotes

1. *Succession de Madame Agnès Van Parys*, Drouot, 7-8 mars 1979, no. 3. The four volumes are bound in two (“4 tomes en 2 volumes”) bearing the arms of the comtesse de Verrue. The same copy was advertised in the October 1951 catalog of Librairie Dommergues: see the facsimile reprint of Lucien Scheler’s annotated copy of Tchermersine, *Bibliographie d’éditions originales et rares* (Paris: Hermann, 1977), and Roswitha Böhm, *Wunderbares Erzählen: Die Feenmärchen der Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003, p. 100-101. In his introduction to the 1997 edition by Philippe Hourcade (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes), Jacques Barchilon describes a different set comprising volumes 1-3 (dated 1698, and without any frontispiece); the current whereabouts of this copy, which used to belong to Gilbert Rouger, are not known.

2. *Le Conte de fées en images: le rôle de l’illustration chez Perrault et Madame d’Aulnoy (1695-1800)*, dissertation Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2012, p. 83-89.

3. The distinction between Barbin’s 1697 editions of Perrault’s tales was first established in d’Eylac (A. de Claye), *La Bibliophilie en 1891-1892*, Paris: A. Rouquette, 1893, p. 11-19.
