

# From Palace to House. The Changing Domestic Settings of Fairy-tales

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## ABSTRACT

*La ricerca sulla natura dei paesaggi nella fiaba non è un campo di indagine nuovo. Anzi. La rappresentazione degli spazi nella fiaba sono stati analizzati in numerosi studi e da diverse prospettive. Meno indagati appaiono essere gli ambienti domestici. Questo contributo mira a colmare questo spazio di ricerca. Il saggio analizza e compara i paesaggi domestici presenti in tre raccolte di fiabe europee: Lo cunto de li cunti ovvero lo trattenemiento de' peccerille di Giambattista Basile (1634-36), Histoires et Contes du temps passé o Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye di Charles Perrault (1697) e Kinder- und Hausmärchen di Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1 ed. 1812, 7 ed. 1857). Sebbene, notoriamente, la spazialità nella fiaba risulta essere atemporale e astorica, un'analisi approfondita rivela che la rappresentazione degli ambienti domestici sono cambiati nel corso dei secoli. La finalità del lavoro è di esplorare come e perché tali trasformazioni hanno avuto luogo.*

**Parole chiave:** Fiabe (Basile, Perrault, Grimm) - Spazialità - Paesaggi domestici - Casa - Oggetti narranti

### ***Dal palazzo alla casa. Le trasformazioni degli ambienti domestici nelle fiabe***

*Research into the nature of the landscapes in fairy-tales is not a new field. The representations of space in fairy-tales have been investigated in many studies from different perspectives. Nonetheless, there is still little research about domestic settings. This paper is an effort to fill this gap. In my essay, I will compare how domestic settings were represented in three collections of European fairy-tales: Lo cunto de li cunti ovvero lo trattenemiento de' peccerille by Giambattista Basile (1634-36); Histoires et Contes du temps passé o Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye by Charles Perrault (1697); and Kinder- und Hausmärchen by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1<sup>st</sup> Ed. 1812, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. 1857). Although the trademark of fairy-tale landscapes is usually atemporal and ahistorical, the analysis will bring to light evidence that over time the domestic settings have changed. The goal is to explore why and how such a transformation has taken place.*

**Keywords:** Fairy-tales (Basile, Perrault, Grimm) – Spatiality - Domestic settings – Home - Narrating objects

### Introduction

Fairy-tales have undergone a whole host of transformations since they were first told. Their popularity and longevity stem from their creative use of narrative structures and their basic framework has been told in myriad styles: the playful literature of Giovan Francesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile; the courtly writings of Charles Perrault; the Romance and folklore tales of the Brothers Grimm; and the more Intimist works of Hans Christian Andersen. They have even been revamped and reinterpreted to create original tales that arose in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of the pacifist, civil and feminist movements which, during the 20th century, drove extensive dialogue between the producers of critical literature and the rewriters of classic fairy-tales. In Italy, this dialogue was led by Gianni Rodari who, in his *Grammatica della fantasia* (1973), describes innovative means of using and rewriting fairy-tale narrative which overturned, readapted, hybridised and distorted traditional tales. These means were in line with the teaching praxis of the day, which aimed to revolutionise school teaching in a bid to involve pupils more actively.

Fairy-tales were told by illiterate ancient peoples, and still today they are handed down orally in some primitive cultures. The advent of printing, however, set these transformations in more structured and clearly defined narrative forms, and it is their versatility that has enabled fairy-tales to span place, time, audience and narrative method. One of the most fascinating parts of fairy-tale research in their see-sawing between oral and written forms is their ability to speak to their times and their readers, and this ability was as strong in the past as it is today, as Gianni Rodari showed. Dialogue has spawned a vast range of research. The research covered literary and intertextual studies (Lüthi, 1947; Robert, 1981; Jones, 1995; Bottigheimer, 2002; Bernardi, 2007; Joosen, 2011) as well as social, cultural, historical and/or folklorist aspects within the production and reception of fairy-tales (Cocchiara, 1952; Verdi, 1980; Rak, 2005; Zipes, 2006, 2012; Haase, 2008; Ben-Amos, 2010; Joosen, Lathey 2014).

The research behind this article examines fairy-tales from a special angle, namely their use as historical documents. This is a tricky angle to take, however, because they are generally impossible to date and locate. Nevertheless, some researchers have succeeded in this approach, one of whom was 20th-century Italian writer, scholar and fairy-tale expert Italo Calvino. In 1956, he gave Italy its first formal collection of fairy-tales *Fiabe Italiane* (Italian Folktales), which brought the invaluable 19th-century folklore collections of specialists such as Giuseppe Pitré, Gherardo Nerucci, Domenico Giuseppe Bernoni and Gennaro Finamore, to a wider audience. These collections were written in their respective local dialects and were therefore unintelligible to anyone who did not speak them. It was as he thought about the scale of his task that Calvino suggested fairy-tales could be used as historical documents. He wrote about it in a 1973 essay entitled *La tradizione popolare nelle fiabe* (Popular Tradition in Folktales). He was well-aware of the pitfalls and criticism that approaching fairy-tales from this angle would entail: “when the historian (or the geographer, the ethnographer or the sociologist) cites a folktale as expressive of a period, or of an environment or social situation, the folklorist can immediately show him that the very narrative scheme reappears almost identically in a very different country and in a wholly different historic-social situation. [...] the story of

magical marvels, from the opening “once upon a time” to the various ending-formulae, refuses to be fixed in time and space” (Calvino, 1973/2011, p. 117). Calvino, however, was convinced, as I am, that fairy-tales also provide historians with some interesting material. The process can be justified and described as follows:

reducing the tale to its unchanging skeleton contributes to highlighting how many geographical and historical variables form the external casing of this skeleton; the place assumed within this scheme by specific instances of social existence, the objects of empirical experience [...] can provide data that would otherwise elude us regarding the value which that particular culture ascribes to them. (*ibidem*, pp. 121-122)

He therefore understood that comparing several versions of the same tale would enable scholars who were interested in historical recognition to pinpoint specific features and objects that belonged to the social experience of a certain era. Calvino’s research, for which he scrutinised numerous collections of folktales, noted that fairy-tales can be used as historical documents most effectively when analysing two specific narrative situations: the first was the adversities described in the initial stages or opening of the tale because generally a tale’s plot and happy-ending are often stereotypical and “far-removed from the real-life experience of the storyteller and his audience (the usual marriage with the usual prince or the usual princess” (*ibidem*, p. 122); the second regards the tale’s choice and use of objects, including magical ones, e.g. an instrument, vegetables, fruit, an everyday item, or piece of furniture (*ibidem*, p. 123).

Against this backdrop, this paper will look at a selection of tales from various collections of European fairy-tales, analyse their domestic environments, and see whether they contain features that testify to the development of these environments from a historical perspective. I decided to restrict my analysis to domestic landscapes for two reasons. The first is that folktales do not describe characters, items and landscapes in detail, usually just naming them instead: “European folktales are void of any taste for description, [...] the single attribute is dominant: a city made entirely of iron, a large house, a large dragon, a young king, a bloody struggle” (Lüthi, 1947/1979, p. 38). They use only spatial indicators “that are absolutely necessary for understanding the story” (Messerli, 2005, p. 276). Yet a more careful look at a tale’s domestic landscapes reveals settings, furnishings and instruments that speak volumes about the times in which the tale was written. The second reason ties in with the fact that domestic landscapes play a particularly important part in the tale’s success with children. For adults, tables and chairs are consummate, almost invisible objects. We use them without thinking, but children regard them as features of an ambivalent, multi-dimensional world that they will explore for many years to come. As soon children are able to get down from a high chair, or escape the prison of their playpen, they begin their first adventure of discovery around the house, its furniture and machines, their shapes and their uses (Rodari, 1973, p.

111). Whereas adults use a table for sitting and eating, children use it as a roof. Beneath it, they feel like the masters of the house, a small, made-to-measure one that is not as terrifying as the one the grown-ups live in. Children do the same thing when they use a chair to make a train or a car, or turn the bathtub into a ship. And this is exactly what Hans Christian Andersen did when he turned a needle and a thimble into characters who had adventures. The experience of handling household things, be it through real or imaginative play, or by reading fiction, provides children with a better understanding of these objects, the world, and thus themselves. Here, cognition and narration, experience and symbolisation work hand-in-hand (ibid., p. 110). However, we are also aware that the outside world of the 21st century penetrates the home in many ways that were unknown to children two, three or four hundred years ago. Today's hi-tech homes are very different from those of a child in the times of the Brothers Grimm, Andersen, Perrault or Basile: electric lights, gas, washing machines, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, hairdryers, mixers, and we can add digital TVs, tablets and smartphones - are only some of the elements of modern children's domestic landscapes; the telephone rings, the buttons of the TV are pushed, there are sounds, tones, digital voices and songs. This is the reason why it could be also worth investigating the old-fashioned domestic setting of traditional fairy-tales. Discovering dramatically different domestic settings could offer a motivating narrative experience for today's young readers.

This paper examines a selection of tales from three European collections: *Lo cunto de li cunti overo lo trattenemiento de' peccerille* (*The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*) by Giambattista Basile (1634-36); *Histoires et Contes du temps passé o Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye* (*Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals, or Mother Goose Tales*) by Charles Perrault (1697); and *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1st Ed. 1812, 7th Ed. 1857). These three fairy-tale collections are both popular and cultured, in that they collect and transcribe popular stories, but order and organise them for cultured purposes. These collections are also distinguished by their aspatial and universal spaces, which emphasise their non-territorial and supranational nature. Nevertheless, careful study reveals a host of historical, social and cultural details that are often overlooked. These details may be a documentary source of evidence that would afford a fascinating insight into how the domestic settings in fairy-tales developed in Italy, France and Germany.

### **Form, Function and Symbolic Representation of Fairy-tale Landscapes and Domestic Settings**

The landscape of fairy-tales is abstract, generic, ahistorical and fixed. It has no name nor any geographical location; it is "recognizable, but not knowable" (Nicolaisen, 1980, p. 15). Take the landscape in the popular folktale "Little Red Riding Hood" and in particular the location of her grandmother's house. In Charles Perrault's version, the little girl gives the wolf precise directions and says that her grandmother's house lies "beyond the mill you see there, at the

first house in the village”. In the Brothers Grimm version, her grandmother’s house is “a good quarter of an hour’s walk further in the forest, under the three large oaks. There stands her house; further beneath are the nut trees, which you will see there”. The descriptions are exact, coherent and recognisable, yet outside the tale they lead nowhere because they contain no specific geographical names, topographical references, or points on a map. The spaces are entirely general. Fairy-tales subject their settings to a process of anthropological and stylistic rarefaction (Cusatelli, 2006, p. 54). Homes, castles, palaces, courts, courtyards, gardens, villages, roads, countryside, fields, woods and forests remain unspecified. Their descriptions are rushed and sparse, making them a symbolic, functional feature of a tale: a stunning, beautifully appointed palace adorned with furnishings and luxury that left nothing to wish for in Basile’s tale “Peruonto”; beautiful city and country homes decked out with gold and silver tableware and brocade-upholstered furniture in Perrault’s tale “Bluebeard”; and the house with the splendid interior at the heart of a dark forest in the Grimm’s tale “Fitcher’s Bird”. Fairy-tale landscapes can become archetypal, abstract places characterised by scenes from an agricultural if not agro-pastoral society (Cambi, 2006a, p. 9), e.g. Perrault’s “Puss in Boots”, which tells of rural landscapes where peasants mowed meadows or reaped grain; the Grimm’s “The Little Peasant” in which the agro-pastoral landscape was populated by herdsmen who led their cows to pasture, or shepherds herding their sheep; and Basile’s “Cagliuso”, which featured shepherds and livestock guardians, as well as herds of cows, horses and pigs. Fairy-tale landscapes are conjured up by their homes, streets, fields, woods and castles, which have been sculpted around people working the fields and making handicrafts. The backdrop to these collections is a European feudal world and the habitat of this world is the village, countryside and forest, places of production, and above them perches the court with its luxury, pleasures, exertion of power and observance of rules (Cambi, 2006b, p. 14). The three collections examined herein feature kings, princes, barons, counts, marquises and gentlemen alongside peasants, millers, woodsmen, woodcutters, carpenters, fishermen, soldiers, servants and cooks, as well as tailors, cobblers, turners, goldsmiths and merchants. In narrative terms, fairy-tale landscapes are defined by processes of linearization, simplification and typicisation. Everything is reduced to the essential, the typical, the general.

The two main examples of fairy-tale domestic settings are the home and the palace (or the castle). Home is a fairy-tale’s structural space; it marks the beginning and the end of the tale (e.g. Perrault’s “Tom Thumb”, and the Grimm’s “Little Red Riding Hood” and “The Seven Ravens”). Home is often the sacred space of identity, intimacy, shelter and (ambiguous) safety, although it is also a place of lurking danger, treachery and peril, such as the witch’s house in the Grimm’s “Hänsel and Gretel” or “The Riddle”. Generally, it is a warm space inhabited by common folk and the poorest and neediest echelons of society. The home is generally represented realistically. The same applies to its contents: tables, chairs, beds, stoves, hearths, wardrobes, sinks, cauldrons, tin utensils, looms, spindles and jugs. In Basile’s “The Snake” or Perrault’s “Sleeping Beauty”, palaces and castles are the homes of kings and/or princes; they are seats of power, realms of luxury and symbolic representations of the uppermost echelons in the social hierarchy. Like the homes of common folk, enemies and treachery lurk in castles as well (see the Grimm’s “The Seven Swans” and “Snow White”, and

Perrault's "Donkeyskin"). Generally, however, they are places where the adventures of princes and princesses end happily ever after. They are also symbolic spaces of a new or rediscovered security and identity, a longed-for sublime space. Although they are also typicised, palaces are portrayed with realistic items of furniture as well: velvet stools with gold fringes, four-poster beds with gold bases (Basile's "Sun, Moon and Talia" and "The Cat Cinderella"); beautiful beds smelling of fresh washing (Basile's "The Merchant"); crystal chandeliers, gold tables and chairs, rugs, mirrors, gold friezes (the Grimm's "The Fisherman and His Wife"); silk tablecloths, solid gold caskets with ruby- and diamond-studded gold cutlery (Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty"); and toiletry sets and jars of cream (Perrault's "Donkeyskin").

In the analysis of the three collections, *The Tale of Tales* by Basile, *Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals* by Perrault, and *Children's and Household Tales* by Grimms, domestic settings maintain their universality, but also trace and testify to social and cultural developments that undermine the fixed and ahistorical nature of fairy-tales, revealing their narrative and historical complexity.

### **The Settings of Fairy-tales in Giambattista Basile's *The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones***

Giambattista Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti overo lo trattenemiento de peccerille* (*A Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*) was published by his sister between 1634-1636 after the author's death. The idealist philosopher and historian Benedetto Croce argued in 1925 that, Italy has in Basile's *The Tale of Tales*, or *Pentamerone*, the oldest, richest and most artistic of all books of popular fairy-tales (Croce, 1925/1994, p. 645) and Italy's finest baroque book (ibid., p. 659). This masterpiece, which contains versions of several popular stories, including "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella", comprises fifty fairy-tales: forty-nine of them are told over five days; ten are told each day for the first four days, and nine tales are told on the fifth. The fiftieth tale frames all the other stories. The author imagines that ten peasant women come to court and tell tales to three characters: Tadeo, the prince of Camporotondo; a Moorish slave who has deceived the prince into becoming her husband; and Zosa, a young girl who is in love with him.

Written in Neapolitan dialect at the height of the Baroque period when literature was tool for learning, pleasure and dominion (Rak, 2005, p. 1), *The Tale of Tales* affords a fascinating insight into "the time when European history discovered the worlds of literary communication techniques and the remote repertoires of marginal traditions, the cast-iron rules of courtly etiquette, and the hustle and bustle of life in cities and squares, great journeys and the cultures of diversity" (ibid.). *The Tale of Tales* is a phantasmagorical book in which fairy-tale objectivity sits side-by-side with expressive subjectivity, the ordinary with the extraordinary, the realistic with the fantastic, the magical with the everyday, the royal with the

rogue, simplicity with cunning, the sublime with the filthy, the terrible with the beautiful, and Naples with the Universe (Guarini, 1994, pp. 602-603).

Basile's fairy-tales bring a magical world in touch with real life and day-to-day experience, and they enable a fantastic, ahistorical domain to converse with life in 17th-century Naples, his hometown (Croce, 1925/1994, p. 661). Michele Rak says (2005) that when Basile wrote his work, he looked to contemporary courtly life as inspiration for his tales and as his primary audience. Court was the setting for play and new forms of entertainment that were invented to delight the powerful; one of these was storytelling. Noble men and women would meet, savour an abundance of delicacies, admire beautiful clothes, listen to music, dance, play games, and tell stories. The pleasure - and the art - of storytelling was appreciated and discussed. One of the courtiers' favourite subjects was the ridiculous, which often saw a string of errors send an ill-mannered yokel to court. Another interesting character is the princess who is spoilt but well-mannered and carefully observes court etiquette (ibid., pp. 54-55), an idea that pleased the powerful. *The Tale of Tales* describes a theatre of human misery. Basile managed to create this fairy-tale theatre by adapting the exempla, proverbs, jokes, stories and open conversation he had heard around fireplaces at country-houses, inns, fairs, markets and celebrations<sup>1</sup>. His stories give their settings specific locations. The homes of lower-class characters are located on the outskirts of Naples, but his royal protagonists live in imaginary kingdoms, placing *The Tale of Tales* at the crossroads of street and court culture.

Settings play an important role because they help to identify the historical fairy-tales' target audience. Basile aimed his tales at a cultured and courtly audience (Rak, 1975), who were most likely the princes and nobility of the small courts under the Kingdom of Naples of Basile's time: "namely the courtiers and friends of the author to whom he probably read parts of the book before it was even finished" (Scala, 2014, p. 3). Despite its subtitle (*Entertainment for Little Ones*), *The Tale of Tales* was not intended for children and behind this ambiguous subtitle "lies an astute courtly misunderstanding" (Rak, 2005, p. 61). A plausible explanation is that by "Little Ones", Basile meant "the common man", the people, who were considered 'little' when compared with the courtiers or nobles for whom the tales were written. Moreover, passing *The Tale of Tales* off as a collection of children's stories enabled Basile to recount palace life within the bounds of acceptability, thus avoiding any trouble and fits of courtly pique. It was also well-known that kings and other powerful people

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Canepa (2008) wrote: "Basile was born to a middle-class family of courtiers and artists outside of Naples, at the time a major European metropolis and center of the baroque. For the most part, Basile's life was that of a typical man of letters: as he migrated from patron to patron, he composed verse on command, organized court festivities and spectacles, was a member of several academies, and even briefly served as a soldier of fortune. He later held administrative positions in the Neapolitan provinces and ended his life with the title of count. His predominantly poetic output in Italian spanned diverse genres—from odes and madrigals to pastoral and religious works to musical dramas—and his scholarly work included philological and editorial projects. [...] *The Tale of Tales* is an expression of the interest in popular culture and folk traditions. [...] Basile did not merely transcribe the oral materials he most likely heard in and around Naples and on his travels". Canepa, N. L. (2008). Giambattista Basile. In D. Haase (ed.), *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* (p. 100). Westport: Greenwood Press.

could be far more petulant and dangerous than children (*ibid.*). *The Tale of Tales*, which is a groundbreaking book of fairy-tales and a masterpiece of Italian literature (Canepa, 2008, p. 99) was written to entertain the courts (Rak, 2005, p. 1), especially the male aristocrats that sought entertainment after their sumptuous dinners. The tales' target audience would justify and explain the presence of many features of palace life, as well as cruelty and explicit sexual references, or the use of extravagant language, which is complicated by myriad metaphors and by the typical features of Baroque prose. Basile's "The Myrtle" uses meticulous detail and delightful metaphors to describe a prince's encounter with a lady's womanhood: "a little creature more soft and fine than Barbary wool, more pliant and tender than a marten's tail, more delicate than thistledown" (p. 41). The language is also often harsh and vulgar, as in the introduction to the 50 Tales, in which an old woman is angered by a page and insults him as follows: "Ah, you snotty little oaf, you dunce, shit-for-brains, bed-pisser, [...] arse-wipe, you hangman's-noose, bastard mule (Basile, 1994, p. 18). In the opening story, "The Tale of the Ogre", the main character Antuono is insulted by an ogre, who calls him a "glutton, fart-breaker, fart breath, putrid throat, chicken's arse" (*ibidem*, p. 35).

A similarly important role is played by domestic landscapes, places and settings because they contain features (e.g. objects, furniture and décor) that provide an insight into this historical period. Basile's fairy-tales are set mainly in palaces and their surroundings, including inns, stables and markets. Although fictitious, these locations include features of the palaces in contemporary Naples:

these stories were strewn with allusions, puns, witticisms, morals, obscenities, lavish settings and details of clothes, black and gold shutters of light wood, large and small sculpted chairs, fabric hangings, paintings of harvest heroines and still life, torches and candles, chairs around a fireplace or around a table set for lunch in the garden, the vibrant colours of the servants' livery, the aromas of spiced food, patisserie and wine, the violent smells of bodies and waste, cess pits and horses. In these tales, the gold floors, ruby-studded doors, diamond-studded tables, lavish clothes, impossible jewellery, rare foods, such as birds' milk, wardrobes full of clothes are the emphasisation of courtly splendour. (Rak, 2005, p. 56 – my translation)

The landscapes of Basile's tales contain settings, furnishings, décor and details that enlighten readers as to courtly life in the Kingdom of Naples. In "Peruonto", the king banquets at a beautifully laid table covered by a Flanders tablecloth, and after dinner he retires to his bedroom where he sleeps on "a bed all made of gold" (Basile, 1994, p. 63). In "The Flayed Old Woman", a king believes he has been tricked one night and takes a flint and a candle from a suede bag that was hidden inside "an ebony and silver writing desk" (p. 134); in the same tale, an old woman who has been turned into a 15-year old maiden, finds herself "found herself seated on a velvet throne with gold tassels under the very same tree, which had turned into a green-and-gold baldachin with a golden dais" (*ibidem*, p. 135). In "Sun, Moon

and Talia”, i.e. Basile’s version of “Sleeping Beauty”, Talia, the daughter of a great lord, appears to die when a piece of stalk in the flax she is spinning wedges itself under her fingernail. Her body is placed “in a palace in the country, upon a velvet seat under a canopy of brocade” (*ibidem*, p. 557).

These examples provide interesting documental evidence of the items found in some of the domestic settings in Basile’s tales. They are real items that afford an insight into the sumptuousness of palace life at the height of the Baroque period. By the 16th and 17th centuries, Italian architecture had reached levels of unprecedented magnificence and this splendour filtered down into the furnishings and decor. Italy’s palaces and stately homes, as well as their items, furniture and décor, were at the peak of their extravagance. The hallmark of Roman Baroque furniture was its wealth of gold-leaf and abundance of precious materials, as well as its intricate handcrafted details which were unparalleled in other eras. This was the time when Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Baroque’s greatest exponent and creator of the St. Peter’s Baldachin in Rome (1624-1633), began to ply his art. Bernini’s architecture, sculptures and décor had a major influence on furniture design throughout Europe. In the examples from the abovementioned tales, the seat and the bed are the two items that stand out the most. Basile’s tales often describe them as extremely lavish and covered in gold and precious fabrics. The taste among the wealthiest noble families for gold-leaf furniture and fabrics began in Baroque times, and the most important item of furniture in these homes was the bed. In Italy’s palaces, beds were generally majestic affairs and pieces of architecture in their own right. The most sumptuous ones had lavish embroidered canopies, coloured blankets, scented sheets and soft cushions for heads and feet. Basile’s opening tale “The Tale of the Ogre” tells how a mother goes to a chest, another important item of furniture, where she keeps her daughter’s trousseau, and joyfully takes out “sheets so fine that they blew away if you but breathed, cloths of sweet-scented linen, coverlets of colours that catch the eye, and made a fine spread” (Basile, 1994, p. 32).

For the purposes of analysis, this paper will focus on the tale of Cinderella from each of the three collections. In Basile’s version of Cinderella, (*La Gatta Cenerentola*), the tale starts like this:

In Italy, there once lived a Prince, who was a widower but who had a daughter, so dear to him that he saw with no other eyes than hers. He kept a governess for her, who taught her chain-work and knitting, and to make point-lace, and showed her such affection as no words can tell. [...] in the end [the father] gave way to Zezolla’s entreaties. So he married Carmosina, the governess, and gave a great feast at the wedding. [...] For the five or six days following the wedding, Carmosina, as her new stepmother, overwhelmed Zezolla with caresses, seating her at the best place at table, giving her the choicest morsels to eat, and clothing her in the richest apparel. But before long, forgetting entirely the good service she had received, Carmosina began to bring forward six daughters of her own, whom she had kept concealed until then; and she praised them so much, and worked on her husband in such a fashion, that his stepdaughters at last won his good graces and he let thoughts of his own daughter

slip out of his heart. In short, it fared so ill for Zezolla – bad today and worse tomorrow – that, at last, she was brought down from her royal chamber to the kitchen, from the canopy of state to the hearth, from her splendid apparel of silks and gold to dishcloths, from the sceptre to the spit. And not only was her condition changed, but even her name; for, instead of Zezolla, she was now called Gatta Cenerentola [Cinderella]. (Basile, 1994, pp. 84-85 – my translation)

The father is a widower prince, and his daughter Cinderella has to suffer the humiliation of moving from her beautiful, luxurious chambers with four-poster bed in her very own palace to a humiliating life in the kitchens. She is forced to give up her finest silk and gold clothes for rags, which were more suitable for a life beside the hearth. This opening provides a number of references to royal life: the governess, the refined embroidery on precious fabrics, beautiful clothes, the choicest morsels, and the grand feast to celebrate the prince's wedding. The nadir of Cinderella's terrible fate, however, is her abrupt fall from the sumptuousness of her bedchamber to the misery of the kitchen. In Basile's day, a noblewoman's bedchamber was not merely for sleep and rest; it was also a reception room where she lay in bed dressed in her finest splendour as she awaited her guests. This explains why bedchambers were adorned so lavishly.

### **The Settings of Fairy-tales in *Les Contes de ma Mère l'Oye (Mother Goose Tales)* by Charles Perrault**

In France, the literary fairy-tale was cultivated mainly by women writing in the country's famous salons, as well as by a small number of male authors, such as Charles Perrault. In 1697, Perrault wrote his *Histoires ou contes du temps passé avec des moralités (Stories or Fairy Tales from Past Times with Morals)*; also known as *Mother Goose Tales*. It comprised twelve fairy-tales (nine in prose and three in rhyme) with final rhymed "morals", which were customarily omitted in later editions. These moral tales are designed to prompt the reader to reflect on the protagonists' dilemmas, which were well-known in folklore. In the renowned Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, which began in 1687, the "Ancients" defended Greco-Roman literary models and neglected magic in "high" literature, whereas the "Moderns" celebrated French folklore and medieval courtly tradition. In this dispute, Perrault played a key role by strongly supporting the Moderns. In his collection, Perrault adapted pre-existing folktales by revising their meaning and presenting them to his target audience: the educated literate readers of aristocratic and bourgeois salons.

Perrault was a member of the haute bourgeoisie and honoured by the court of Louis XIV at Versailles (Zipes, 1991, p. 20). His fairy-tales are a reflection of the extensive interaction between France's nobility and the bourgeoisie. Jack Zipes also points out that manners and the style of speech in Perrault's fairy-tales were altered to include bourgeois

qualities, such as honesty, politeness, diligence and responsibility. Perrault modified traditional tales and introduced new modernist aesthetic concepts to amuse his aristocratic audiences (Jean, 2007). His tales were written between 1694 and 1697 at a time when *préciosité* was a fashionable style in literature and life, both in France and across Europe (p. 277). *Préciosité* refers to the brilliant conversation, wit and elegant language that were intrinsically associated with the aristocracy (ibid.). It also represented the trappings associated with their lifestyle and was a means of distinguishing the aristocracy from other classes. Unlike the *conteuses* of his time, Perrault did not fully adhere to the requisites of *préciosité*. However, his literary style was deeply influenced by this approach. Some of the morals and textual details are quite obviously witty remarks meant for educated people and they cannot have been taken from folktales. Perrault's work is a multifaceted collection because it is a compendium of literary fairy-tales written in fashionable salons, an adaptation of folktales and a close revision of those tales with a new set of values (Malarte-Feldman, 2008, p. 2).

The target audience of Perrault's tales was, once again, the nobility: the cynical and often bored courtiers at the sumptuous Palace of Versailles. This time, however, the audience was mainly noblewomen, such as princesses and duchesses. Whereas Basile aimed to provide aristocratic men with a vulgar belly-laugh, Perrault aimed to tease a sensual knowing smile from female aristocrats. Perrault entertained them with simple stories of the people; he retained the structure and some typical phrases, but created a sense of belonging for aristocrats by using *précieux* vocabulary and observing the criteria of the fairy-tale writing in France's fashionable salons. One example of this approach is found in "Sleeping Beauty" in the sharp, flirtatious tones that characterise the scene when the spell is broken. When the prince kneels trembling before the princess, as she awakes she bestows on him "a gaze more tender than a first glance might seem to warrant" and says "Are you my Prince? You have been long in coming" (Perrault, 2000, p. 114). In addition to the princess's sensual manner and coquettish words, traces of *préciosité* also lie in the subsequent passage when Perrault says that the prince was won over not only by the princess's beauty, but also by the way she said those words.

Analysis of settings in Perrault's fairy-tales reveals that considerable emphasis is placed on furnishings and fabrics. Rooms have inlaid floors, full-length looking glasses, ruffles and velvet, gold cases for table settings, mirrored halls, clothes, pearls, jewels and other symbols of the sumptuous life in salons and at the court of Louis XIV of France. In "Sleeping Beauty", the baptism ceremony is followed by a celebration to honour the fairy godmothers. Before each one was laid "a magnificent blanket with a solid gold casket containing a spoon, fork, and knife of fine gold set with diamonds and rubies". After the princess has pricked her finger with the spindle, her body is laid "in the finest apartment in the palace upon a bed embroidered in gold and silver" (*ibidem*, p. 111); after she is awoken, she leaves the chambers by the prince's side and crosses "an apartment hung with mirrors" (p. 114) where they dine together. Likewise, the opening of "Donkeyskin" describes a vast palace bedecked with luxury and grandeur and "full of courtiers and servants going hurrying about their business" (*ibidem*, p. 84). In "Bluebeard", a wealthy gentleman hands over a set of keys to his young bride, saying: "Here are the keys to the two great wardrobes where I have my best furniture. These

are to my silver and gold plate, which is not everyday in use. These open my strongboxes, which hold my money, both gold and silver; these my caskets of jewels. And this is the master key to all my apartments” (*ibidem*, p. 128). The chambers and rooms in Bluebeard’s palace are “so fine and rich that they seemed to surpass one another. [...] the beauty of the tapestries, beds, couches, cabinets, stands, table and looking glasses, in which you might see yourself from head to foot; some of them framed with glass, silver or golden vermeil”.

The surroundings, furnishings and sumptuous, grandiose décor of Perrault’s tales are reminiscent of the Palace of Versailles, which Louis XIV had built around the country residence of his father Louis XIII between 1668 and 1710. After forty-two years of work, Versailles would become one of the most majestic and sumptuous palaces in the world. The Sun King installed his court and government there in 1682 and used his new palace, which lay 15 km from Paris and thus a safe distance from any conspiracies, to create a new monarchy and nobility in its image and likeness. Louis XIV added a touch of grandeur and luxury to Baroque, a fully-fledged style in Italy and one that defined the early 17th century. Louis XIV exploited the new space within the Palace of Versailles to launch a new rituality. Its etiquette, protocol, customs, pleasures, intrigues, work, fashion and cuisine enabled the king to govern court life and the lives of his courtiers (Levron, 1998/2017). A closer look at Perrault’s tales reveals a host of historical references to real-life places and spaces. The fine apartment where Sleeping Beauty lay clearly recalled the Salon de Mercure, i.e. the Grand appartement du roi, in which stood “a magnificent bed covered in gold and silver brocade, in the same fashion as the walls” (*ibidem*, p. 47). The apartment hung with mirrors where Sleeping Beauty dines after being awakened is reminiscent of the Gallerie des Glaces at Versailles. In “Donkeyskin”, the throng of “governesses, ladies-in-waiting, chambermaids, gentlemen, officers, butlers, cooks, recruits, servants, guards, Swiss guards, pages, valets” (Perrault, 2000, pp. 111-112) that lived in Sleeping Beauty’s palace and the continual coming and going of courtiers and valets in the palace of the “the greatest king on the whole of the earth” (Perrault, 2000, p. 83) are scenes that recount another feature of palace life. It is thought that at the height of its splendour the court of Versailles numbered about 10,000 people (Levron, 1998/2017, p. 108). The team of people responsible for feeding the king alone (kitchen and bread pantry staff, plus his corps of cup-bearers) numbered 1500 people (*ibidem*, p. 42). Besides rooms filled with tables bearing priceless vases, mirrors, solid silver furniture, marble, paintings by Titian, Rubens and Van Dyck, crimson velvet upholstery, gold- and silver-embroidered hangings, Versailles boasted an array of stunning outdoor spaces, as the Sun King also adored open-air performances (Levron, 1998/2017, p. 52). In the event of inclement weather, many shows were held in the grounds of the Great Stables where the war, riding and parade horses were generally housed (*ibidem*, p. 53). This description recalls the stables in “Donkeyskin”, which were home to “horses large and small of all breeds, covered with saddlecloths stiffened with gold and embroidery” (Perrault, 2000, p. 84).

Another fascinating feature of Perrault’s tales is that they used the term “apartment”. Prior to the 17th century, the modern concept of “apartment”, i.e. an entire floor containing adjacent rooms, did not exist. In Renaissance times, the wealthiest families lived in one large

environment that served as a dining room, reception area, bedchamber and study. The modern idea of a furnished apartment came into use in the 17th century and the well-to-do often furnished them with a wealth and elegance that often bordered on sumptuousness and magnificence; this was especially true in France. Within these surroundings, the furnishings were of unparalleled wealth and taste, just as they are in the tale of “Bluebeard”, who entrusts his young wife with “the master key to all of the apartments” (Perrault, 2000, p. 128). The Palace of Versailles contained an extraordinarily high number of apartments (*ibidem*, p. 226) plus double the number of rooms (Levron, 1998/2017, p. 108). The most luxurious were the *Grand Appartement du Roi*, which was mainly used for receptions, the *Petit Appartement du Roi*, which was the king’s private suite, and the queen’s apartment. Note that one of the main arbiters of Louis XIV décor was the Sun King’s powerful minister of finances Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who was a very close friend of Perrault’s, “for a long time, Perrault was Colbert’s right arm on cultural matters at the court of Louis XIV. He occupied a position of power and influence when absolutism was at its height. As Inspector of Royal Buildings for nearly twenty years, he was directly involved in the supervision of building sites, acquiring thus a firsthand, comprehensive knowledge of architecture” (Malarte-Feldman, 1997, p. 100). Perrault’s accurate, lifelike portrayals of palace spaces and architecture, as well as his thorough descriptions of furnishings and décor may also be explained by his professional experience in the service of the Sun King’s court.

Perrault’s version of *Cinderella or The Little Glass Slipper* is also worth analysing, and it begins like this:

Once there was a gentleman who married, for his second wife, the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had, by a former husband, two daughters of her own, who were, indeed, exactly like her in all things. He had likewise, by another wife, a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over but the stepmother began to show herself in her true colours. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl, and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious. She employed her in the meanest work of the house. She scoured the dishes, tables, etc., and cleaned madam’s chamber, and those of misses, her daughters. She slept in a sorry garret, on a wretched straw bed, while her sisters slept in fine rooms, with floors all inlaid, on beds of the very newest fashion, and where they had looking glasses so large that they could see themselves at their full length from head to foot. [...] When she had done her work, she used to go to the chimney corner, and sit down there in the cinders and ashes, which caused her to be called Cinderwench. (Perrault, 2000, p. 149 – my translation)

In this version, the father is no longer a prince but a noble gentleman. His house is no longer a palace, although it contains many of the same precious items and fineries, e.g. inlaid floors, fashionable beds and large looking glasses. Cinderella has to perform the most menial tasks, such as washing the dishes and stairs, which is not mentioned in Basile's version; she also has to sleep on a wretched straw bed in the garret and be grateful that she can sleep next to a warm fire, her one consolation. Readers can understand the divide between the nobility and the common folk by the vast difference that separates the sumptuous nature of the settings and furniture that Cinderella once enjoyed and the shabby, wretched surroundings to which she is now confined by her wicked stepmother and two step-sisters.

### **The Settings and the Audience of Fairy-tales in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm**

The fairy-tale settings in the Brothers Grimm collection *Children's and Household Tales* are quite different from Basile's and Perrault's settings. The Brothers Grimm wrote their fairy-tales during Germany's Romantic period in a bid to rediscover and preserve the heritage of the German people as expressed in their language and oral traditions. This collection was first published by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1812, but was expanded and edited until the seventh and final edition was published in 1857 with 210 stories (200 fairy-tales and 10 children's legends). It contains a wide variety of genres: "wonder tales, humorous tales and jests, etiologic tales, legends, exempla, moralistic stories, religious tales and legends, and various mixed forms" (Uther, 2008, p. 535). Edition after edition, the Grimms gradually replaced many of the tales or rewrote their own versions, blending texts or adding content and structure of a more literary style. The finished work was mostly the result of continual revision and polishing by Wilhelm, with "the most extensive changes and most radical amendments [...] made in the second and third editions" (Cocchiara, 1951/1992, p. XI). Wilhelm sought out popular literature and proverbs, idiomatic expressions and onomatopoeia to build their masterpiece, just as Basile did. The Grimms started collecting folktales when they were in their twenties. They relied heavily on oral tradition, but "contrary to what is commonly thought, they did not wander about the countryside with a pad and a pencil to collect oral folktales from informants. Much of their material came to them in written form or stemmed from diverse literary sources" (Uther, 2008, p. 540). Their sources were mostly educated, middle-class women who were especially good storytellers. They sought people with a reputation for this art. Many storytellers came to the Grimms' home in person. In their early careers, the Grimms did not intend their collection of fairy-tales to be for children at all, as it was part of a scholarly project to identify and preserve the true spirit and identity of the German people. It was only once they had understood their collection would become popular middle-class family reading that the brothers made their stories more suitable for a respectable middle-class audience, and thus for their children, as well. Their collection became a tool of a national pedagogy to convey useful social, moral, and even religious lessons for children, but

also to educate the German people about German character and culture (Haase, 2008, p. 734).

This was the origin of the Grimms' renowned children's tales, which became known as "tales for the fireside", a physical and symbolic place that united young and old in the serene environs of the family (Cocchiara, 1951/1992, p. XIV). The listeners and readers of the Grimms' fairy-tales were middle-class children and families who lived in simple houses, not palaces, and they sought love and affection in a private, closed, intimate domestic setting. Thus, the settings in the Brothers Grimms' collection are only seemingly part of peasant folk culture. The "Household Tales" are instead meant to be an educational manual for Christian upbringing, a part of domestic tradition, a "fabula domestica" (Uther, 2008, p. 535) which is closely connected with the values and symbols of bourgeois culture. Consequently, the domestic setting in Grimms' fairy-tale collection is characterised by much more modest, humble furniture and simple intimate domestic environments. The Brothers Grimm collection of tales opens with "The Frog Prince". It tells of a king's beautiful daughter who reluctantly befriends a frog after he retrieves her favourite toy, a golden ball, which she had dropped into a pond. The tale includes an account of the meal that the princess eats with the king and the rest of the court. The table, furnishings and décor go unmentioned; all that is said is that the princess eats from "a small gold plate" (Grimm, 1951/1992, p. 6). When the frog arrives at the castle to claim his reward, he eats from the princess's gold plate and asks to be taken to her chamber. Unlike the collections by Basile and Perrault, the Grimm's simply speak of "a small silk bed" (*ibidem*, p. 7). No mention is made of luxury, splendour or princely décor.

The furnishings are similarly sober in "The Fisherman and His Wife", which unfolds in a domestic setting. After fisherman throws a magical speaking flounder back into the sea, his wife tells him he should have asked for a reward for sparing the fish's life. She orders him to ask for their hovel to be turned into a better dwelling, but when the flounder grants her wish, she becomes greedy. The couple's filthy shack turns first into a small cottage with "a little front yard and a beautiful little parlour, and a bedroom where their bed was standing, and a kitchen, and a dining room. Everything was beautifully furnished and supplied with tin and brass utensils, just as it should be" (*ibidem*, p. 72). It then becomes a fine stone palace with marble floors, white walls, beautiful tapestries, golden chairs and tables, crystal chandeliers and carpets in every room, after which it transforms into a castle of polished marble with "alabaster statues and golden decorations" (*ibidem*, p. 74). The final transformation turns the castle into a large church surrounded by nothing but palaces; inside sat his wife "clothed in pure gold" wearing "three large crowns upon her head". This tale is a further example of how the Grimms chose frugal, sober descriptions and did not provide details of pomp and luxury, despite being required to describe the magnificence of regal surroundings. They provide a mere list of the furnishings, with the main recurrent feature being that they are made of gold; they also focus on "quantity" but little else is added. Even when they give a description of the wife sitting on a throne "made of one piece of gold and a good two miles high [...] wearing a large golden crown three yards high adorned with diamonds and carbuncles. In the one hand

she had a sceptre and in the other the imperial orb” (*ibidem*, p. 74), there is no trace of preciousness, intricate gold and silver details, valuable gems, clothing or jewellery. Nothing is said of the shimmering fabrics, finery and frivolity associated with the dress and habits of female royalty, but they are overwhelmingly present in Basile and in Perrault, both which speak of mirrors, tabourets, perfume balls, jars of creams, curling irons, rouge, hairstyles, tiaras, necklaces, collars, cuffs, bodices, capes, embroidery, lace and velvet. The Grimms’ version of “Sleeping Beauty” - “Little Briar-Rose” - also features a celebration feast, but contains no descriptive trimmings or meanderings of any kind; it simply states that 12 golden plates were prepared for the wise women, a description far removed from Perrault’s pageantry. When Little Briar-Rose turns fifteen and she pricks her finger with a spindle, she simply falls “onto a bed that was standing there and fell into a deep sleep” (*ibidem*, p. 177). What is most noteworthy about the settings in the Grimms’ tale is the almost complete disappearance of the free-flowing and whimsical forms, finery and elegance that were the hallmark of Basile’s and Perrault’s descriptions of furnishings in similar situations. “Fitcher’s Bird” says that “everything was splendid in the house” (*ibidem*, p. 160), but contains no descriptions or references to furniture, mirrors, chairs, beds or other furnishings. In “Table Be Set, Gold Donkey and Cudgel out of the Sack”, the table is laid but only with “a clean little cloth and a plate was there, and a knife and fork beside it, and dishes with boiled meats and roasted meats, as many as there was room for, and a great glass of red wine shone so that it made the heart glad” (*ibidem*, p. 131). In “The Knapsack, the Hat and the Horn”, however, the table was laid only with a “pretty little tablecloth” (*ibidem*, p. 192).

The Grimms’ *Household Tales* are almost completely free of adjectives, figures and metaphors that depict the elegance, delicacy, lightness and grace of the furniture (tables, chairs and beds) and the décor (hangings, fabrics, blankets, sheets and cushions). There are, however, fleeting references to luxury; one example is in “The Elves. Second Story”, in which a young serving girl is invited by elves to hold a baby at a christening. This brief tale describes the inside of a hollow mountain where “everything there was small but more elegant and beautiful than can be described”; the baby’s mother “lay in a bed of black ebony ornamented with pearls, the coverlids were embroidered with gold, the cradle was of ivory, the bath of gold” (*ibidem*, p. 145). Although the setting is luxurious and warm, the authors shy away from arousing any real attraction for a wondrous (yet sometimes mawkish and indolent) palace life, as Basile and Perrault did. Although “the poor serving girl who was industrious and cleanly” had enjoyed her time with the elves, the tale ends with her preferring to return home because she wanted to begin her work. When she arrived, she “took the broom, which was still standing in the corner, in her hand and began to sweep” (*ibidem*, p. 145). This epilogue highlights some of the trademark features of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, one being that the values promoted therein are closely linked with the middle-class norms of the Biedermeier period (Uther, 2008, p. 539). Under this historical perspective, diligence, cleanliness, and a strong work ethic are portrayed as virtues, whereas laziness and sluggishness are branded as vices. Characters who are portrayed positively are obedient and unconditionally devoted to their duty, especially the heroines. In addition to being beautiful,

these women have to be diligent, hard-working and perfect housekeepers, as well as show compassion for human beings, animals and nature, if they wish to advance socially (ibid.).

Travelling and leaving home have an educational function, as during their journeys, the protagonists learn to ply a trade and to run business and families. This knowledge alone will allow them to return home and live happily ever after. The plot of “Table Be Set, Gold Donkey and Cudgel out of the Sack” tells of three brothers who may only return home once they have learned the trades of a carpenter, miller and turner respectively. This tale is a further example of how the settings of *Household Tales* are in line with the values and regulations of the Biedermeier period. Biedermeier is used to denote a decorative style mainly used for furniture and furnishings that was widespread in the first half of 19th-century Germany. This sober style is characterised by an extensive use of wood and was suited the needs of the day’s middle classes, who required their furniture to be built for comfort, practicality and affordability. Biedermeier furniture is unornamented and economical with clean, functional lines eschewing all forms of Baroque. It was most common in the home where everything was small and simple. The dwellings themselves were modestly sized; their furnishings were void of extravagance and courtliness and made with locally available wood. The wooden tables, chairs, wardrobes, chests and drawers were carved and engraved, but simply and frugally. They were modest and heavy, but sturdy, practical and reliable, just like the Grimm’s characters. The homes portrayed by the Brothers Grimm were in many cases Biedermeier-style homes: parsimonious and adorned solely with simple wood.

This frugality also comes to the fore in the opening of The Brothers Grimm version of *Cinderella*, which reads as follows:

A rich man’s wife became sick, and when she felt that her end was drawing near, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said, “Dear child, remain pious and good, and then our dear God will always protect you, and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you.” With this she closed her eyes and died. The girl went out to her mother’s grave every day and wept, and she remained pious and good. When winter came the snow spread a white cloth over the grave, and when the spring sun had removed it again, the man took himself another wife. This wife brought two daughters into the house with her. They were beautiful, with fair faces, but evil and dark hearts. Times soon grew very bad for the poor stepchild. “Why should that stupid goose sit in the parlour with us?” they said. “If she wants to eat bread, then she will have to earn it. Out with this kitchen maid!”. They took her beautiful clothes away from her, dressed her in an old grey smock, and gave her wooden shoes. “Just look at the proud princess! How decked out she is!” they shouted and laughed as they led her into the kitchen. There she had to do hard work from morning until evening, get up before daybreak, carry water, make the fires, cook, and wash. Besides this, the sisters did everything imaginable to hurt her. They made fun of her, scattered peas and lentils into the ashes for her, so that she had to sit and pick them out again. In the evening when she had worked herself weary, there was no bed for her. Instead she had to sleep by the hearth in the ashes. And because she

always looked dusty and dirty, they called her Cinderella. (Grimm, 1951/1992, p. 83 – my translation)

In this version, the authors remove all references both to the showy furnishings, e.g. four-poster beds, silk and gold clothes, inlaid floors, and to the symbols of royal life, e.g. sceptres and looking glasses. The tale includes no reference or description to suggest that the home is sumptuous and opulent. The father is described with the sole adjective “rich man”. Cinderella’s loss of status is described in a single line: instead of beautiful clothes, she has to wear an old smock and wooden shoes. This extract, however, provides an indepth, five-line description of home life and domestic chores, as it lingers on the tasks that the wretched girl, who is mockingly called “princess”, has to carry out. There is a sort of celebration of the idea that work is ennobling and that bread should be earned. The most laudable virtues of bourgeois life were piousness and goodness.

### Conclusions

Although the trademark of fairy-tale landscapes is usually their atemporal, ahistorical and universal features, analysis of a selection of settings in three collections of tales: *Lo cunto de li cunti overo lo trattenemiento de' peccerille* (*The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*) by Giambattista Basile (1634-36); *Histoires ou Contes du temps passè avec des Moralitez* (*Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals*) by Charles Perrault (1697); and *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*) by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1812) has brought to light evidence that over times the domestic settings of fairy-tales have changed dramatically.

One reason this occurred is that the target audience or beneficiaries of fairy-tales also changed over the centuries: fairy-tales were constantly seeking a new audience, as indeed Basile, Perrault and the Brothers Grimm were. Basile aimed his tales at a cultured and courtly audience, who were most likely the princes and nobility of the small courts under the Kingdom of Naples of Basile’s lifetime. His fairy-tales brought a magical world into contact with the courtly life of 17th-century Naples. Perrault aimed his tales at the educated and literate readers of aristocratic and bourgeois salons and at the court of Louis XIV of France. The Grimms, however, used their collection as a pedagogical tool to convey useful social, moral and even religious lessons for children, but also to educate the German people about German character, culture and identity. The listeners and readers of the Grimms’ fairy-tales were middle-class children and families.

The changes in domestic settings reveal the plasticity of fairy-tales and the ability to absorb and mirror the values, functions and settings of the social, cultural and architectural milieu of the period in which they were written. Analysis of domestic settings, such as

architectural elements, furniture, furnishings, decoration and objects has proven to be a fascinating source of historical documentary evidence and offer an insight into how domestic settings in fairy-tales have developed in Italy, France and Germany. In addition to substantially contributing to narrative plots, domestic settings also imply strong symbolic references. They provide a variety of narrative settings that can shift from sites of protection, love and care; to disquieting places of observation, deprivation, exclusion. Like the palaces and the houses themselves, their interiors (bedrooms, kitchens, hallways, etc.) and the objects they contain (beds, tables, chairs, wardrobes, curtains, carpets, looking glasses, tapestries, chandeliers, blankets, sheets, cushions, crockery, cutlery, toiletry sets, etc.) can acquire narrative force and offer various interpretation keys (Iori, 1996). Objects and furniture are not just decoration; they are narrating objects that play a vital role because they have a profound influence on the characters' as well the readers' sense of identity and belonging.

The settings in Basile's fairy-tale collection capture the splendour that bedecked the courts of the Kingdom of Naples, as his palaces were full of sumptuous items, upholstery and furniture. They were made with the precious materials and intricate craftsmanship of Basile's age and harked back to the Roman Baroque period. They included ebony and silver writing desks, velvet gold-leaf chairs, beds with golden canopies with embroidery, scented sheets and soft cushions. Similarly, Perrault's settings comprised the pomp and opulence of the Louis XIV furnishings found at Versailles: gold and silver vessels, priceless hangings, crystal, silver and gold vermeil frames, as well as magnificent beds with gold and silver brocade walls. Perrault's tales mention "apartments", which were new approaches for organising a palace's architectural space. The settings of the Brothers Grimm tales, however, bear no trace of the extravagant lifestyles enjoyed by contemporary nobility that pervaded the works of Basile and Perrault. All reference to the grace, beauty and show of the furniture and décor in Naples's palaces and Versailles have gone. The homes and castles of the Grimms' tales are smaller and contain none of the majestic surroundings seen in the worlds of Basile and Perrault. Home is no longer a place for celebrations and social events, but a setting built for love, safety and privacy that shares little or nothing with the spaces where people received, talked and built rapports in the tales of Basile and Perrault. The Grimms' dwellings were Biedermeier-style: simple, modest and frugally furnished, designed to safeguard the privacy of middle-class families.

My analysis shows that the changes in domestic settings over time mirrored the changes in social and cultural attitudes. Basile's large open domestic interiors made way for Perrault's closed, neatly arranged apartments, some of which served a public function while others were exclusively private domains. These spaces, in turn, were replaced by the cosy, private environs of the Grimms' middle-class homes. Their *Household Tales* were set in intimate, modest environments, marking a discontinuity from Basile's and Perrault's traditionally aristocratic settings. The stunning, open, social and collective settings of palaces depicted in Basile's and Perrault's fairy-tale collections were gradually replaced by a closed, internal, private, intimate world: the home. Home, family and work became the new fundamental middle-class values in 19th-century Germany. The focus of the Brothers Grimm collection, which was a new

privileged space for educating children, turned to domestic life. New links between spaces and social behaviour were forged. These changes in the domestic settings of fairy-tales also reflect the changes in the concepts of childhood and children. Children needed to be subjected to a civilising process and to an education system. For this purpose, new educational spaces were needed, and home provided the perfect setting. The symbols of this new direction were no longer “velvet stools with gold fringes, four-poster beds with gold daises, beautiful beds smelling of fresh washing, mirrors, fine linen and silk tablecloths, solid gold caskets with ruby- and diamond-studded gold cutlery, toiletry sets, jars of cream, clothes, pearls, jewels” but the inner, private domestic spaces of a house with simple, humble, solid everyday household items.

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