Walt Disney’s Visual Interpretation of the Fairy Tales

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty

Tracy Selina Chan

A Thesis in the Field of Visual Arts

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University
May 2016
Abstract

Snow White, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and other classic fairy tale characters were reborn through Walt Disney’s hands. For nearly a century, his unique adaptations of European fairy tales in animated films have provoked extreme criticism and endless comparison to their literary sources. This denunciation stems from Disney’s failure to be faithful to the original narrative, thematic, and aesthetic elements we expect from the literature, implying that literature, as a form of artistic medium, is superior to adaptation film. Such expectations of fidelity diminish the value of Disney’s interpretation as a storyteller and neglect the historical significance of the development of animated films as a contemporary form of storytelling. By differentiating Disney’s animation from an imitation of the literature and treating it instead as an independent form of storytelling, it is possible to render an objective platform to view the transformation through the lens of Walt Disney. With a comprehension of his artistic development based upon adaptation theory, a close examination of his creative roots explains why his animated versions of the stories were—and are—unrivalled among other animated versions. Their success is the result of artistically designed images, humorously planned drama, believable characters, and emotional stimulation that evokes audiences’ physiological responses. Although some artistic components are explicit and some are symbolic, all were largely influenced by his obsession with European art and culture. Disney adapted a large number of European elements that were associated with the original stories and his adaptation is encoded in his creative process and graphic selections. These European
elements are what resonate with the literature, which in turn satisfy the audiences’ interpretation of the original stories.
Dedication

To my Parents, So Chan and Lily Ching
and Grandparents, Chen Shi Kun, Zhang Li Chan, Cheng Shang Min, and Xia Dao Ping
Who granted me a true Happily-Ever-After
Acknowledgments

This project would not have been completed without the unconditional supports and constructive guidance of several people. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to former Dean Sue Schopf, for her expert advising that helped develop my ideas and shaped the form of my thesis; to my thesis director, John Stilgoe, Robert and Lois Orchard Professor in the History of Landscape, who continually provided insightful comments and instructive evaluation at every stage of the writing process. His kind encouragement is also a powerful motivation for me to finish this thesis.

I sincerely thank Annette Lemieux, Senior Lecturer on Visual and Environmental Studies, who inspired my works on fantasy arts and encouraged me to step out of my comfort zone; Gary Urton, Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian Studies in the Department of Anthropology; Oliver Simons, Associate Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures; Paul Thur, Director of the Writing Center of the College of General Studies at Boston University, for their remarkable lectures that significantly enhanced my skills in critical thinking and writing. My thanks as well goes to the staff members of the Fine Arts, Lamont, and Widener Libraries at Harvard, Jack Langson Library at the University of California Irvine, and the Arts Library at the University of California Los Angeles, for their assistance during the course of my research.

I am especially grateful to Mr. Gordon Appelbe Smith, Education Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia and the Order of Canada, who suggested and encouraged me to pursue my master’s degree at Harvard University.
Table of Contents

Dedication.............................................................................................................................................. v

Acknowledgments.................................................................................................................................. vi

List of Figures.......................................................................................................................................... ix

Preface..................................................................................................................................................... 1

Introduction............................................................................................................................................... 3

I. Walt Disney and His Talents.................................................................................................................. 9

II. The Formula of the Disney Spell......................................................................................................... 14

III. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* .................................................................................................. 29

   How All Began....................................................................................................................................... 30

   How the Story Begins............................................................................................................................ 33

   Disney Characterization......................................................................................................................... 35

   European Horror and American Comic................................................................................................. 39

   The Ending that Opens to the Grand Beginning.................................................................................... 42

IV. *Cinderella*.......................................................................................................................................... 43

   The Post-war Comeback......................................................................................................................... 44

   Both Perrault and Grimm....................................................................................................................... 48

   Film Noir and Expressionism.................................................................................................................. 52

   References for the Disney Pictures....................................................................................................... 54

   The Moral Figure.................................................................................................................................... 55
V. Sleeping Beauty ........................................................................................................58
   Disney and Earle ........................................................................................................59
   The Story Adaptation ..............................................................................................62
   The Artistic References ............................................................................................64
   Symbolism ................................................................................................................67
   A Commercial Failure, An Artistic Success ............................................................71

Conclusion ..................................................................................................................74

Appendix-Figures ......................................................................................................78

Bibliography and Filmography ....................................................................................130
List of Figures

Fig. 0-1  Aurora and Prince Philip’s Encounter in the Forest…………………………...23
Fig. 0-2  Doc’s Shadow on a Wall…………………………………………………………24
Fig. 0-3  The Huntsman Attempts to Kill Snow White………………………………24
Fig. 0-4  Prince Philip Falls into a Swamp from His Horse……………………….25
Fig. 0-5  Cinderella Runs to the Backyard………………………………………………25
Fig. 0-6  Cinderella Looking Out the Window from Her Attic……………………..26
Fig. 0-7  The Animals Mourning for Snow White’s Tragedy in the Rain…………26
Fig. 0-8  Gus in a Mousetrap…………………………………………………………….27
Fig. 0-9  Maleficent’s Castle………………………………………………………………27
Fig. 1-1  Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs Storybook from Opening Scene……...78
Fig. 1-2a  First Page of the Storybook from Opening Scene of Snow White………..78
Fig. 1-2b  Initial S: The Lord Appearing to David in the Water…………………….79
Fig. 1-2c  Second page of the Storybook from Opening Scene of Snow White…….80
Fig. 1-3  The Queen Seated on Her Throne……………………………………………80
Fig. 1-4a  Kornstaur i Måneskinn [Stalks of Corn in Moonlight]…………………..81
Fig. 1-4b  The Princess and the Trolls……………………………………………………81
Fig. 1-5  Trois Femmes et Trois Loups [Three Women and Three Wolves]………..82
Fig. 1-6  Frühlingsabend [Spring Evening]…………………………………………….82
Fig. 1-7  Titania and Bottom……………………………………………………………83
Fig. 1-8  Snow White in Glass Coffin………………………………………………….83
Fig. 1-9  *Shirley Temple and Janet Gaynor* .............................................. 84
Fig. 1-10  *Joan Crawford* ........................................................................ 84
Fig. 1-11a  Uta, Wife of the Margrave of Meissen .................................... 85
Fig. 1-11b  Early Sketch of the Queen ...................................................... 86
Fig. 1-12  The Queen Standing in front of the Magic Mirror .................... 86
Fig. 1-13  *L’Enfer [Hell]* ........................................................................ 87
Fig. 1-14a  *Det Rusler og Tusler Rasler og Tasler [Creepy, Crawly, Rustling, Bustling]* .......................................................... 87
Fig. 1-14b  *The Grotto of Manacor, Mallorca* ......................................... 88
Fig. 1-15a  Snow White Surrounded by Terrifying Hands ....................... 88
Fig. 1-15b  Terrified Snow White Feels All Nature is Against Her .......... 89
Fig. 1-16a  Charon Comes to Ferry Souls Across the River Acheron to Hell .. 89
Fig. 1-16b  The Queen as Witch Paddling Across the Forest .................... 90
Fig. 1-17a  Snow White at Her Balcony .................................................... 90
Fig. 1-17b  *Romeo and Juliet* ................................................................ 91
Fig. 1-18  *Snow White* .......................................................................... 91
Fig. 1-19a  *Metropolis* .......................................................................... 92
Fig. 1-20  Music Instruments of the Yodeling Scene ............................... 92
Fig. 1-21  Grumpy’s Craved Organ .............................................................. 93
Fig. 2-1  The Decorated Storybook with Theatrical Light ....................... 93
Fig. 2-2  Young Cinderella and Her Father, Horse, and Puppy Bruno ....... 94
Fig. 2-3a  Stepmother and Sisters Looking Down at Cinderella from a Window ............................................................................. 94
Fig. 2-3b  Queen Jealously Looking Down at Snow White from Her Window ............................................................................. 95
Fig. 2-4  Stepmother Surrounded by Shadow
Fig. 2-5  Two Blue Birds Open the Curtain in Cinderella’s Attic
Fig. 2-6  The Two Blue Birds in Clothes Cinderella made for Them
Fig. 2-7  Prince Charming’s Castle with Village in the Foreground
Fig. 2-8  Window Bars’ Shadow on Cinderella’s Body
Fig. 2-9  Stepmother’s Reflection from a Broken Mirror
Fig. 2-10a  Triumph of the Will
Fig. 2-10b  Cinderella Enters the Royal Ball
Fig. 2-11a  Stepmother Going Up to Attic
Fig. 2-11b  The Staircase Leading to Cinderella’s Attic
Fig. 2-12  The Spiral Staircase
Fig. 2-13a  Anastasia and Drizella Destroying Cinderella’s New Dress
Fig. 2-13b  Close Shot of Anastasia
Fig. 2-14  Guards Chasing After Cinderella After She Flees the Royal Ball
Fig. 2-15  Cinderella transforms back to rags after twelve o’clock
Fig. 2-16a  Cinderella Looking Out the Window
Fig. 2-16b  Cinderella Looking Out the Window (From the Disney Movie)
Fig. 2-17a  Cinderella Races Down the Stairs
Fig. 2-17b  Cinderella Rushing Down the Staircase (From the Disney Movie)
Fig. 2-18a  Her Godmother Pointed to the Finest of All with Her Wand
Fig. 2-18b  Fairy Godmother Transforms a Pumpkin to a Coach
Fig. 2-19a  The Mice Sewing the Mayor’s Coat
Fig. 2-19b  The Mice Make a Dress for Cinderella
Fig. 2-20a  *Simpkin the Cat Keeps the Mice Under a Teacup* ........................................107
Fig. 2-20b  *Lady Mouse Curtseying in Front of a Teacup* ........................................107
Fig. 2-20c  Gus and Jaq in a Teacup .................................................................108
Fig. 2-21a  *Pumpkin Carriage Drawn by the Three Pairs of Rabbits* ......................108
Fig. 2-21b  The Carriage Fleeing the Prince’s Castle .........................................109
Fig. 2-22  *Le Rat Qui S’est Retiré du Monde [The Rat who Withdrew from the World]* .................................................................109
Fig. 2-23  *Mouse Playing a Violin with Four Snails* ........................................110
Fig. 2-24  *Cinderella Being Helped by Birds* ...................................................110
Fig. 2-25  *King Rother Puts the Shoes on the Princess’s Feet* .........................111
Fig. 3-1  The Decorated Storybook on an Easel ..............................................111
Fig. 3-2  The Celebration of the Birth of Princess Aurora ....................................112
Fig. 3-3a  *April: Aristocratic Lovers Get Ready for Their Wedding* ..................112
Fig. 3-3b  *September: Harvesting Grapes* ......................................................113
Fig. 3-4  The Arrival of the Three Good Fairies at Aurora’s Birth Celebration .................................113
Fig. 3-5a  *Concept Drawing of Maleficent and Her Raven* ..............................114
Fig. 3-5b  Maleficent Curses Aurora with Her Wicked Power .............................114
Fig. 3-6  Aurora Singing to the Birds in the Forest ..........................................115
Fig. 3-7a  The Fairies’ House in the Forest ..........................................................115
Fig. 3-7b  *Journey to Wu* ..................................................................................115
Fig. 3-8  Aurora Sings with Her Animal Companions in the Forest ....................116
Fig. 3-9a  *Prince’s Arrival at the Sleeping Beauty’s Castle* ..............................116
Fig. 3-9b  The Sleeping Castle ..........................................................................117
Fig. 3-10  Henry V.................................................................117
Fig. 3-11a Romeo and Juliet (Renato Castellani)...............................118
Fig. 3-11b Princess Aurora Asleep.................................................118
Fig. 3-12 Virgin and Child in a Landscape........................................119
Fig. 3-13 Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Barbara.................................................................119
Fig. 3-14 Return from the Inn........................................................120
Fig. 3-15a King Stefan’s Castle.....................................................121
Fig. 3-15b King Stefan’s Castle, Interior.........................................121
Fig. 3-15c Maleficent’s Castle......................................................122
Fig. 3-16 Castle Eltz.................................................................122
Fig. 3-17 Schloss Neuschwanstein.................................................123
Fig. 3-18 Le Gai Château [Cheerful Castle]......................................123
Fig. 3-19 Nocturnal Spires............................................................124
Fig. 3-20 Vue Cavalière du Château de Pierrefonds en Cours de Restauration [Bird’s eye view of the château de Pierrefonds during its Restoration].................................................................124
Fig. 3-21 Aurora and Prince Philip Dancing at the End of the Film........125
Fig. 3-22 Maleficent’s Throne......................................................125
Fig. 3-23 Flora, Fauna and Merryweather Rescue Prince Philip from Maleficent’s Castle.................................................................126
Fig. 3-24 Aurora Reaching for the Spindle........................................126
Fig. 3-25a St. George Slaying the Dragon.......................................127
Fig. 3-25b Prince Philip Slaying Maleficent the Dragon.....................127
Fig. 3-26 Prince Philip Fights Maleficent........................................128
| Fig. 3-27 | The Fairies Turn the Arrows to Bubbles | 128 |
| Fig. 3-28 | Cinderella Cleans the Floor on Stepmother’s Demand | 129 |
| Fig. 3-29 | Dopey Slides on a Bar of Soap | 129 |
Preface

The very first fairy tale book I encountered was a Chinese translated storybook that contained a great list of the original fairy tales written by the Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Andersen, and a selective collection from One Thousand and One Nights. It was given to me by my grandmother when I was eight years old. In those stories, I learned that the Little Mermaid died drowning herself in the sea and turned into bubbles when the prince she loved married another princess; the Evil Queen of Snow White died dancing in the red-hot iron shoes at Snow White’s wedding; that in order to fit into the glass slippers, Cinderella’s stepsisters cut off their toes and heels, and that at Cinderella’s wedding pigeons pecked out one eye from each of them for punishment. Young as I was, I was fascinated by these seemingly violent and disturbing stories and quickly became attached to them. They were the only versions of fairy tales I acknowledged until a few years later, when my family emigrated to Canada and I was exposed to the Disney versions of these tales.

I was intrigued by Disney’s interpretations because his images contained the fine art elements I once adored in the illustrations of the original book I owned. My mental imaginings of these stories were fragmented, as I lacked the ability to put all the pieces together in my mind. Disney uniquely actualized my imaginary images–I finally saw what sixteenth-century cottages and landscapes looked like with the characters in them, how the dwarfs acted and talked, and connected the symbolic objects in the films to the stories I had in mind. Most importantly, I learned the power of interpretation. In later years when I became an artist, it helped me to draw references from almost any subject
matter I wanted and to transform them into my own visions without concerns or boundaries. I also noticed that after digital technology had taken over the Disney animation process (which, importantly, was also the time after Disney himself had passed away), some of the finest art elements in the early pictures were gone. This led to my focus on the hand-drawing collections of Disney animations, for they represent the foundation of the Disney spirit of art collaboration.

When reading the critics in regards to how Disney’s style of reworking violated the original meaning of the tales, I had the desire to look into his creative process and search for the roots that formed the way he interpreted the fairy tales in these early animations. My intention in writing this thesis is not to attempt to exculpate Disney from the charges leveled at him by other critics, but to render an evenhanded study of how his visual arts were developed—a study that seeks the line that differentiates contextual and adaptation analysis.
Introduction

No one knows exactly where or how traditional fairy tales originated, but we all know that the most celebrated animated versions of these fairy tales came from Walt Disney. Admittedly, Disney’s adaptation films have attracted almost a century’s worth of both admiration and fierce criticism. In *Understanding Disney*, media theorist Janet Wasko observes that “critics during the 1930s and 1940s were mostly positive about, and typically gushed over, Walt Disney’s products, praising his artistic development. However, after World War II, more harsh criticism emerged. The criticism also went beyond aesthetics and sometimes focused on Disney’s interpretation of classic children’s literature and folklore” (125). Critics often dispute the Disney way of, in their opinions, misconstruing the original purposes of the tales by altering the stories and overstating the roles of characters for strictly entertainment purposes. Folklorist Jack Zipes called Disney’s films “an attack on the literary tradition of the fairy tale. He robs the literacy tale of its voice and changes its form and meaning” (“Breaking the Disney Spell” 344). He further argues that “instead of using technology to enhance the communal aspects of narrative and bring about major changes in viewing stories to stir and animate viewers, he [Disney] employed animators and technology to stop thinking about change, to return to his films, and to long nostalgically for neatly ordered patriarchal realms” (“Breaking the Disney Spell ” 352). Children’s literature critic Jill P. May went further, putting forth the accusation that Disney’s productions contain minimal educational material, unlike the originals, and that the studio “never produced films that demanded much intellectually of
the audience” (463). The most aggressive criticism of Disney in the matter of interpretation was presented in a letter to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1965, by children’s literature expert and librarian Frances Clarke Sayers. In response to Dr. Max Rafferty’s public appraisal of Walt Disney as “the greatest educator of this century,” Sayers called Dr. Rafferty’s appraisal “absurd” and Walt Disney a “shameless nature faker.” She asked Disney “to account for his debasement of the traditional literature of childhood,” in which “he shows scant respect for the integrity of the original creations of the authors, manipulating and vulgarizing everything for his own ends” (“Walt Disney Accused” 602). Sayers damningly suggests that what Disney has done is not merely creative interpretation but moral corruption of the original intent of the fairy tales.

Almost all of these austere comments came from folklorists or literature critics; in other words, they came from the literary field. Their presumption in seeing Disney’s works as an interpolation originates from their firm insistence on fidelity—Disney’s modification is not faithful to the originals. This insistence on the need to be faithful exhibits the common cultural assumption elevating the status of literature over that of film, preventing us from objectively examining Disney’s creative process and accepting it as a visual interpretation, rather than merely an imitation in visual form. In a wider sense, it also implies that there should be one single “correct” meaning for a text. Such assumptions have caused three major problems in the study of Disney’s adaptation films. First, they generate the misconception that a good adaptation requires absolute fidelity to its original. Secondly, they understate the significance of interpretation and exclude it from contributing to art study. Thirdly, these assumptions prohibit us from viewing Disney’s adaptation as a completely new, modern form of storytelling.
Looking at the issue from another perspective, adaptation film scholars have provided different challenges to the legitimacy of the criticism. Robert Stam, in his critical exploration of how we should position the meaning of interpretation, contends that the variety of accusations are all simply stating that the book is better; the idea of judging the films’ relationship to the text based on its fidelity to the text undermines filmmakers’ own understanding of their source material. He declares, “The mediocrity of some adaptations, and the partial persuasiveness of ‘fidelity,’ should not lead us to endorse fidelity as a methodological principle,” and further questions whether strict fidelity to the book is even possible due to the change of medium (3). Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan lament that the prejudice against adaptation films in the academic field today is what makes it ambiguous and that these films “have been among the most despised forms of entertainment, often referred to as ‘mixed cinema’ or even more damning, ‘impure’ film, implying that film and literature when combined are mutually contaminating or polluting each other” (Screen Adaptation 8). Cartmell and Whelehan further point out that, in order to study the subject fairly, one must respect the importance of giving the appropriate amount of attention to each medium in order to balance our prejudices and abilities to comprehend the different genres (From Text to Screen 3). They also address the issue that critics tend to overlook the fact that literature and adaptation film are two fundamentally different mediums. For this reason, the core value of adaptation does not lie in whether or not the adaptor is faithfully translating every aspect of the original; rather, analysis should focus on why they interpret the original in such ways. In this regard, Stam believes that “while text literature can be read infinitely, so it
can also generate infinite numbers of adaptations” (4). The idea of fidelity to one single meaning is utopian but unrealistic.

To address Disney’s interpretation of the fairy tales, my study focuses exclusively on the visual techniques he invented and applied, why those decisions were made at that point in history, and whether they effectively deliver what he envisions. I will limit my study to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, for they are the only three full-length fairy tale adaptations undertaken in Walt Disney’s lifetime, and have therefore shaped the foundation of the “Disney style” of mood, theme and story structure. The creative process of these three animations not only directly reflected Disney’s perception of the subject matter but also the related circumstances that affected the outcome of the adaptation.

As the chief director of his talent team, Disney neither created the stories nor drew the pictures himself. His role remained that of an idea man throughout, as he incorporated and collaborated with all kinds of arts and artists that harmonized with or even enhanced his version. European sources inspired him the most. In the early years, the artists he hired either were strictly European or had been educated in Europe. Much of his iconography was shaped by drawings and illustrations of the most celebrated European artists—Arthur Rackham (1867-1939), Gustave Doré (1832-1883), Beatrix Potter (1866-1943), to name a few—with other European fine arts such as Renaissance paintings, nineteenth-century comic strips, and silent films all providing prototypes for his visual designs. He also paid attention to the performing arts; some episodes from English vaudeville, pantomime, operetta, French stage plays, puppetry and circus arts are adapted as the scenarios in his films. American influences inevitably emerged, especially
in later years; when the early European artists started to depart the studio due to death or retirement, American artists brought in their perspectives and took over the adaptation of the European sources.

Disney recognized the incredibly broad appeal of fairy tales—the enchantments, supernatural elements, anthropomorphism, romance, sentimentality and, most importantly, the morals imbedded in these universal stories have no cultural boundaries. All of these elements easily provoke layered emotion that remains in viewers. In his versions of the fairy tales, Disney advocated hope, righteousness and belief. As Ralph Izard describes, Disney “was always a moralist. Virtue, in the end, triumphed over evil. Love, when it appeared, was pure and good” (“Master of Laughter and Learning” 39). His main characters present as pairs of mirror-selves that audiences can psychologically relate to—Snow White and the Evil Queen, Cinderella and her Stepmother, Sleeping Beauty and Maleficent—wherein one represents the best of humanity: kind, loving, and courageous; and the other represents the dark side of humanity: jealous, manipulative, resentful. The absence of characterization in the texts provided much freedom for Disney to insert designated characteristics and personalities to strengthen the characters’ roles and heighten the climactic incidents. Happiness only comes when the innocent and benevolent heroines overcome all kinds of ordeals maliciously devised by the anthropoid villains. In the end, the constant law of Disney revolves around one ever-present certainty: whether by good will or by magic, the good, who are also the small and meek, will always triumph over the evil, big and powerful (Tatar, The Hard Facts xix).

In his effort to maximize the audience’s emotional connection to his stories Disney employed a series of animating methods—from graphic designs to symbolic
choices— which created and reinforced important aspects in the films to intensify resonances. Disney’s characters are highly realistic, with appearances drawn from fictional and Hollywood figures. The inherent impressions the public had of these references was amplified in the impressions they formed of the characters. Equipping the animal characters with human behaviors and a high sense of consciousness in regards to morality was another crucial choice to ensure connection with the audience. The anthropomorphized illustrations by French artist Honoré Daumier (1808-1879), Gustave Doré (1832-1883) and Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard Grandville (1803-1847) immensely influenced Disney’s artists with their quality of theatrical and melodramatic style. Visual symbolization is imprinted in Disney’s images throughout, some by explicit drawings and some shown implicitly by visual effects such as color, compositions, or angle of shots, which serve to emphasize certain characteristics of an event which, in the texts, are shown through rhetoric. Although due to the quick fluidity of motion pictures these graphic symbols are concealed, their existence is significant and should not be neglected, for they explicate the relationship between Disney’s comprehension of the text and his imaginations.

In this study, I present Disney as a storyteller who used animation as a contemporary medium to convey the stories he interpreted from the old classics. Each of the animating techniques he employed serves multiple functions: they support the storyline, tighten the flow of each scene, stimulate visual excitement, render a favorable visual experience, provoke emotional attachment, and ultimately bridge our imaginations back to the original literature. Together they represent Disney’s visual interpretation of his, and our, favorite fairy tales.
Chapter I

Walt Disney and His Talents
Many appellations and epithets have been attached to Walter Elias Disney (1901-1966): the genius storyteller, the prominent filmmaker, the successful entrepreneur, Hollywood mogul, the father of Disneyland, the popular entertainment legend, or even the man who Americanized European fairy tales. Of all these identities, perhaps the most crucial, as well as one which is often overlooked, is that he was a remarkable “talent” collector. We cannot analyze Disney’s artistic achievements without recognizing his team of talented artists and his gift for discovering and gathering unusual talents for his own use. He demonstrated keen acumen in gathering up those arts and people whose style accorded with, or even invigorated, his vision, collaging all kind of artistic cultures into his irreplaceable “Disney style”.

According to Bruno Girveau’s introduction to the *Once Upon A Time Walt Disney* exhibition, starting in the mid-1930s Disney began to search for European artists whose style could be relevant to his projects. Girveau states, “When his skills were no longer sufficient, he had the intelligence to hire artists whose knowledge was far wider than his own, and who were for the most part immigrants from Europe: the Swiss Albert Hurter (1886-1942), the Swede Gustaf Tenggren (1896-1970), the Dane Kay Nielsen (1886-1957), the Hungarian Ferdinand Horvath (1891-1973), the Irishman David Hall (1905-1964), and the Englishwoman Sylvia Moberly-Holland (1900-1974). Almost all were trained at European academies and brought with them not only technical mastery of their art, but also the whole esthetic tradition and artistic heritage of their respective countries” (18). The group of brilliant American-born artists Disney brought together also derived

1. The *Once Upon A Time Walt Disney* exhibition was organized by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. The exhibition was held in Paris from September 16, 2006 - January 15, 2007, and in Montreal from March 8-June 14, 2007.
from European art backgrounds: Joe Grant (1908-2005), an admirer of Daumier and
European art in general; Vladimir Tytla (1904-1968), of Ukrainian parentage, who left to
train in the studio of Rodin’s pupil Charles Despiau; Claude Coats (1913-1992); Mary
Blair (1911-1978); and Eyvind Earle (1916-2000), the last a great expert on Early
Flemish and Italian paintings (20). Their individual personal styles and abundant artistic
dexterity positively inspired one another, providing Disney with a wealth of sources of
inspiration.

Disney showed tremendous interest in cartoons during his time in a temporary job
as an advertisement artist at the Pesmen-Rubin Art Studio. When the contract ended, he
started his own company with cartoonist Ubbe Iwerks, where they created commercials
based on cutout animation. During the 1920s and early 1930s, Disney devoted himself to
animation technology. Film industry biographer Bob Thomas recalled, “All of his
planning had aimed in that direction: developing greater drawing skill with the art school;
experimenting with color and photographic innovation; using Silly Symphonies as
proving ground for new techniques and themes”(129). At the same time, Disney
recognized the momentous power of European literature and children’s stories for his
shorts, and eventually decided to produce his first full-length feature film, Snow White
and the Seven Dwarfs. With advice from his artists, he became a prolific collector of
books. In the summer of 1935, he spent an eleven-week-long vacation travelling Europe
with his family. He journeyed to France, Italy, Switzerland, England, and Holland and
kept expanding his collection of books in each place he visited. All of the books he
brought back to the States became part of the private collection of the Disney Studio
Library, which artists used extensively for artistic references for the studio’s productions.
Disney brought more than three hundred books back from this trip: ninety in French, eighty-one in English, one hundred and forty in German, and fifteen in Italian. The collection included all of the greatest European illustrators of the day: Arthur Reckham, Gustave Dore, Honore Daumier, Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard Grandville, Benjamin Rabier, Ludwig Richter, Wilhelm Busch, Heinrich Kley, Attilio Mussino, John Tenniel, Charles Folkard, and many others (Girveau 22). He also acquired nearly two hundred drawings by Heinrich Kley (1863-1945), a German painter and illustrator of the early twentieth century. “Such a collector’s approach shows that he was attracted to unusual artists and also explains some of the people he hired,” states Girveau, “The works illustrate the connection between scholarly and popular culture, as well as ‘Old’ Europe and America” (26-28). The materials he compiled during this trip had a decisive impact on the development of Walt Disney Studios’ following productions.

In addition to the wealth of European influences, a significant part of Disney’s array of resources was purely American. These varied American influences ranged from regional painters Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton, who inspired his woodland designs, to Hollywood figures such as Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Joan Crawford, Shirley Temple, and Jean Harlow, who provided examples for Disney’s characters.

Although Disney was neither the inventor of animation nor the first filmmaker to adapt European literature in cartoons, he was definitely the first to treat animation in a formal, fine-art manner. The variety of arts that galvanized Disney seemed to have no limitations or boundaries, embracing a wide range of styles from Gothic Middle Ages, Surrealism, German Romantic painting, to Expressionist film. In Girveau’s words:
“Disney had no qualms about borrowing from these various and seemingly conflicting sources: Shakespeare and vaudeville, avant-garde and popular films, classical painting and children’s illustrations, Stravinsky and harmonicas. This unlikely blend became a unique and revolutionary form of expression, the expression of the wonderful image recycler and one of the greatest storytellers, an artist in a class entirely of his own” (33-34). Building a library and hiring talents who represented different art backgrounds certainly did not satisfy Disney’s eagerness to perfect his work. He insistently pursued realism in a medium that was predominantly abstract. The studio continually instituted in-house training for the already brilliant artists to hone their drawing techniques. The production crews were supported by film viewing sessions, group conferences, and art classes with actors and real animals in order to attain the ultra-realistic style Disney desired. He personally dominated each phase of the process with care and thoughtfulness, especially for the first five feature films before World War II. In later years, when Disney was absent from most of the production conferences for concept contouring, the esthetic cohesiveness of the later productions appeared uneven. As Girveau concluded in his introduction: “There was a feeling that the degree of perfection of Snow White, Pinocchio and Fantasia was never fully achieved again” (26).
Chapter II

The Formula of the Disney Spell
Jack Zipes once asserted that Disney had “cast a spell” on the fairy tales with the “most up-to-date technological means” (“Breaking the Disney Spell” 332). If Disney did, what were the ingredients in the spell? To this date, half a century after Walt Disney’s death, the Disney Studio, as a community, continues to pioneer a unified style in visual trends and storytelling (with the exception of Sleeping Beauty, which I will cover in Chapter V) that cannot be supplanted by any other maker of cartoons. The Disney style has flourished because of an enforced way of managing the production. From graphic design to visual effect to story development, all of the processes not only cater to the taste of the American viewer but are also universal in that they trigger and satisfy viewers’ emotional needs, regardless of culture. It might be beneficial to our comprehension of the foundation of the subject to briefly introduce how fairy tale, as a form of storytelling, evolved long before Disney ever began his work.

When we now discuss the original sources of the fairy tales, or folktales in general, we usually refer to the written form of the stories and credit our acknowledgement to their authors–for example, Giovan Francesco Straparola (c.1480-c.1557), Giambattista Basile (1566-1632), Charles Perrault (1628-1703), Catherine Bernard (1662-1712), and Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859). It is necessary to bear in mind that these authors did not create the stories themselves. Long before printing technology was invented, folktales in primitive form were passed down in an old oral tradition among the commoners in villages from generations to generation: “The tales came directly from common experiences and beliefs. Told in person, directly, face-to-face, they were altered as the beliefs and behaviors of the members of a particular group changed” (Zipes, “Breaking the Disney Spell” 334). Although the origin of the
stories remains unknown, it has been proved that the stories were cultivated by adults and infused with mores and values to function as both amusements and instruction about everyday occurrences. Depending on an individual storyteller and the matters he or she wanted to address at a certain moment, the details of the stories often changed. Thus today we have hundreds of versions of one story that might share the same central theme but with differing plots. At the turn of the fifteenth century, Italian author Giovan Francesco Straparola recorded the first volume of folktales by obtaining the stories directly from common people. (Zipes, *Art of Subversion* 13-14). Straparola was followed by authors such as Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, who collected the stories from both the tales told by local acquaintances and from less familiar storytellers when they travelled to various locations (Furniss 115). Inspired by Straparola’s work, the authors of the written versions substantially adapted the tales they were told. The stories’ plots were intentionally reshaped; characters and meaning were considerably altered to fit the flavor of their mission, targeting their own culture before publishing. The process of storytelling ultimately transitioned to a high-art fashion, when the tales were written in a formal manner with rhetorical embellishments and later published along with illustrations in the support of the legitimacy of the story.

Adapting the literature to a full-length animation is what Givreau called a “ticklish exercise” due to the difficulty of translation (178). Literature is relatively shorter and contents are allusive; the absence of details provides much room for imaginations to fill the untold part. Translating such format into moving pictures was not just difficult; it was a brand new exercise to all early animators. What Disney had to deal with was a completely new form of medium that required a set frame of accurate images to validate
the story. Differing from oral or literary tradition, where the imagination of the readers plays a significant role in perceiving the story, the nature of animation leaves significantly less room for imagination because it must crystallize places and characters. Technology and its associated skills were the major challenges at the onset. The components of animation are comparatively complex, as it contains and revolves in a thriving combination of disparate art forms: drawing, painting, sculpture, print, literature, cinema, and music, all of which are expressive in their own ways. By bringing them together, Disney fulfilled the need to tell his version in a form of audio-moving drawings that adhered to the validity and fluidity of his interpretation. In this regard, it was essential for Disney and his team to adjust the original stories for their creative use. Storylines and dialogues were reduced to the essentials; subplots were created to ameliorate the story’s rhythm and plausibility. Characters were given distinctive characteristics that people could easily relate and attach to; secondary characters were added to support and stimulate incidents, while climaxes were heightened to intensify the theatrical and dramatic quality of the stories.

In an attempt to pinpoint the formula Disney used, Zipes notes the following criteria of a Disney fairy tale:

There is an opening song that announces the yearning of a heroine; the young woman, always virginal and sweet, is victimized and is captured or imprisoned by evil forces; at the same time comical animals or animated objects, provide comic relief and try to assist the persecuted heroine; at one point a male hero is introduced along with a romantic song or two; and because the girl cannot save herself, the hero is called on to overcome sinister forces represented by a witch, scheming minister, or dumb brute. (*Art of Subversion* 209)
However, Zipes’ description only covers a small part of the formula that is solely dedicated to its literary adaptation. The “Disney formula” I refer to is a set of animating techniques and stylistic elements that the studio has been employing to reflect Disney’s visual interpretation since the preparation of their first full-length animation, rather than merely his representation of the literary text. In addition to the structure of the storyline, there is the graphic presentation: the layouts, the settings, the cutting, the staging, the acting, the expressions, the dialogue, and the attitudes. Disney employed visual methods in animating techniques and effects to fabricate pictorial components that elevate viewers’ conception of the message he wanted to convey. In explaining these animating methods, Thomas and Johnston find similarities between them and acting:

Certain gestures, attitudes, expressions, and timing have come to connote specific personalities and emotions, some regional, other universal. By using the right combination of these in the proper sequence, the actor builds a bond with the people in the audience, and they are with him, they understand him; and if they like him they will be concerned about what happens to him. These are the animator’s tools as well, but while the actor can rely on his inner feelings to build his portrayal, the animator must be objectively analytical if he is to reach out and touch the audience. (324-325)

The most well-known visual element that Disney animations continue to employ is a particular style of appeal that wins the adoration of many souls. Harrington notes that “Disney animators are taught that no matter what character they draw, whether it is intended to be beautiful, ugly, evil or foreboding, it has to have appeal. Nothing can be truly ‘ugly’ or unpleasant, each image must be laden with qualities that will captivate the desire of the viewers” (92). To identify what Disney considered to be “appealing,” we
should draw attention to the concept of kinderschema (Baby schema).\(^2\)

The 1973 Nobel Prize winner Konrad Lorenz, an Austrian zoologist and ethologist, first came up with the theory based on his study of psychology and animal behavior. The study explains why humans are instinctively fond of subjects such as babies, small animals or cartoon characters, situating human perception of cuteness in the set of infantile physical features that renders a subject adorable and attractive. In short, the characteristic features which he proposed humans perceive as cute or cuddly include a large head, round face, high and protruding forehead, large eyes, chubby cheeks, small nose and mouth, short and thick extremities and plump body shape (Glocker 257). All Disney designs, from the characters to the animals to the objects around the characters, are subject to this style. The flowing curves and exaggerated comical features engage the conventional image of cuteness in our perception. Even in the rare case of Sleeping Beauty, where pictures were deliberately designed in a contemporary fashion, the secondary characters like the three fairies and King Hubert still faithfully conform to this visual mode. Coincidental or not, Sleeping Beauty, the only full-length animation that did not fully adopt this graphic style, was a box office failure in its initial release in 1959.

Anthropomorphic animal adaptations are another significant feature that touch the hearts of audience members. The tradition of giving human characteristics to an animal or inanimate object functions “as a mean to express the spirit thought to be inside it” (Furniss 67). Disney heroes and heroines are joined by flocks of animal companions that

---

2. Kindchenschema, baby schema in English, is a scientific concept in ethology first introduced by Konrad Lorenz. The concept identified infant characteristics that evoke affective response in humans and especially caretakers, thus enhancing offspring survival. The study of baby schema explains a fundamental function of human social cognition.
mirror their power, personalities and spirits. The evil figures are often symbolically accompanied by ravens, cats, or snakes to show their wickedness, with arrogant and gawking expressions; the princes are always paired with tall, handsome white horses, accentuating their strength and force; and the heroines are attended by therapeutic creatures like birds, squirrels, rabbits, or owls, who are subdued, harmless and caring. The animals, while providing comic relief in their roles as part of the animation, also function as members of the audience, as they witness characters’ experiences inside the scene. When they display emotions for the characters, whether happy, sad or concerned, the feelings are infectious and as audience we immediately connect to those feelings. In an effort to make his animal characters convincing, Disney persistently emphasized a high level of realism. Real animals were brought to the studio for drawing classes and training purposes as artists honed their skill first-hand in portraying animal body movements. Artists were required not only to depict the movement of a real animal, but also to ensure that the complexity of the movement be unnoticeable (Wells 23). Nonetheless, the high level of “realism” Disney was seeking was a caricature of realism rather than a caricature of reality, for in reality animals do not emote as broadly as animators require. The key here is to draw what people imagine the animal to look like rather than what it actually looks like. This is, as Thomas and Johnston refer to, capturing the essence of the animal in order to create possibilities for acting (182).

Furniss suggests that the precondition of realism is most significant to an animation because it greatly affects audiences’ perception:

In real life, living beings are never completely still because bodily functions such as breathing and heartbeats cause at least minute amounts of movement at all times. Seeing an animated figure that is completely still—that is, to see a single image that is
photographed for more than, say, half a second- might strike the viewer as being unrealistic. (79)

This experience is further enhanced by the authenticity of the movement of the films’ human characters; Disney used live-action footage of dancers and actors—Marjorie Belcher, for instance, in the role of Snow White—in order to document the most realistic figure movement (Furniss 113). To further pursue the illusion of the total reality of a scene, the reinforcement did not stop with one single figure. A multi-plane camera was used in this part of the production, where the foreground, middle ground and background image were painted on different panels of glass placed in layers. The space between each layer displayed a realistic sense of perspective. As the camera moved along, the images in each layer moved at different speed thus creating the illusion that simulated human perception of movement (Furniss 78). Animators borrowed artistic references that matched with the stories’ initial settings. When Disney adapted Snow White from the Brothers Grimm’s version, the background—architecture, landscape and costume—appeared to be Germanic; for Cinderella, a story written for Louis XIV and his court, the European background was deliberately adapted from the French style. The visual experience intensifies our imagination of the written tale, giving us a guide to cope with what appears to be abstract and distant.

In addition to attractive storylines and realistic visual depictions, the most powerful ingredients in Disney films, which separate them from their rivals, are the richness of their emotional content and Disney’s ability to build strong internal resonance with selected graphic elements. Disney’s characters are endowed with sets of personality traits that audiences can easily identify with; they act and react in accordance with these
qualities. People can empathize with the situation, be really moved by the characters’ experiences, and feel their innermost emotions. Thomas and Johnston observe that the only way to communicate emotion is to “show the change of expression that would reveal the character’s thought process” (326). As an example, they cite the sequence where the dwarfs are crying beside Snow White’s bier, a sad scene where actions should be minimal. Happy, Sleepy, Bashful, Sneezy, and Doc are standing still and speechless; big drops of pearl-like tears are coming down their faces. Their stillness notably heightens the sorrowful aura of Snow White’s death. The only action takes place when Dopey, who is portrayed as the youngest and most dependent, buries his face in Doc’s shoulder, and Grumpy, who would not cry openly or find comfort like Dopey, “is true to his personality” when he “turns away and cries alone” (327). It is the minutiae of their actions that make the scene convincing and infectious.

Not all emotions can be depicted with one or two simple expressions. While literature relies on rhetorical techniques to render the sense of emotions, too often a certain feeling or mood is implicit, thus, the graphic presentation must be symbolic. Deeper emotions of the subconscious such as love, jealousy, greed, dejection, resentment, or anxiety are substantially circuitous and difficult to draw. At the same time, an emotion can accelerate and shift so quickly that the development of it is too rapid to capture with human eyes. When the audiences have difficulty seeing what the character is experiencing on the inside, it is more effective to create an atmosphere that enables the audience to feel what the character feels. The representation of a full range of emotions relies on the whole picture in the right combination of color, cutting, staging, and timing. Designed visual techniques are put into practice to create anticipated responses, whether
through not letting the audience see everything, allowing them to see part of something, or by forcing them to look at a certain thing, these techniques immediately generate the physiological responses the animators plan to provoke. In exploring the ways in which Disney uses aesthetic techniques to create certain emotional responses and convey abstract feelings and moods, Thomas and Johnston have identified nine graphic techniques and titled them “nine economical ways that animation can build emotions in the imaginations of the audience” (334-335), all of which provoke sentimental response without actually drawing the expression on the surface. Thomas and Johnston show pictorial examples from a range of Disney animations; here I present the ideas by extracting examples from *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* exclusively:

1. Rear view

![Aurora and Prince Philip’s Encounter in the Forest](image)

*Figure 0-1. Aurora and Prince Philip’s Encounter in the Forest. Snapshot of Sleeping Beauty, 1959.*

A shot taken from behind of Aurora and Prince Philip, of them looking off to the far distance, rendering the dreamy, romantic feeling since the feeling of falling in love is better imagined than shown in detailed drawings.
2. Shadows

Figure 0-2. Doc’s Shadow on a Wall.  
Snapshot of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937.

A simple shadow image of a character can express suspense and drama in a scene more quickly and effectively than spending the time to draw each expression on the character. This is the best example of “less is more”.

3. Shadows over the character

Figure 0-3. The Huntsman Attempts to Kill Snow White.  
Snapshot of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937.

Snow White is in tremendous shock and fear when the huntsman attempts to kill her. The intense feelings of fear and urgency are difficult to depict well. Showing the shadow of the action passing over her instead of drawing the expression on her face presents the image with a more dramatic feeling that arouses the viewer’s own emotion.
4. Overlays

Figure 0-4. Prince Philip Falls into a Swamp from His Horse.

Prince Philip cannot wait to find out where the beautiful singing is coming from when he hears it in the forest. His excitement and eagerness are addressed by him dashingly galloping, and he falls right into the pond from his horse.

5. Dramatic layout

Figure 0-5. Cinderella Runs to the Backyard.
Snapshot of Cinderella, 1950.

Cinderella mournfully runs to the back garden after the Stepsister rips her new gown and prevents her from going to the royal ball. Her figure is devoured by the large and desolate background. This design layout portrays her as small and helpless, emphasizing her isolation.
6. Pictorial shot

Figure 0-6. Cinderella Looking Out the Window from Her Attic. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

When she is prevented from going to the ball, Cinderella’s disappointment is better portrayed in a generalized mood than in a specific facial expression. With her looking out the window at the royal castle, we know she is devastated even without seeing her face.

7. Effects animations

Figure 0-7. The Animals Mourning for Snow White’s Tragedy in the Rain. Snapshot of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937.

Animation of forms from nature can establish a mood through symbolism, amplifying the implicit expression and strongly stirring up viewer’s emotions. The animals are mourning for Snow White in the rain, which symbolizes the sadness the animals feel.
8. Held drawing with camera moves

Figure 0-8. Gus in a Mousetrap.
Snapshot of Cinderella, 1950.

Some expressions can be not supported by movement. On the contrary, they can be strengthened by the stillness of the image. In this case, instead of moving the character, moving the camera forward to a close-up shot emphasizes the fear of Gus the rat.

9. Offstage sounds

Figure 0-9. Maleficent’s Castle.

An appropriate effect of sound can replace a complicated drawing. The shot of Maleficent’s castle looks horrific and ghastly enough, but with the sound of thunder and storm music, it adds to our comprehension of the evil of its owner.
It is important to note that, although, Disney animations inevitably limit part of our imagination by manipulating the pictures, stripping away our conceptual mental images of the stories, this does not mean Disney animations eliminate our imaginations. Rather, by actualizing the images and using graphic techniques to create a certain emotional resonance, Disney’s images, in a way, amplify our imaginations to a new horizon. Most of the criticism of the way in which Disney images replaced our imaginations, or how their fabricated meaning replaced the original meaning, was focused on his adjustment of the storylines. Since the true meanings of the original stories are open for interpretation and modifiable by time and culture, having our obscure, fragmented mental images actualized onscreen legitimizes whatever modified storyline is put forth, by Disney or others. Therefore, the formula of Disney’s magic spell does not lie within the idea of how he interpreted the stories, but how he utilized visual arts to represent the stories he interpreted.
Chapter III

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
How All Began

The idea of producing a full-length animation feature first occurred to Disney as early as 1932. His friends from the publishing and entertainment fields had made a list of recommendations of published works on which to base this feature; the list included some of the most famous stories in our knowledge such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Rip Van Winkle*, *Bambi*, and *The Odyssey* (Gabler 215). It was much anticipated and almost inevitable, and that the studio’s first full-length feature would be an adaption of a literary work. The decision to selecting a universally popular story was rational and pragmatic. From the financial standpoint, a story already in favor with the public greatly limited the risk of box office failure. As Brian MacFarlane notes, “No doubt there is the lure of a pre-sold title, the expectation that respectability or popularity achieved in one medium might infect the work created in another” (7). Also influential in the decision was the consideration of the long-term potential success of the project—Bob Thomas indicates that choosing a story that is “timeless in nature” meant that it would be “unaffected by the transition of styles and could be released to each new generation” (292).

Finally, in 1933, Disney settled his decision on the globally-known European household story *Snow White* by the Brothers Grimm and registered his film’s title as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The choice was personal; many years later he said, “I don’t know why I picked Snow White. It’s a thing I remembered as a kid. I saw Marguerite Clark in it in Kansas City one time when I was a newsboy” (Burnes, Viets, and Bulter 62). That silent live-action version was the first movie he had ever seen. He also recalls the memories of his grandmother reading him the tales: “It was the best time of day for me, and the stories and characters in them seemed quite as real as my schoolmates and
our games. Of all the characters in the fairy tales, I loved *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* the best” (Allan 36). In an article for *Photoplay Studies* magazine, Disney explained his enthusiasm for *Snow White* ever since he saw it as a play when he was a boy. He thought that “the dwarfs would be interesting characters to animate”, and that he could “introduce attractive little animals and birds of the type with which he had success in the past” (37). In addition to his fascination with the story, we must not disregard Neal Gabler’s view of Disney’s deep-seated psychological reason for embracing the story, linking the tale’s plot to Disney’s personal life: “*Snow White* had nearly all the narrative features—the tyrannical parent, the sentence of drudgery, the promise of a childhood utopia—and incorporated nearly all the major themes of his young life, primarily the need to conquer the previous generation to stake one’s claim on maturity, the rewards of hard work, the dangers of trust, and perhaps above all, the escape into fantasy as a remedy for inhospitable reality” (216). Perchance it is not only Disney’s personal life that corresponds to *Snow White*; the story represents every one of us who has had, at least at one point in life, to confront our parents, work hard for rewards, face the challenge of trust, seek ways to escape from reality, and consistently pursue the meaning of true love.

Although it was decided that Disney’s version would be an adaptation from the Grimm’s, the short story from the German brothers was not fully developed enough for the big screen. Literature contains limited visual elements and, although signification in narratives is transferable, enunciation is not due to the nature of film. According to McFarlane, literature and film can share the same raw materials, but are distinguished by means of different plot strategies that alter sequence and highlight different emphases, leading to defamiliarization of the story (23). In searching for the more vivid visual
elements that a successful translation would require, Disney consulted Winthrop Ames’s 1912 Broadway play *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which he had seen in Los Angeles. Ames drew his adaptation from the nineteenth-century writer Karl Goerner’s German play *Schneevitzen*. Ames’s reference to European theatrical tradition and English pantomime inspired a numerous of scenarios in Disney’s narrative. Another *Snow White* stage play Disney examined was from 1913, written by Jessie Braham White. Small touches like Snow White kissing the dwarfs good-bye as they head off to work and the Queen’s disguise before approaching the princess are borrowed from White’s play (Gabler 217). Disney’s adaptation was highly influenced by and drew major references from the European arts and therefore his film maintains a refined theatrical quality. Plots from the Grimm’s version were considerably altered. Snow White’s biological mother is completely absent from Disney’s version. The Queen asks the huntsman to bring back Snow White’s heart instead of her lungs and liver. The seven dwarfs have names and distinctive personalities. The Queen’s two attempts to kill Snow White, one with a staylace[^4] and the other with a poison comb are supplanted by “Doc’s spoonerisms, Grumpy’s misogyny and the slow tortoise joke,” which visually and verbally “replaced the traditional repetitive narrative element with running gags and comic repetitions” (Allan 37). The Queen did not die from dancing in the red-hot shoes at Snow White’s wedding; she falls off the precipice while trying to lift a rock to harm the

[^3]: Ames produced Broadway stage play *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs* in 1912. The play is based on Brothers Grimm’s *Snow White*, and adapted from Karl Goerner’s German play *Schneevittchen*. The version Disney saw was a local performance in Pasadena, CA, 1935, at the Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy.

[^4]: A staylace is a type of lace used to tighten the band in a corset.
seven dwarfs. The roots of Grimm gave Disney a strong story structure and, though with some limitation in animation, lots of freedom to develop a new outline.

How the Story Begins

Surprisingly, Walt Disney’s animated version of *Snow White* did not unfold with an animation; instead, the story expands from a close shot of a real white leather-bound tome made by artist Gordon Legg. The color of the book immediately symbolizes the characteristics of the protagonists’ name, physical features and personality traits. Next to the tome there is a lamp, a visual metaphorical technique that makes the audience associate the book with the story they once read at bedtime (see Fig. 1-1). The composition of this opening scene welcomes and prepares audiences to revisit their memories of the written story, but the bookmark placed on the first page indicates that this is a brand-new story, and opening the new chapter leads audiences from the reading experience to the visual experience. Allen suggests that the action of a book opening the film “had connotations of magic, learning, power and secrecy” (45). In addition, Cartmell and Whelehan assert that starting the film with a picture of a book opening into the world of the story often implies that watching the film will be a superior experience to reading its literary source (74). A short introduction is drawn in words with the familiar opening

5. In Grimm’s version the story opens with Snow White’s biological mother sewing by the window. She looks out at the snow outside, pricks her finger with a needle and three drops blood fall onto the snow. She makes a wish to herself: “If only I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony.” She then gives birth to a little girl who is as white as snow, as red as blood and as black as ebony. Hence the name Snow White. (Tatar, *Classic 83*)

6. Snow White has been portrayed as an innocent, positive, kind-hearted character in the history of fairy tales. Her associated color is always white, in opposition to the evil Queen’s color, black.
“Once Upon A Time”; decorative titling inside the book mirrors the artistic layout of an illuminated medieval manuscript (see Fig.1-2a, 1-2b), in which the design of initials, borders, and miniature illustrations reflects the content of the literature and implies the time setting of the upcoming story. The decorative animal illustrations around the letters represent the nature of the Snow White and the Queen, symbolizing their characteristics: Snow White is surrounded by sweet, sympathetic and peaceful animals like doves, squirrels, rabbits and birds, whereas the Queen is represented by a single peacock (see Fig. 2c). The image signifies the Grimm’s description of the Queen in the most direct way: “She was a beautiful lady, but proud and arrogant, and could not bear being second to anyone in beauty” (Tatar, The Classic Fairy Tales 83). The peacock image reappears in the film where the Queen’s throne is shaped like a peacock spreading out its feather (see Fig. 1-3). The Books of Symbols described the symbol of the peacock as follows:

There is an old Hindu saying that the peacock has ‘the feather of an angel, the walk of a thief and the voice of a devil.’ The stunning tail is a courtship display that is also heavy and conspicuous, making the peacock vulnerable to predators, and also to moralizers who perceive an example of pride and fall. (Ronnberg, Martin, and ARAS 260)

The graphic choice immediately presages the characteristics of the owner of the throne: she is beautiful, arrogant, proud and devious; she is meant to shine and eager to seek for approval; her imperiousness makes her failure unavoidable. These animals function as the presence of the characters in Disney’s interpretation; they are shown repeatedly throughout the film as an emphasis to the narrative—a “Disney” strategy we see in all of his animations, where the characters are strengthened, and often exaggerated, by the creatures or objects associated with them.
Disney Characterization

Folklore scholar Karen Keely, when analyzing the stories of the Brothers Grimm and Anne Sexton’s reworking of them, notes the fact that the original tales are plot-driven rather than character-driven providing plenty of room for modern reworking because the absence of details and characterization allow later adaptations to emphasize the character’s motivations and personality traits (70). Perhaps it is needless to point out some direct and obvious characterization in the form of contrast, such as Snow White’s association with the white of light and purity and the Queen’s with the black of night and death; as Snow White is constantly surrounded by a multitude of doves and her cute woodland animal helpers, the Queen is accompanied by her single raven server. However, it is worthwhile to note that Disney’s symbolization of his characters extends to the story’s narratives, utilizing what Christopher Finch calls the “economy of construction and extravagance of invention”. Not a single shot was wasted and “there is nothing in Snow White that does not contribute either to developing character or to moving the plot forward” (151). A few examples can be traced to the beginning of the film; a castle is half in shadow and half in sunlight, symbolic of the good and evil within Snow White and the Queen (Allan 47); the disgusting wicked green bubbles in the Queen’s transformation scene contrast with the playful clean bubbles when Dopey cleans the cottage; Snow White’s obsession with cleaning is juxtaposed with the Queen’s filthy hidden chamber. When Snow White is abandoned in the forest by the huntsman, a blue bird, often seen as a symbol of happiness and associated with spring, marriage and anniversaries, sympathizes with her; when the Queen enters the forest after her
transformation to an old hag, her entrance is welcomed by two vultures, which are often interpreted as the symbol of death and living by preying on another.

The dwarfs play a much more humble role and remain anonymous in the Grimm’s version. Although Disney’s is not the first to give names to the dwarfs, it was the first to offer a name that is immediately identifiable with the character, advancing from the Blick, Flick, Plick, Whick, Snick, Click, and Qee of Ames’s version. Each of the seven dwarfs’ recognizable characteristics, along with their matching impressions and figurative features, are firmly established and the focus is on their individuality. By 1934 Disney had a list of fifty names under consideration for the characters. Not all of the names made it to the screen, but all marked the evidence of Disney’s concise way of describing their personalities (Finch 124). Disney animators photographed real dwarfs as models. Early sketches show more grotesque aspects, akin to the trolls and dwarfs of Theodor Kittelsen, (1857-1914), John Bauer (1882-1918), and Arthur Rackham, then moved to mysterious, eccentric creatures (see Fig. 1-4a, 1-4b) and later to the softer, rounder, friendlier, lively icons. Pinksy reminds us that “Snow White does not see the dwarfs as in any way grotesque or comical” (24). The princess’s inclusion of accepting others as who they are establishes a key element of the Disney characterization.

The plot-driven originals not only permitted Disney’s characters to develop a set of distinguishing characteristics, but also rendered the opportunity for the animators to develop an appearance that was to closely parallel with and support to those characteristics for visual stimulation. European artists have provided an outline for Snow White: the French Le Printemps by Eugène Grasset (1854-1917) (see Fig. 1-5), the German blonde princess by Ludwig Ritcher (see Fig. 1-6), the scene from Midsummer
Night by John Anster Fitzgerald (1819-1906) (see Fig. 1-7), and the detailed illustration of humans and animals by Hermann Vogel (1854-1912) (Girveau 138) (see Fig. 1-8). Conjointly, the idea of the innocent and beautiful princess constantly depicted in an outdoor environment, surrounded by lively blossoms and cheerful animals is a modification of Persephone, the goddess of spring from Disney’s own work Silly Symphonies in 1934 (Whitley 20). Concerns have been raised in regards to the ambiguous sexuality of Snow White during character development, as she is a seven year-old girl in the text but has a romantic interaction with the Prince. Disney refers the qualities of the heroine to Janet Gaynor, Mary Pickford, and particularly Shirley Temple, the world’s most famous child star in the 1930s (see Fig.1-9). An outline of the breakdown of the cast of characters in October 1934 noted that Snow White is “a Janet Gaynor type—14 year old” (Finch 125). To explain this decision, Allan writes:

    Janet Gaynor had been a childlike actress of the silent twenties, and presented as ambiguous sexuality which become more complex in the thirties. This attitude towards Snow White is ambiguous because although she is seen as a child… she also has sexually romantic longings for the Prince. This emphasized by the Queen’s jealously when she sees the first meeting between the Prince with Snow White. (38)

The Queen is, according to the outline, “a mixture of Lady Macbeth and the Big Bad Wolf” with the face of Hollywood Joan Crawford (52) (see Fig. 1-10). She exhibits bipolar qualities: she is human and inhuman, possessing the female figure and male authority; her beauty is desirable but her nature is terrifying, masking with American modern cosmetics but nurtured in an ancient European setting. In a group discussion in October 1934, Disney finalized his vision of the Queen as “along the lines of the Benda mask type . . . as high collar stately beauty” (Allan 55). The final look of the Queen’s
physical appearance and attire is strikingly reminiscent of a statue of the medieval Lady Uta, consort of Count Ekhart, located in the exterior of Namberg Cathedral (c.1245) (see Fig. 1-11a, 1-11b). The presentation of the Queen materializes what Richard Maltby viewed as the American perception of a European character: “For Hollywood’s American audiences in the 1930s Europe represented a half-admired, yet half-condemned sophistication. Europeans were daring but decadent, sensual but self-destructive, charming but dangerous and even evil” (qtd. in Allan 53). Her evil is made even more graphical when Disney wittily has the Magic Mirror decorated all around by the twelve constellations of the zodiac (see Fig. 1-12). Clinical professor Julius Heuscher in his book *A Psychiatric Study of Fairy Tales* has asserted his explanation of the meaning of the use of zodiac in the story *Briar Rose* (Grimm’s version of *Sleeping Beauty*):

Viewing the story of Briar Rose in its broadest phylo-rather than ontogenetic meaning, we can say: a long time ago the human being was under the beneficial influence of twelve wise women. The soul was integrated in the cosmic All represented by the twelve constellations of the zodiac. But, influenced by an evil spirit (the thirteenth wise woman, the devil, Lucifer, who set himself in opposition to the All, etc.), this soul lost his early paradise. (169)

Heuscher’s view of the zodiac in *Briar Rose* is equally relevant to *Snow White*.

Standing in front of the twelve constellations of the zodiac, a symbol of the twelve wise women according to Heuscher, the Queen is implicitly positioned as the thirteenth wise woman—a sign of the devil.

Although everything associated with Snow White and the Queen seems to be in direct contrast, folktale scholar Joyce Thomas, in her study of Grimm’s story, suggests that the Queen is the “dark shadow of Snow White” rather than simply opposite. She further explains that “the shadow represents the personality’s dark aspects and
inferiorities which have an emotional, autonomous, and obsessive or possessive quality,” and it is experienced as “a projection onto another . . . a replica of one’s own unknown face” (qtd. in Whitley 21). J. Thomas’s view of shadowing is especially strengthened in the film when the two characters share identical looks—pale skin, pink cheeks, red lips, dark eyes and black hair. The Queen is identified as the aged and dark version of Snow White, with differences within their inner selves, which result in the difference of the consequences that befall them.

European Horrors and American Comics

The powerful imageries of Snow White and the Queen’s contrasted experiences initiated in the forest emphasize Snow White’s direct link to horror films. Disney drew upon European melodrama and stage Gothic tradition, particularly German expressionism, in the two forest scenes to create an atmosphere of visual experience that mirrors the “technically brilliant, often vulgar and melodramatic work” of Gustave Doré (see Fig. 1-13). The evil spirit of the forest is also presented in the work of Norwegian artist Theodor Kittelsen and Belgian symbolist William Degouve de Nuncques (1867-1935) (Girveau 218) (see Fig. 1-14a, 1-14b). After escaping from the knife of the huntsman, Snow White flees into the forest and gets lost. In Grimm’s story, although Snow White is undoubtedly in fear, she never seems to lose an objective sense of reality:

She was so frightened that she just stared at all the leaves on the trees and had no idea what to do next. She started running and raced over sharp stones and through thornbushes. Wild beasts darted near her at times, but they did her no harm. (Tatar, The Classic Fairytales 84)
In a meeting on June 1936, Disney confirmed his treatment of the terrifying journey Snow White undergoes. He perceives the interrelationship between Snow White and her own fear itself:

It would be good for her to be caught in the bushes showing these grotesque hands, then the wind and all the things that frighten her. Have it lead to things that make her think things are alive, but at the same time the audience should have a feeling that it is all in her mind . . . her imagination goes wild. (50) (see Fig. 1-15a, 1-15b)

The animated Snow White falls into a surrealistic imaginary world; everything around her has become grotesque and threatening, from the alligator logs, to the branches in the shape of the wicked witch’s hand, to the alienating eyes that turn out to be her animal helpers. Whitley suggests “[Snow White is] not only lost in the dark forest, but also in her objective reality”. He further asserts that the darkness she undergoes is “the Queen’s domain, and the experience of the film’s new nightmarish mode constitutes a kind of dramatic paradox; it is as though, in fleeing from the Queen, Snow White is not only entering more deeply into the Queen’s world but has actually internalized its qualities as paranoid terror” (21).

Taken into the same setting, the Queen, who by then has already transformed into the wicked hag, travels through the forest on her way to Snow White’s cottage. However, after her disturbing and dazzling scene of transformation, her journey to the cottage is unusually peaceful. She paddles in a canoe that mirrors the canoe of Doré’s Charon in Dante’s Inferno (see Fig. 1-16a, 1-16b). Unlike Snow White’s vividly agitated encounter with the nature, her entrance is quiet and dramatically misty, avoiding the bleak trees with gaunt branches in a stagnant landscape where all elements “echo the sterility of the Queen herself” (Allan 47). Snow White’s horrific mise-en-scene is explicit, but the
notably slow motion and quiescence technique Disney applies in the wicked hag’s movement is even more magnified in the form of German expressionism, where the true horror does not come from the actual danger scene, but the scene leading to that.

In counterbalance to the darkness of the European sources, Disney also drew esthetic references from American arts and sprinkled in comedic moments for relief. In March 1937, Disney personally gave instructions that the transformation scene of the Queen could have “something of Jekyll and Hyde” about it (Girveau 190). The operetta esthetics of George Cukor’s 1936 Romeo and Juliet had been an inspiration for the scene where the Prince sings his serenade to Snow White while she leans on her elbow at the balcony (194) (see Fig. 1-17a, 1-17b). Snow White in her glass coffin as the dwarfs hold their vigil is comparable to Maxfield Parrish’s 1912 painting of the princess guarded by a grim dwarf (see Fig. 1-18). Another link to this scene is Fritz Lang’s 1927 science fiction film Metropolis; the cottage of the dwarfs copies that of Doctor Rotwang; Maria lying on Rotwang’s desk covered by a glass tube is the modern version of Snow White in her glass coffin (192) (see Fig. 1-19). Native American esthetic elements can be found in the musical instruments in the scene where Snow White and her friends are dancing and singing in the cottage: Doc plays a bass-like instrument in the design of an indigenous animal (see Fig. 1-20); Grumpy plays a wooden organ with fine carved animal totems on top (see Fig. 1-21); Bashful plays a fipple flute in the shape of a primitive fish; Happy is yodeling, and the group jollily performs what we refer as American folk dance.

7. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is an American horror film directed by Rouben Mamoulian in 1931. The story is an adaptation of The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, a novella published in 1886 and written by the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson.
The Ending that Opens to the Grand Beginning

Leonard Maltin remarks in *The Disney Films*: “For Disney *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was not a crowning achievement, as so many critics were to say. For him, it was only the beginning.” He asserts this after quoting what Disney commented upon *Snow White*’s release: “We have worked hard and spent a lot of money, and by this time we are all a little tired of it. I have seen so much of *Snow White* that I am conscious only of the places where it could be improved. You see, we have learned such a lot since we started this thing! I wish I could yank it back and do it all over again” (32). Indeed Disney did, all over again and again, with his other European-rooted fairytale creations. The end of *Snow White* had not only pulled back the curtains for the grand opening of Disney’s adaptation-film kingdom, but also formed a concrete model for the development of full-length animations in the entire film industry. In Hollywood, rival movie studios started to prepare for their full-length animations and followed after the “Disney style”, which “a year before they would not have touched” (Maltin 31). Paramount released *Gulliver’s Travels* in 1939; Universal announced a feature called *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*, but it never came to completion; Warner Brother’s short *Tom Thumb in Trouble* in 1940 was shamelessly patterned after Disney. Disney’s personal method of adaptation had then influenced many in the film and art field; an enormous variety of great creations were and still are inspired by his spirit of “Once Upon A Time.”
Chapter IV

Cinderella
Cinderella: The Post-war Comeback

*Cinderella* was the first animated feature film Disney had produced with a continuous narrative since *Bambi* in 1942. Its plot is often characterized by the public as the most classic example of “from rags to riches”. Interestingly, *Cinderella*’s production process itself effectively embraces this theme as well. Robin Allen commented on the plot: “The story reflected Disney’s own career in its rag to riches theme, though his personality bore little resemblance to the passive heroine. Rather, it reflected a wish fulfillment on his part about the public role that he was to play” (207). If we conclude that the production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was designed to fulfill his dream and express his fascination with fairy tales and innovative animating technologies, in contrast, we must surmise that the reasoning behind the decision to make *Cinderella* was much less romantic.

At the time that the process of creating *Cinderella* began in 1948, a number of factors were affecting Walt Disney Studios. Disney’s reputation as an animator had been firmly established in American cinema since the 1930s, when the studio had won every Oscar award for cartoon productions. By the end of the 1940s Walt Disney Studios had produced sixteen animated feature and hybrid films, separating its name from those of other producers. However, due to World War II, the studio had been undergoing financial difficulties. Live-action films took over the schedule in order for the studio to obtain cash flow, since the lengthy, complicated progress and steep upfront investment made animated productions less profitable than live productions. However, the studio was not able to capture its market; the return on live productions was very disappointing. Economic recession after World War II made a huge impact on the film industry; Walt
Disney Studios was in debt. In addition to suffering from financial pressures, the studio was also “losing its pre-eminence among animation producers” (Ohmer 235). The Oscars first announced a new category of cartoon in 1932; Disney won it and every Oscars in that category until 1939. MGM’s *Tom and Jerry* dominated the awards in the 1940s, winning from 1943-46 and again in 1948, with Warner Bro’s *Sylvester and Tweetie* winning the award in 1947. The Disney Studio failed to win any awards for more than ten years, between 1943 and 1952 (235).

Acknowledging the severity of their predicament and realizing that things had to change, Disney insisted on producing animated features when the studio’s president and chief financial officer, Roy Disney, suggested abandoning them because of the high expense of producing such films. Disney emphasized that a well-planned, classic, full-length feature was the only remedy for the situation. In order to reduce costs and speed up operation, he was inevitably forced to adopt several business strategies to ensure production efficiency. These managerial arrangements greatly affected the fundamental structure of subsequent productions and are visible in the development of *Cinderella*.

Senior animator Ollie Johnston summarized Disney’s feelings about the alterations they needed to make, articulating Disney’s view as follows: “We have got to do something here we can do for a price; we have got to know what we are doing all the way through, so that we do not have to make a lot of changes” (Ohmer 238).

One fresh approach Disney later firmly committed to was the implementation of marketing research. The studio hired the Audience Research Institute⁸ as the company’s

---

⁸. Audience Research Institute (ARI), now Gallup, Inc., is an American-based national polling company founded by George Gallup which uses political polling techniques for marketing research. Many motion picture companies had been against the
consultant to conduct viewer surveys in an effort to find out public reaction in advance.

Susan Ohmer notes:

In November 1943, the studio commissioned ARI to conduct a ‘want-to-see’ test to measure the popularity of six properties, including Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan. Cinderella emerged as the leader, with a rating of 95 percent on a scale of 100. Peter Pan earned a score of 76 and Alice in Wonderland 71. All three projects were eventually produced, but it is reasonable to assume that the decision to begin with Cinderella was based partly on market research. (238)

Bob Thomas relates Disney’s decision to produce Cinderella as his post-war comeback feature to the heroine’s inspiring personality: “Walt did not feel comfortable with either Peter Pan or Alice, finding the characters too cold. Cinderella, on the other hand, possessed the qualities of Snow White, and he chose to go ahead with it” (209).

Another problem the studio needed to solve was the need to adequately minimize changes in drawings and sketches, which required extensive amounts of labor and time. Drawing was the first, as well as the most essential, stage of an animation. Character design, background layout, artistic appeal, composition, style, mood, and all other important visual factors were solely based on the early and final drafting. Hundreds of thousands of drawings were made for Snow White before putting the film together and animating it. If the studio wanted to cut costs, reducing the number of drawings and time spent on changes would be one crucial and necessary step. Consequently, Disney decided to film all of Cinderella in live action before making any drawings. Actors and actresses were hired; they were put on stage sets with costumes and makeup, acting out all the

---

idea, believing that the elements which make a film successful could not be measured. As time went by, political polling became more prominent in American culture and the industry more competitive, thus many studios started to turn to market research as a way to manage production (Ohmer 238).
scenes of *Cinderella* while the animation team filmed their acting. Footage and photographs were used as guidelines for animators to grasp timing, composition, body movements, and plot development, and the drawings were later done in accordance with these references. This filming practice essentially reversed the traditional process of animating, in which drawings were done first based on the producer’s and the artist’s perceptions of the story. This method was not new; it had been used in *Snow White*’s production for testing the movements of the main characters, but it had never been employed to such an extent. “While live action was helpful for the directors, who could determine beforehand whether the action would prove effective as cartoon, it restricted the animators,” said B. Thomas (211). Since live-action cameras can only be framed in certain ways and placed in certain angles, ideas for staging and camera angles were limited to those that were compatible with such cameras. Animator Frank Thomas recalled complaints made by some artists: “Anytime you’d think of another way of staging the scene, they’d say ‘We can’t get the camera up there!’ So you had to go with what worked well in live action” (Ohmer 238).

In addition to utilizing marketing research and live action, Disney started to gather advice and comments from his employees in conference meetings. He generated questionnaires regarding the construction of story development. Participants were required to provide input for each discussion; forms needed to be filled out and would then be carefully documented. Questions were designed by Disney himself or by other senior supervisors; they involved specific topics related to each stage of the production and served as a blueprint to eliminate problems before the project advanced. For example, the questionnaire for June 27, 1948, asked, “Do you have any constructive
criticism of the character? Are the characters interesting? Are there any that are not taken full advantage of? Any that could be eliminated? Are both the animal and human characters coming off?” (Ohmer 239). Participants of these conferences were not limited to senior animators, but also included other staff members such as maintenance people, secretaries, junior animators, and women from ink and paint (239). In previous productions, while artists were responsible for the visual elements of the films, Disney usually dominated the design and plot treatments. The different perspectives and criticism the staff brought in contributed significantly to the outcome of the production.

Both Perrault and Grimm

Out of the seven hundred versions of Cinderella folklorists have identified from various cultures, Disney based his adaptation on the most gentle, logical and nonviolent version, that of French author Charles Perrault (1628-1703). Published in 1697, *Cendrillon* is the only version that features a darling fairy godmother, a pumpkin coach, six mice, and, most importantly, the glass slipper. The story also offers detailed descriptions of the magical transformation of Cinderella and her enormous reward for being a sweet, kindhearted girl. Ohmer notes that “Perrault’s tale displays significant narrative and ideological difference; it eliminates violence, heightens the emphasis of drama and magic, and use the tale for an explicit didactic purpose” (233). The magical elements and the enchanted transformations inscribed by Perrault offer unlimited possibilities for the animator’s imagination, and the survival theme fits the story line of all Disney’s productions. In adapting Perrault’s narrative, Disney emphasizes the implied

---

9. *Cendrillon* is the French version of Cinderella written by Charles Perrault, the name meaning “of the ashes”.

48
moral directive to “be kind, be forgiving, and keep believing”. Disney’s heroine never complains about her exploitative situation, nor does she resent her abusive stepmother and sisters. Facing all the ordeals life throws at her, the beautiful young lady “remained gentle and kind,” as the narrator in the beginning of the film concludes, “for each dawn she found new hope that someday her dreams of happiness would come true” (Pinsky 53). What Disney wanted was not only a benevolent survivor, but also an indomitable believer who knows that the only thing that can turn life around is the power of hope.

Closely resembling the opening of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the story of *Cinderella* opens with a golden, heavily decorated storybook that is “dark, shut up, bound by its own convention” (Allan 208). The tome turns to its first page with a sharp light flowing by, adding to the atmosphere a tint of theatrical flavor (see Fig. 2-1). The image spreads out into a page of dreamy watercolor landscape painting; it zooms into Prince’s Charming’s castle, then on to Cinderella’s mansion, and then quickly deliquesces into animation wherein young Cinderella is happy in the presence of her father and her companions, the horse and Bruno the dog, then a puppy (see Fig. 2-2). The image of young Cinderella with her adored father provokes sorrowful emotion for his death. Furthermore, the father’s death in Disney’s adaptation erases the father’s disappointing image in Perrault’s version where the father is present throughout the story but refuses to do anything to help Cinderella’s misfortune: “The poor girl put up with it all patiently, not daring to complain to her father, who would have scolded her, because he was completely under the thumb of his wife” (Perrault 136). Just when they are peacefully enjoying the moment, the shot shifts up to a window where her stepmother, stepsisters, and a cat named Lucifer, after the Devil, lurk, smoldering at them with disgust and
hatred. A similar scene can be found in the opening of *Snow White*, where the Queen leers enviously at Snow White and the Prince from a window (see Fig. 2-3a, 2-3b). The window acts as a sheer threshold between two worlds: one in light, represented by Cinderella, the other in dark, represented by the stepmother and her daughters. The window is the location “where inside and outside meet and cross, bringing together two worlds and their elements” (Ronnberg, Martin, and ARAS 564). The proud and haughty stepmother, noticeably a figure that mirrors the Evil Queen in *Snow White*, presents as cold and dark and is always followed by a shade or shadow wherever she goes (see Fig. 2-4). Mark Pinsky asserts: “Here is the Disney formula for a heroine, a theory based in part on aesthetics. Cinderella is pretty, plucky, and without guile, echoing many novels of the nineteenth century. It is a description that has remained constant throughout the studio’s history. The same is true for the presentation of evil” (53). There is no suggestion that either the cat figure, commonly associated with witches, or the stepmother possesses any magical powers, but the implication is nonetheless there for contemplation.

Although Disney claimed his version was based on Perrault’s narrative instead of being an adaption of Grimm’s less magical but considerably bloodier version, some of the ideas are specifically borrowed from Grimm’s *Aschenputtel*\(^{10}\) for a more dramatic, stimulating story. Cinderella’s animal friends played a significant role in Grimm’s tale, while animal helpers appear nowhere in Perrault’s story. Heuscher explains the psychological function of animal helpers in Grimm’s version:

\(^{10}\) German version of *Cinderella* written by the Brothers Grimm. One of the stories collected in *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* (1812).
The doves, rather than being of physical help, portray spiritual assistance exactly opposite to the laws of the material world. Cinderella is challenged to separate one potful of lentils from the ashes in two hours, and that she accomplishes this—with the bird’s help—in one hour. Yet when challenged the second time, she finishes twice this task in only half of the time. From a spiritual viewpoint, the physical tasks cannot ever become impossible; the greater the hardship, the greater the help. (226)

The same is true for Disney’s story, wherein the white doves become two bluebirds and a group of mice. They are cheerful and humorous in nature; we know from the beginning that they will be part of Cinderella’s rescue. The anthropomorphism here exceeds that affecting the humble animals in *Snow White*; as in *Pinocchio, Dumbo*, and *Bambi*; when animals are granted the power of speech, the audience knows they will play a major role in the movie. The bluebirds, which signify happiness in *Snow White*’s story, open the curtain of Cinderella’s attic as the narrative fades from the background, officially framing the opening just as though opening the curtain of a grand stage play (see Fig. 2-5). The birds are obviously gendered, one wearing a hat and a vest and the other wearing a kerchief11 (see Fig. 2-6). “If an animal in a film is wearing any kind of costume, he can be handled with human attributes and the audience will accept him,” animator Frank Thomas notes, further adding, “The more the animator goes toward caricaturing the animal, the more he seems to be capturing the essence of that animal, the more he is creating possibilities for acting” (F. Thomas 182). Disney’s animals are believable because artists depicted what people imagine the animal looks like, rather than what the real animal looks like. Cinderella’s mice friends are characterized by their individual designated appearance. While Jaq is thin and slightly taller, Gus is chubby and shorter.

11. A piece of fabric used to cover the head, a signature headpiece of a farmwoman.
By knowing the stereotype of cartoon characters, we immediately catch the idea that Jaq is quick and witty while Gus and slow and clumsy. Their supportive role becomes especially important in the film; rather than just serving to embellish the plot, they “often are the plot” (Ohmer 242). Mice have been common figures in many folktales throughout history and are often portrayed as heroes, regardless of the culture. Their distinctive body size is “suggestive of the small and invisible, intricate workings of the unconscious to overcome obstacles, even without our conscious participation” (Ronnberg, Martin, and ARAS 290). Because of them, Cinderella’s life becomes sweepingly dramatic. They are not only companions who console her in her loneliness, but are also responsible for Cinderella’s happy ending. The scene where Jaq and Gus attempt to free Cinderella by carrying a key bigger than they are after the stepmother locks her in the attic was elaborated so extensively that it almost overshadows the scene where Cinderella tries on the glass slipper—the supposed climactic moment of the film. The hide-and-seek scene in the beginning of the film between Jaq, Gus, and Lucifer lasts nearly twenty minutes in the beginning of the seventy-five minute film. Later on, the scene where the group of mice helps sew a ball gown for Cinderella occupies another fifteen minutes of the film.

Film Noir and Expressionism

Dynamic shifts amongst studio artists by the late 1940s probably account for the change in style. European artists had dominated the adaptation and creation of Disney films since the 1930s, a phenomenon we can see clearly in, for example, Snow White. However, by the late 1940s, most of the powerful European artists who had worked on previous films had either died or retired from the studio. The European influences were
then interpreted entirely by a new group of talents who were born and educated in America, such as Milt Kahl, Frank Thomas, Eric Larson, Ollie Johnston, Marc Davis, and Mary Blair. As a result, along with the application of live-action photography, these factors greatly influenced the style of the film. The images were constructed using a mixture of different components: there are the French influences in the interior and objects designs; the atmosphere is expressionistic and Germanic; and the visual narrative is filtered through Hollywood’s own genre of film noir\(^\text{12}\).

German influences can be seen in the background setting and architecture in particular, including the exterior of the castle and, in the interior, its columns, staircase and curtains (see Fig. 2-7). There are a number of themes common to German cinema and expressionism present throughout the film. The dark nature of the Stepmother in itself is expressionistic, and a great number of scenes evolve around this seemingly eerie side. When Cinderella enters the room of the Stepmother, a shadow of a window spreads across Cinderella’s body like “the bars of a prison, as she is forced reluctantly to approach the darkness of the bed in which the Stepmother lies” (Allan 208) (see Fig. 2-8). When the Stepmother is about to lock Cinderella in the attic to prevent her from trying on the glass slipper, the shot of Cinderella brushing her hair includes the Stepmother’s reflection in a broken oval mirror, a feature astutely resembling the magic mirror belonging to Snow White’s Evil Queen (see Fig. 2-9). Expressionism can also be noted in

\(^{12}\) Film noir is a cinematic term used primarily to describe stylish Hollywood crime dramas, particularly those that emphasize cynical attitudes and sexual motivations. Hollywood's classical film noir period is generally regarded as extending from the early 1940s to the late 1950s. Film noir of this era is associated with a low-key black-and-white visual style that has roots in German Expressionist cinematography.
the ball scene. When Cinderella enters the royal ball, two rows of sternly focused guards are lined up in strict order, contrasting with the isolated figure of Cinderella and likening the scene to the military rally in Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* (1936) (see Fig. 2-10a, 2-10b). Animator John Hench points out that the importance of emphasizing Cinderella’s isolation and loneliness at the palace is “to theatricalize, to show the baroque, the size and exaggeration” (Allan 209). Other examples are found indoors, including the angled shots of stairs and landings when the stepmother walks up to the attic and the same shots seen from a mouse’s point of view as Jaq and Gus shakily bring the key up to her attic (see Fig. 2-11a, 2-11b). The use of the stairs and shadows resembles that in *The Spiral Staircase* (1945) (Allan 210) (see Fig. 2-12). The medium close shots that capture the attack of the stepsisters on Cinderella make the scene exceptionally vivid and terrifying to the audience (see Fig. 2-13a, 2-13b).

References for the Disney Pictures

The magical power of Disney’s images is indeed found in the fact that they are a pastiche of some of the most favorable pictures we have seen from other sources. They are incredibly recognizable; sometimes we are able to tell where the familiar scene is adapted from, yet most of the time we cannot quite piece the puzzle together, leaving an inexplicable feeling lingering between the Disney pictures and our memory. Decidedly, many drawings by the century’s most prominent illustrators are used as archetypes in the film *Cinderella*. We see the classic appearance of Cinderella in her ragged clothes under Arthur Rackham’s paintbrush (see Fig. 2-16a, 2-16b), in A. H. Watson’s 1927 illustration of Cinderella rushing down the staircase when the clock reaches twelve (see Fig. 2-17a,
2-17b), and in Edmund Dulac’s exquisite portrayal of the pumpkin transformation scene (see Fig. 2-18a, 2-18b). The mice mirror the work of English illustrator Beatrix Potter, whose drawings of beloved mice, rabbits and kittens were widely admired in the United States. In Potter’s children’s book The Tailor of Gloucester, a group of mice sewing resembles Cinderella’s mice friends sewing her ball gown (see Fig. 2-19a, 2-19b). Simpkin the cat keeps the mice under a teacup just as Lucifer does with Gus (see Fig. 2-20a, 2-20b, 2-20c). In another book, The Tale of Samuel Whiskers, we see that Kitten Tom falls into the clutches of rats behind the wall, while in Cinderella we go behind the walls and down mouse holes as we follow the adventures of Gus and Jaq (Allan 209). Cinderella’s fleeing scene recalls a familiar episode from the Peter Rabbit and the Pumpkin Patch (see Fig. 2-21a, 2-21b). Other references in drawings and paintings are abundant: Phillippe Rousseau, Heinrich Kley, Ludwig Ricther, Henman Vogel and more, all contribute to the richness and diversity of the Disney visual sources (see Fig. 2-22-25).

The Moral Figure
Steven Watts described Cinderella as “survival in a competitive environment, industriousness and domesticity” (Whitley 34). The story’s settings are mostly indoors, with infrequent outdoor scenes of her backyard and only one quick forest scene when she escapes from the castle. The lack of outdoor settings causes the narrative focus to be on “home”, amplifying the heroine’s sweet, obedient, and dutiful nature for which “she is rewarded with the grand prize, an adoring husband and economic ease” (O’Brien 62). On many levels, the attributes of Cinderella represent an idealized female image for the large part of the American public of the post-war period that promoted reinvigorated family
values, “an example of Hollywood’s reflection of post-war society’s wish that American women would return to their pre-war domestic subservience” (Allan 210). Her passiveness and domesticity, although it reflects the stereotype of the nineteenth-century and the idealized twentieth-century post-war woman, were not intended by Disney.

Disney once described his vision of Cinderella and explained how she differs from Snow White on the assertiveness scale: “Cinderella was ‘more practical.’ She believed in dreams all right, but she believed in doing something about them. When Prince Charming did not come along she went right over to the palace and got him” (Pinsky 55). Initially, the message we get from the film seems to imply the opposite. The heroine’s only solution to her predicament is to mentally “keep believing” and physically “sob” about it; it appears that she can never have the happy ending without the help of her Fairy Godmother and animal friends. The assertive aspect of Cinderella that Disney wanted to convey finally shows in the scene where the Grand Duke appears at her door, seeking the owner of the glass slipper. After several minutes of shots of Gus and Jaq stealing the key from the Stepmother and releasing Cinderella from the locked room, Cinderella rushes down the stairs and loudly calls out, “Your Grace! Your Grace! Please wait. May I try it on?” Like the originally timid heroine of Perrault’s version who finally breaks out of silence and demands to try on the glass slipper when the equerry arrives at her home: “Let me see if it fits me!” (Perrault 138), Disney’s impotent heroine at last steps out of her passivity and shouts for her happiness. It is clear that the industriousness and domesticity of Cinderella are not developed at her own will, but are forced upon her by external factors. If Disney’s Cinderella indeed illuminates the role of women at the
time, the message behind it is explicit: despite society’s wish for the home-oriented moral female figure, women are meant to escape from this role when given the opportunity.
Chapter V

Sleeping Beauty
Disney and Earle

The setting of *Sleeping Beauty* is not “once upon a time,” but exactly in the fourteenth century, as Prince Philip repeatedly emphasizes throughout the film. This piece of information is particularly crucial, as it explains *Sleeping Beauty*’s compelling medieval settings and makes clear how it became the most esthetically distinct animation ever produced in the Disney canon, as well as the one that spent the longest time in production, and a phenomenal investment of six million dollars. The film was in full production as early as 1951, revised in 1953, suspended for two years and finally released in 1959. The person behind this lengthy preparation was illustrator Eyvind Earle (1916-2000), who was then a freshman at the studio. Although Earle was not the official art director of the film and was only formally credited as “color styling,” he was in fact the person who was wholly in charge of the film’s design and emphatically raised *Sleeping Beauty*’s artistic achievement to another level – a level that was applauded by some, and criticized by the rest.

After the triumph of several full-length feature films, followed by the grand achievement of the successful completion of Disneyland in 1955, Disney was more than ever confident and ambitious, envisioning *Sleeping Beauty* as “his masterpiece, an ultimate” in animated filmmaking (Maltin 152). He wanted it to be different and was concerned that, based on the given story essentials, the film’s potential resemblance to the previous fairy tale films would be too great. Rendering a fresh, original look that would separate the design of *Sleeping Beauty* from those of *Snow White* and *Cinderella* was a set goal of Disney’s from the get-go. At this point, Disney’s interest and time were much occupied by other new projects related to his Magic Kingdom. B. Thomas renders
his critique of the film as follows: “Sleeping Beauty was put into production at a time when Walt Disney was thoroughly engrossed in Disneyland, television and the live-action films. He kept an eye on the cartoons’ progress but he lacked time to lavish on its preparation, as he had done on all the previous features. As a result, the characters lacked the human touches that Walt always endowed; they also lacked his humor. The emphasis was on visual beauty and spectacular effects” (295). Not only was Disney unable personally to govern the art direction of the film, he also brought some of his best artists over to work for the Disneyland project. Compounding the problem, the death of some of the most prominent native European talents and the departure of previous animating heroes such as Mary Blair and Joe Grant left the Disney Studio with a hollow that urgently needed to be filled with new talents who could live up to Disney’s ambition (Allan 232). It was imperative to inject new blood into the Disney anatomy, necessitating Disney’s search for an aspirant who possessed the ability to bring his goals to fruition and represent his enduring vision.

Earle was an assistant background painter when he first entered the studio in 1951 and started his freelance journey on several shorts and films. He created experimental background painting for *For Whom the Bulls Toil* in 1953 and in the same year, his design for *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom* won an Academy Award and a Cannes Film Festival Award. He was later appointed to be background artist for *Peter Pan and Lady and the Tramp*, in which his unique expressionist drawing style caught Disney’s attention. Previously, Disney had always encouraged artistic collaboration amongst his artists and supported references, so the decision to appoint Earle as the chief designer of an important feature and commit to using only his style on the film was somewhat
alarming to the other animators. Earle’s authority was continually questioned by a number of senior animators who knew the Disney style well and argued that his cutting-edge artistic touch would not match the other Disney productions. “I wanted,” said Earle, “stylized, simplified Gothic, a medieval tapestry out of the surface wherever possible… Everything from the foreground to the far distance is in focus. That gives you more depth” (Allan 233). He based his work on Pre-Renaissance French, German, Flemish, and Italian painters along with Persian miniatures and Asian paintings, acknowledging that the works of Albrecht Dürer, Jan van Eyck, Pieter Bruegel and Sandro Botticelli were his main inspiration (Girveau 214). Earle’s abstract yet intentionally angled images challenged the ultra-realistic and three-dimensional look that everyone in the Disney Studio had been striving to achieve for years. In order to create agreement between the characters and the background, animators sharpened the contours of the images, giving them a spiky, acicular look.

Neal Gabler notes the painstaking job animators had to go through, “The layout artists and animators were both impressed and depressed by Earle’s paintings – impressed by the quality of the work, depressed by that they would have to work within a style that many of them regarded as too cold, too flat, and too modernist for a fairy tale. “ ‘I had to fight myself to make myself draw that way,’ Ken Anderson¹³ said” (558). The box office of Sleeping Beauty proved that the animators were probably right – the Disney Company suffered approximately one million dollars in losses due to this feature. For the first time, Disney himself admitted that “I sorta got trapped. I had passed the point of no return and I had to go forward with it” (B. Thomas 295). The high hopes he had nurtured left him

¹³ Ken Anderson, along with Don Da Gradi, was nominated as art director of Sleeping Beauty. They are the official entitled art directors of the film.
with only disappointment; it was a pity he was unable to witness *Sleeping Beauty*’s marvelous counter-come-back in 1971—twelve years after he passed away.

The Story Adaptation

Disney’s story was a fairly direct adaption of the Brothers Grimm’s *Little Briar-Rose* (1857), as it contained every key element of the story with a number of intentional alterations to the plot in order to differentiate it from *Snow White*. However, Disney officially credited his adaption to Charles Perrault’s *Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* (1697). The reasoning behind this decision is unclear. Perhaps it can be traced to the consideration that Perrault’s version was also Grimm’s source, or perhaps it was because Perrault’s version included the magical fairy godmothers that fit Disney’s fantasy taste better than the less enchanting “wise women” in Grimm’s. The most likely reason for crediting Perrault’s version is the appealing title “Sleeping Beauty.” Regardless, Perrault’s story did not end after the prince awakens the princess when he kneels before her; it goes beyond that moment to their marital life where the princess gives birth to boy and girl twins and the three of them are assailed by the prince’s mother, who is an ogre. Disney’s heroine adopted the name “Aurora,” which is indeed her daughter’s name in Perrault’s version, and was later given the alias “Briar Rose” by the three fairies, taken from the Grimm version’s title.

Disney’s story, unsurprisingly, opens with the “familiar, ornate storybook” (Pinsky 74). This time, however, the opening is grander than ever; the tome is placed on an easel thoroughly decorated with jewels instead of simply lying on a table as it appears in *Snow White* and *Cinderella* (see Fig. 3-1). The standing easel allows a view of the
overstated background, which was deliberately designed to strengthen the medieval theme. This layout served as one of Disney’s common techniques, as it utilizes objects and atmosphere that are artistically relevant to the tale in the beginning as an introduction to the story that follows. The extravagant embellishment also blatantly expresses the eagerness Disney imposed onto the film. The storybook expands to a sequence of images of the citizens’ pilgrimage to the birth of the infant princess (see Fig.3-2)—a scene which recalls our memory of the most celebrated French Gothic manuscript illumination *Tres Riches Heure du Duc de Berry*¹⁴ (see Fig. 3-3a, 3-3b).

The characters are carefully planned; the three fairy godmothers—Flora, Fauna and Merryweather—were given distinctive characteristics to justify their roles. Flora’s personality is set out to be “dominate without realizing she is doing it; she felt the burden of any problem and thought of herself as having a sense of responsibility,” Merryweather is “more impulsive and quick to understanding of the big events around her,” and Fauna is “wispy, constantly smiling, twinkling-eyed, and almost unaware of what might be going on about her” (Thomas and Johnston 252-253). Their arrival on the scene is enthralling, with dust pixels and luminousness brought in in attention to their magical power (see Fig. 3-4). Young Prince Philip is introduced early in this celebration scene to meet baby Aurora before their reunion in the forest sixteen years later, in an attempt to distinguish their encounter from a similar plot of the couple meeting in *Snow White*.

---

¹⁴. The *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, translated as *Book of Hours of the Duke of Berry* in English, was created between 1412 and 1416 by the Flemish Limbourg brothers by the command of their royal patron the Duke of Berry and remains as the best surviving example of French Gothic manuscript illumination. The manuscript was left unfinished when the three painters died in 1416. Painter Jean Colombe picked up the work on behalf of the Duke of Savoy in 1485-1489 and brought it to its present look.
While the crowd is granting wishes to the young princess, Maleficent enters with a villain’s conventional companion – the raven. With demonic horns and grotesque facial features, she is the first Disney villain to be illustrated in nonhuman form (see Fig. 3-5a, 3-5b). Her image has evolved from that of the Evil Queen in Snow White and the Stepmother in Cinderella. An evil figure is truly presented: her attire is spiky and gothic; her face is long and green with large eyes and small pupils to depict a sneering look and she is equipped with a scepter that infuses her with vicious power.

Despite Disney’s wish and the studio’s effort to create a new fairy tale, the story unfolds in a plot that is remarkably similar to that of Snow White: there is an evil figure who desires to put the young princess to death; the princess then hides in a pastoral setting with a group of caretakers to avoid the preying villain; the evil figure puts the princess into a deep sleep with her magic power, and only true love’s kiss can awaken her (Whitley 36). In contrast with Snow White, Aurora’s animal companions play a more humble role in the film. Though less active and important to the plot, they are still positioned as comical appendages to lighten the scene when Prince Philip and Aurora meet, where they bring the couple together by stealing the prince’s boots and cloak, in the effort to stimulate romantic emotions in the audience.

The Artistic References

After numerous productions, the experienced Disney and his team had effectively established a specific style for their works–round, soft, romantic, with expressive lines and translucent colors. In obvious contrast, Earle’s style in Sleeping Beauty is almost a complete opposite: squared, angular, in distorted perspective, with sharp outlines and
bright colors. There is always something unnaturally attractive about it; it is expressive yet judicious, nostalgic yet contemporary. The background is in wide panoramic view that depicts every single detail of every single object; each layout moves at different speed to provoke sensational response to the event, and the focal point is off from the character and extended to the busy yet meticulous backdrop (see Fig. 3-6). Earle adapted this style from Asian arts: “I orientated myself on Persian and Japanese artists—especially the latter. They knew how to capture the detail of the leaves, the flowers and trunks better than any other artists on earth” (Girveau 214) (see Fig. 3-7a, 3-7b). He further asserts his fascination with European primitive landscapes: “I love square trees. That was the shape they were given by the early artists and that gives them their style. Horizontal and vertical lines dominate in all their works. It is only when you intellectualize a drawing that you come up with diagonals and curves” (qtd. in Girveau 216) (see Fig. 3-8). As a result, we see trees in the intriguing square shape typical of French horticultural art, landscapes that are consciously lengthened as though they had been stretched by some whimsical magic.

Animation historian Maureen Furniss has noted that the importance of a background cannot be overlooked in the esthetic analysis of an animation, for it greatly impacts the viewer’s perception (66). Correspondingly, the lively background drawings in *Sleeping Beauty* definitely take the audience’s focus away from the characters; there is so much going on at once that viewers can hardly land their eyes at a single focal point in this visual fiesta. That being said, the activeness of all the images jumps out collectively, and therefore generates a conception that “the animation character reads uncomfortably against the elaborate backgrounds” (Allan 233). Earle’s layout drawings are so magnificently enticing that they can easily supersede the charm of the characters.
Earle’s artistic references include Gustave Doré’s illustration of the prince’s arrival at Sleeping Beauty’s castle where everyone is asleep (see Fig. 3-9a, 3-9b), along with, as Whitley shrewdly observes, a hint of the image Spenser drew on for his *Epithalamium* seen in the birds’ counterpoint responses to the princess’s song, in which “all the woods may answer and your echo ring” (36), and the constructed architecture designs from Laurence Olivier’s British film *Henry V* (1944) (see Fig. 3-10), who also drew his inspiration from *Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. Additionally, in the scene where Aurora is elegantly asleep in her castle, the vivid lighting and color is reminiscent of Renato Castellani’s English-Italian film *Romeo and Juliet* (1954). The film was shot in Italy and contains exquisite photography by Robert Krasker (Allan 233) (see Fig. 3-11a, 3-11b). The works that inspired the woodland designs, such as the cottage of the fairies, were acquired from the Nordic arts, a resemblance we see in Jan Provoost’s oil painting on wood of the *Virgin and Child in a Landscape* (see Fig. 3-12), Hans Memling’s triptych on oak of the *Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Barbara* (see Fig. 3-13) and the *Return to the Inn* by Pieter Bruegel the Younger (see Fig. 3-14) (Girveau 216).

In discussion of the architecture, one must not forget the signature icon of *Sleeping Beauty*—its grandiose castle. All of Disney’s fairy tales begin in a castle; it is the first image that we see in the opening of the film when the storybook unfolds, and the

15. *Epithalamion* is an ode written by Edmund Spenser in 1594, to his bride Elizabeth Boyle on their wedding day in celebration of their marriage. The volume constitutes a sequence of 89 sonnets, a series of short poems called *Anacreontics* and the *Epithalamion*.

16. Directed by Laurence Olivier and released in 1944, *Henry V* is a British film adaptation of William Shakespeare’s play of the same name. The medieval setting of the stage sets are largely reminiscent of the style of *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. 

66
story often ends in a castle (when the prince brings the princess back to theirs). As a
decisive element in any royal-themed fairy tale, it carries the aspect of the fantasy world
more than any other component we can imagine. The castle in Sleeping Beauty, that of
King Stefan and Maleficent, “was the product of long iconographical research” (Girveau
232) (see fig. 3-15a, 3-15b, 3-15c). Girveau enumerates a number of sources of
inspiration for the architecture of the castle. In addition to the obvious imitation of the
slender silhouette of Charles V’s Louvre we find in Tre Riches Heures de Duc de Berry,
Disney artists also drew their inspiration from “Germany and the romantic vision of K. F.
Lessing (1808-1880),” (see Fig. 3-16) “or more precisely to Bavaria and the extravagant
castle built for Ludwig II in the second half of the 19th century, especially
Neuschwanstein” (see Fig. 3-17). The list of brilliant architectural references extends to
Christian Jank (1833-1888), Eduard Riedel (1813–1885), Victor Hugo (1802-1885)(see
Fig. 3-18), Edmund Dulac (1882-1953)(see Fig. 3-19), and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-
1879) (see Fig. 3-20) (234): all of their works contributed to creating an unequivocal
model for the building of the realistic Disney landscapes and architecture (Girveau 234).

Symbolism

The application of symbolism was more conspicuous and deliberate in Sleeping
Beauty than in its predecessors. Aurora’s associations with wild nature and floral
metamorphosis were carefully signified, either subtly or explicitly. Whitley identifies a
few of these instances: Aurora means “dawn,” and later she inherits the name “Briar
Rose”. Her three fairy godmothers are called Flora, Fauna, and Merryweather; all directly
refer to nature. At one point Flora even proposes to change Aurora to a flower to save her
from the curse of Maleficent. Furthermore, Whitley suggests that the flower
metamorphosis is linked to the ending, where Prince Philip must go through a battle to
rescue the princess: “Aurora becomes flower in name, if not in body, and the
longstanding metaphorical connections between the rose and sexual love allow the
twisted sea of horns that Maleficent later throws around the castle to prevent the Prince
gaining access to his ‘rose’ to acquire added significance as a barrier to erotic fulfillment”
(36-37).

In another scheme, symbolism is explicitly articulated in the form of colors. The
Evil Queen, Stepmother and Maleficent are all represented by the colors of purple and
black in their appearance, representing their majestic ranking and dark side. Black is
simply the absence of any color and, needless to point out, purple is a mixture of red and
blue; it symbolically brings together opposites or, in Ronnberg, Martin, and ARAS’s
words, it functions “psychologically, for union of opposing energies within an
individual” (654). Here, the two energies are seen at the end of the film when Aurora and
Philip are dancing to their happy ending, and Flora and Merryweather are fighting to
choose the color of Aurora’s gown. So by the power of their magic wands the gown
changes color, alternating between blue, the color often associated with unity, trust, and
security, and pink, which often represents love, tenderness, and acceptance. The rapid
change of blue and pink tints the scene with a coat of purple, leaving us to ponder the
relationship between good and evil (see. Fig. 3-21).

Maleficent is additionally endowed with a glowing green, an unnatural and
multifarious color, to represent her wicked power (see Fig. 3-22). Green is the film’s
primary color, as Earle exclusively used different shades of green for his majestic
landscape to depict the liveliness and prosperity of Aurora’s felicitous nature life—Ronnberg, Martin, and ARAS asserts, “green also stands for hope, for the promises of reaching one’s precious goal beyond the blackness of discouragement” (646). The shade of green in the harmonious nature scene immediately becomes a straight contrast with the wicked green of Maleficent. The authors further reveal the opposite aspect of the color in relation to life:

Green’s relationship to life can easily swing over to a connection with life’s opposite pole. Then green is found in images of death and decay and illness: slime, mold, poison, pus, nausea; also in the threatening faces of witches, the bodies of extraterrestrial enemies, dinosaurs, monsters. In the psyche, too, there is the green-eyed monster of jealousy, and being ‘green with envy.’ (646)

In any event, when a character enters Maleficent’s domain, her color magnetizes onto them excessively. We can clearly see that when the three fairies and Prince Philip enter the realm of Maleficent, the color of their bodies, all background, and all objects, are immersed in the wicked green (see Fig. 3-23). The same holds true for Aurora when she becomes hypnotized and walks up to the attic to reach the spindle; the picture is again deeply dyed in green (see Fig.3-24), based on fear and Maleficent’s presence even when she is not in the picture.

Following up is the battle between Maleficent and Prince Philip, an episode that is made up by Disney and where more symbolism kicks in. Maleficent’s transformation to a dragon, according to Pinsky, is “a literal and instantly recognizable reenactment of the
battle between *St. George and the dragon*\(^{17}\) (77) (see Fig. 3-25a, 3-25b). Pinsky further introduces a number of significations in this scene:

The three fairies come to rescue, freeing the prince and arming him with an enchanted shield of virtue and mighty sword of truth. These weapons of righteousness that will enable him to triumph over evil are also heavily with symbolism: The sword looks like a cross, and it flows. The long shield is emblazoned by another large, raised cross. In this scene, my Orlando Sentinel colleague Mark Andrew sees a parallel with Ephesians 6, where the apostle Paul urges Christians to ‘take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day’ against ‘the spiritual forces of evil.’ Later in the chapter, they are called on to don ‘the breastplate of righteousness’ and to take up ‘the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one.’ Notwithstanding these weapons, it is magic that helps cover Philip’s escape from the witch’s castle. (77) (see Fig. 3-26)

In the light of a deeper psychological form of metamorphosis, we must draw our attention to the application of the bubble in the film. Although it is a seemingly banal object that only adds to the playfulness in visual effect, the meaning of it can be interpreted on a more conscious level: “As the shining soap bubble soon dissolves into thin air the archetypal symbol of bubble conveys—beyond the certainty of the body’s demise—the hope of the soul’s eternal life” (Ronnberg, Martin, and ARAS 52). Bubbles are a repeated image that appear consistently in all three animations that I address in this paper: Flora uses her magic power to turns the arrows of Maleficent's troops into bubbles to protect prince Philip (see Fig. 3-27), Cinderella is cleaning the floor by the Stepmother’s command (see Fig. 3-28), and Dopey slides on the soap in *Snow White* (see

---

\(^{17}\) *Saint George and the Dragon* refers to the legend of Saint George slaying a dragon. The story involves a princess captured by a dragon, and Saint George eventually rescues the princess by slaying the dragon in their battle. A dragon often symbolized the Devil in the Middle Ages.
Fig. 3-29); in all of these instances the bubble’s luminosity, ethereality, and spirituality can be identified with the celestial light of heaven and ultimate happiness.

A Commercial Failure, An Artistic Success

As admittedly nothing can be more directly reflective of the public’s response to the film than the box office results, Sleeping Beauty, in this area, greatly defeated Disney’s high hopes. Scholars who have studied the Disney films have rendered their fair opinions on the quality of the film. In Allan’s comprehension, “The European references were now tacked on as decorative devices; the desire to create a new style, admirable in itself, failed through a misunderstanding of the capabilities of the medium, an attempt to reclothe an old shape” (236). Girveau related the failure to the lack of cohesion between the background and characters: “That look [Earle’s design] hampered the animators considerably, as they had great difficulty in adapting to his primitive, Gothic style. In this latter venture, the settings outweighed the rest of the production, and the public gave the film the cold shoulder when it was released, finding it too elaborate and pretentious” (210). Barrier ascribes the setback to Disney’s lack of personal attention, stating that “Sleeping Beauty is full of lapses of a kind that Disney would not have tolerated twenty years earlier” (271) and Tatar criticizes its resemblance to Snow White, the heroine of which “can do nothing more than lie in wait for Prince Charming” (Annotated 238).

However, Maltin renders an explanation and possibly a new perspective for us to reconsider the reasons behind the despondent public response: “One can imagine

18. Maria Tatar here wrote “Prince Charming” in reference to the prince in Snow White and Seven Dwarfs. “Prince Charming” is the name of the prince in Cinderella. The Disney studio never officially offered a name to the prince in Snow White.
reviewers going to see the film in 1959, ear abuzz with scandalous news that $6 million had been spent, minds agog with thoughts on other recent Disney features to use for comparison, all subjected to the promotional assault prepared by the Disney company to ensure the film’s success” (154). Maltin’s comment does not point to the esthetic aspects or the seemingly repetitive storyline; rather he addresses the external factors that might have led to this unsatisfying commercial result, such as failing to meet the public’s expectations. It is arguable that *Snow White* and *Cinderella* were successful to the point that they had gained the public’s approbation as the “model” fairy tale. It is not hard to imagine that the viewers, those who were accustomed to the usual Disney style, had a fixed anticipation of the film’s visual experience. The expectation projected an immediate resonance with the previous productions and consequently involved their favorite features: the expressive watercolor, the exaggeratedly rounded cute characters, and the romantic atmosphere; it is understandable that the public rejected a new form of art which hardly conformed to the sacred images of fairy tale in their mind, for *Sleeping Beauty*’s artistic style differed not only from previous Disney films but from any other cartoon productions in American cinema.

Maltin’s view might be proven true by the response when the film was repackaged and reissued in 1971 and then again in 1996. This time around, Disney presented the same story and artwork, and it auspiciously captured the heart of the audiences around the globe; the previous financial losses were recovered. *Sleeping Beauty* had found its new position amongst the other Disney fairy tale animations. Maltin again attributes the change in public response to external causes, suggesting that the film was reissued “at a time when children’s and so-called family entertainment had sunk to a
new low on television and in theatres. Not that *Sleeping Beauty* looks good only in comparison to the current competition. But seen today, it seems much better than anyone gave it credit for in 1959. The so-called heavy-handedness just isn’t there” (154-155). In Allan’s words, “time has been kind to *Sleeping Beauty*” and he credits “growing period charm” (236) for its glorious transmutation.

The initial failure of *Sleeping Beauty* might have been hurtful to the studio’s profit but it was catastrophic to Walt Disney personally. It shattered his vision of fairytale adaptation, which he had once believed was the foundation of his dream and success. He reduced staff from the animation department, “dismissing studio veterans with twenty or thirty years of service” (Barrier 273). Never did he produce another fairy tale-adapted feature before he passed away in 1966. The Disney Studio eventually decided to pick up fairy tale adaptation film again in 1989 for *The Little Mermaid*, leaving between it and *Sleeping Beauty* an astonishing thirty-year gap–a gap that reminds us of the studio’s caution in how they faced the challenges of the adaptation format. Regardless of the numbers shown on the box office ranking, it is safe to conclude that the final outcome of *Sleeping Beauty* is a success. The exquisite, revolutionary artwork of Earle remains an artistic masterpiece of the Disney realm today; the animation has evolved into one of the all-time favorites of the public, making Earle the only artist ever whose name overshadowed Walt Disney’s in an animation. *Sleeping Beauty* marked the grand finale of hand-painted film and ushered the Disney animation kingdom into the digital era.
Conclusion

Young Disney first moved to Hollywood in 1923, with a big dream of becoming a director in live-action films. However, his dream was defeated by reality; he had no money and received no job offers in the field. As disappointed as he was, he eventually returned to the production of animations, in which he had experienced some small successes before. Little did he know that fate intended a bigger mission for him; the specialty he built up in Kansas City turned out to be the medium that became “the perfect outlet for his special imagination and sense of fantasy” (Thomas and Johnston 7). In this study, I demonstrate Disney’s visual interpretation of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, the only three fairy tale-adapted full-length features undertaken in his lifetime. I have shown the primary sources of Disney’s images, both European and American; his discernment in combining different kinds of arts and artists; and his ways of visualizing the original stories in motion pictures. Disney’s method of adaptation transforms the complex relationship between the linguistic energy of literary writing, fragmentation of imagination, and fluidity of audio-movements. It is a notorious animating process that requires precise planning in styling, story and character development, sketching and drawing, ink and painting, directing, staging, reeling, special effects and sound that emphasizes and demands creativity, individuality, and collectivity. Story alteration, characterization, anthropomorphism and symbolism are incorporated in graphic techniques, and as a whole, he transmutes animation into a new form of storytelling that creates strong attachments and internal resonance in his audiences, surmounting cultural barriers. How Disney interpreted, created and received in fairy tale
adaptation testified the relationship between the different elements of storytelling at this point in history, followed by the inquisition into what those relationships entail.

The Disney pictures so powerfully hold onto their modern status in the realm of film and even fine arts, that certainly no amount of debate will diminish this status anytime soon. With the extraordinary public responses to his works, in addition to the power of film and TV media worldwide, the widespread affection for Disney’s work provokes mixed responses of disapproval and obsession, and has aroused the concern of traditional folklore advocates who see the different approaches to the literature as an act of blasphemy. All works of adapted films are somewhat undervalued today due to the high cultural status of literature imbedded in our subconscious mind preventing a fair judgment of the subject. Zipes’s view of Disney’s work, that it “robs the literary tale of its voice and changes its form and meaning” (“Breaking the Disney Spell” 344), along with other criticism in regards to his interpretation, implies a sense of fear as if the real value and meaning of the original tales could be contaminated or destroyed by Disney’s version. This interpretation of adaptation films is best summed up by Stam: “the standard rhetoric has often deployed an elegiac discourse of loss, lamenting what has been ‘lost’ in the transition from novel to film, while ignoring what has been ‘gained’” (3). As Cartmell and Whelehan suggest, in order to properly address this “contemporary dilemma,” viewers should focus on the graphic and narrative choices made by the producer, why those choices were made, and the circumstances or outcome that those choices create. Further, it is important to extend the study of such by finding alternative options and their potential effects on the adaptation. It is evident that the original tales and their related European roots nurtured the contextual and visual elements of Disney’s stories. The two
mediums maintain a symbiotic relationship; varieties of interpretations expand the text’s boundaries based on, and therefore heightening, the original meaning of the tales. Only when they are seen as separate mediums can the study of each form ultimately benefit from that of the other.

Although it is true that Disney’s imaginations and fantasies might not conform to the standard code of traditional folk tales and represent the messages that are considered to be pivotal in the originals, it is also true that the value of Disney’s fairy tale-adapted animations inescapably, as a modern reworking, will always be trapped under the shadow of the old classics. The “violations” which, according to the critics, Disney committed, whether intentionally or unexpectedly, are indeed what make Disney’s stories successful and irreplaceable, for his productions should be perceived as personal interpretation and creative elaboration, rather than a translation of the originals. The three adapted films in my study function as models of the “Disney pattern” and allow for the study to be extended to other Disney adaption productions in the later period–Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland, J.M. Barrie’s Peter Pan, A. A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh, Rudyard Kipling’s The Jungle Book, Carlo Collodi’s Pinocchio, Victor Hugo’s The Hunchback of Notre Dame, and more. When Disney borrowed his prototypes from some of the best fairytale art works–whether they are of Germanic, Nordic, English, French, or Hollywood–he was, in a way, borrowing the interpretation of other artists of the stories. The graphic and narrative selections he made witness the essence of the tales celebrated by the imagination of many genius minds, and his works have become the inspiration for many fairy tale adaptation creations by other artists as well. Disney’s creative use fired up a popular trend of fairy tale adaptation; the subject matter reappears in other modern
reworkings such as Angela Carter’s novel *Bloody Chamber* (1979); Roald Dahl’s nursery illustration book *Revolting Rhymes* (1982); Terry Gilliam’s fantastical live-action film *The Brothers Grimm* (2005) and Rupert Sander’s *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), in addition to the rise of fantasy graphic conventions in pop and digital arts. To be sure, the cycle of interpretation will continue regardless, and each time it will push the limits even further.

In the last part of my thesis, I would like to explore an intriguing example of Disney’s recent reproduction of a fairy tale: For the first time ever in Disney’s 2013 feature *Frozen*, an adaption of Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Snow Queen*, its twenty-first century heroine is no longer a passive princess who awaits a lover’s kiss for salvation. She is a Queen, staunch and full of fortitude, who has a new definition of true love and lectures her sister that “you cannot marry a guy you just met.” She is fearless in facing the challenge fate intends for her, determined to control her destiny and turn it around with magic, magic of her own. The feature illustrates the new Disney team’s approach to the subject of fairy tale adaptation, prolonging Disney’s spirit of “Once upon A Time”—a spirit they certainly did not let go—through the interpretation of a new generation.
Appendix - Figures

Figure 1-1. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* Storybook from Opening Scene. Snapshot of the opening scene of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Directed by David Hand, production of Walt Disney Picture, 1937.

Figure 1-2a. First Page of the Storybook from Opening Scene of *Snow White*. Snapshot of the opening scene from the *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Directed by David Hand, production of Walt Disney Picture, 1937.
Figure 1-2b. Initial S: The Lord Appearing to David in the Water.
Bute Master, illuminator (Franco-Flemish, active about 1260 – 1290), illumination about 1270 – 1280; written about 135 – 1375, Tempera colors, gold, and iron gall ink on parchment Leaf: 17 x 11.9 cm (6 11/16 x 4 11/16 in.) The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. 46, fol. 92
Figure 1-2c. Second Page of the Storybook from Opening Scene of Snow White. Snapshot of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Directed by David Hand, production of Walt Disney Picture, 1937.

Figure 1-3. The Queen Seated on Her Throne. Snapshot from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, directed by David Hand, production of Walt Disney Picture, 1937.
Figure 1-4a. *Kornstaur i Måneskinn [Stalks of Corn in Moonlight]*. Theodor Kittelsen, c.1900, watercolor, graphite, charcoal, Oslo, Museum of Art, Architecture and Design.

Figure 1-4b. *The Princess and the Trolls*. John Bauer, 1913, watercolor, Stockholm, National Museum.
Figure 1-5. *Trois Femmes et Trois Loups [Three Women and Three Wolves]*.  
Eugène Grasset, 1900, watercolor, Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

Figure 1-6. *Frühlingsabend [Spring Evening]*.  
Ludwig Ritcher, 1844, oil canvas, Düsseldorf, museum Kunstpalest.
Figure 1-7. Titania and Bottom. John Anster Fitzgerald, Mid-nineteenth century, oil on canvas, New York, French and Company, Inc.

Figure 1-8. Snow White in Glass Coffin. Hermann Vogel, 1894, illustration, Kinder und Hausmarchen, Munich.
Figure 1-9. Shirley Temple and Janet Gaynor. Photograph, Paris, Bibliothèques de Film et de l’Image.

Figure 1-10. Joan Crawford. Photograph, c.1940, Paris, Bibliothèque du Film et de l'Image.
Figure 1-11a. Uta, Wife of the Margrave of Meissen. Column statue, the Gothic cathedral in Naumburg, Germany.
Figure 1-11b. Early Sketch of the Queen.  
Storyboard drawing, 1937, graphite pencil, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 1-12. The Queen Standing in front of the Magic Mirror.  
Snapshot from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, directed by David Hand, production of Walt Disney Picture, 1937.
Figure 1-13. *L’Enfer [Hell]*.

Figure 1-14a. *Det Rusler og Tusler Rasler og Tasler [Creepy, Crawly, Rustling, Bustling]*.
Theodor Kittelsen, 1900.
Figure 1-14b. *The Grotto of Manacor, Mallorca.*
William Degouve de Nuncques, 1901, oil on canvas.

Figure 1-15a. *Snow White Surrounded by Terrifying Hands.*
Storyboard drawing, 1937, graphite pencil and red pencil, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.
Figure 1-15b. Terrified Snow White Feels All Nature is Against Her. Gustaf Tenggren. Illustration for *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs*. Copyright of Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Figure 1-16a. Charon Comes to Ferry Souls Across the River Acheron to Hell. Gustave Doré, 1861. One of the illustrations for Dante’s *Inferno*.
Figure 1-16b. The Queen as Witch Paddling Across the Forest. Illustration for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Figure 1-17a. Snow White at Her Balcony. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, storyboard drawing, 1937, graphite, colored pencil, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and Animation Research Library.
Figure 1-17b. *Romeo and Juliet*.

Figure 1-18. *Snow White*.
Figure 1-19. *Metropolis*.

Figure 1-20. Music Instruments of the Yodeling Scene.
Early sketch for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Disney Enterprises, Inc.
Figure 1-21. Grumpy’s Craved Organ. Early sketch for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Figure 2-1. The Decorated Storybook with Theatrical Light. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-2. Young Cinderella and Her Father, Horse, and Puppy Bruno. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

Figure 2-3a. Stepmother and Sisters Looking Down at Cinderella from Her Window. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-3b. Queen Jealously Looking Down at Snow White from Her Window. Snapshot from *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs*, 1937.

Figure 2-4. Stepmother Surrounded by Shadow. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-5. Two Blue Birds Open the Curtain in Cinderella’s Attic. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

Figure 2-6. The Two Blue Birds in Clothes Cinderella Made for Them. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-7. Prince Charming’s Castle with Village in the Foreground.
1950, glass, gouache, plates from a multiplane camera, production background, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 2-8. Window Bars’ Shadow on Cinderella’s Body.
Snapshot of Cinderella, 1950.
Figure 2-9. Stepmother’s Reflection from a Broken Mirror. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

Figure 2-10a. *Triumph of the Will*. Leni Riefenstahl, 1936.
Figure 2-10b. Cinderella Enters the Royal Ball. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

Figure 2-11a. Stepmother Going Up to Attic. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-11b. The Staircase Leading to Cinderella’s Attic
Snapshot of Cinderella, 1950.

Figure 2-12. The Spiral Staircase.
Figure 2-13a. Anastasia and Drizella Destroying Cinderella’s New Dress. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

Figure 2-13b. Close Shot of Anastasia. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-14. Guards Chasing After Cinderella After She Flees the Royal Ball. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

Figure 2-15. Cinderella Transforms back to Rags After Twelve O’clock. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-16a. *Cinderella Looking Out the Window.*
Arthur Rackham, 1919, illustration from *Cinderella* by Evans, C. S.

Figure 2-16b. Cinderella Looking Out the Window (From the Disney Movie).
Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-17a. *Cinderella Races Down the Stairs.*
A. H. Watson, 1927, illustration of *Told Again - Traditional Tales told by Walter de la Mare.*

Figure 2-17b. Cinderella Rushing Down the Staircase (From the Disney Movie).
Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-18a. *Her Godmother Pointed to the Finest of All with Her Wand.*
Edmund Dulac, 1910, illustration of *The Sleeping Beauty and Other Tales From the Old French* by Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur.

Figure 2-18b. Fairy Godmother Transforms a Pumpkin to a Coach.
Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.
Figure 2-19a. The Mice Sewing the Mayor’s Coat.

Figure 2-19b. The Mice Make a Dress for Cinderella.
1950, production background, celluloid, gouache, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.
Figure 2-20a. *Simpkin the Cat Keeps the Mice Under a Teacup.*  

Figure 2-20b. *Lady Mouse Curtseying in Front of a Teacup.*  
Figure 2-20c. Gus and Jaq in a Teacup.  
1950, production background, celluloid, gouache, Burbank, California, Walt Disney 
Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 2-21a. *Pumpkin Carriage Drawn by the Three Pairs of Rabbits.*  
Beatrix Potter, 1895, watercolor, ink and pencil, inscribed on back: “Cinderella ‘s carriage going to fetch her from the ball, intended for moonlight,” London, Victoria and Albert Museum.
Figure 2-21b. The Carriage Fleeing the Prince’s Castle. 
1950, production background, celluloid, gouache, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 2-22. Le Rat Qui S'est Retiré du Monde [The Rat Who Withdrew From the World]. 
Philippe Rousseau, 1885, oil on canvas, Lyon, Musée Beaux-Art.
Figure 2-23. *Mouse Playing a Violin with Four Snails.*
Heinrich Kley, 1920, pencil, San Francisco, Walt Disney Family Foundation.

Figure 2-24. *Cinderella Being Helped By Birds.*
Ludwig Richter, Illustration of *Cinderella* in Brothers Grimm’s Fairy Tale.
Figure 2-25. *King Rother Puts the Shoes on the Princess’s Feet.* Hermann Vogel, 1882, Illustration of *Epics and Romances* of the Middle Ages.

Figure 3-1. The Decorated Storybook on an Easel. Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.
Figure 3-2. The Celebration of the Birth of Princess Aurora. Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.

Figure 3-3a. *April: Aristocratic Lovers Get Ready for Their Wedding*. Limbourg Brothers, early 15th century, From *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry*, Victoria and Albert Museum.
Figure 3-3b. September: Harvesting Grapes.
Limbourg Brothers, early 15th century, From Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry,
Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 3-4. The Arrival of Three Good Fairies at Aurora’s Birth Celebration.
Figure 3-5a. Concept Drawing of Maleficent and Her Raven. Sleeping Beauty early concept design, Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Figure 3-5b. Maleficent Curses Aurora with her Wicked Power. Snapshot of Sleeping Beauty, 1959.
Figure 3-6. Aurora Singing to the Birds in the Forest. Snapshot of Sleeping Beauty, 1959.

Figure 3-7a. The Fairies’ House in the Forest. Eyvind Earle, c.1949, gouache, preliminary study, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 3-7b. Journey to Wu. Anonymous, 15th century, ink on paper, Montreal, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montreal.
Figure 3-8. Aurora Sings with Her Animal Companions in the Forest. Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.

Figure 3-9a. *Prince’s Arrival at the Sleeping Beauty’s Castle.* Gustave Doré, c. 1862, engraving, Strasbour, Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain.
Figure 3-9b. The Sleeping Castle.
Eyvind Earle, 1959, production background, ink and gouache, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 3-10. Henry V.
Laurence Olivier, 1944, film still, Paris, Bibliothèque du Film et de l'Image.
Figure 3-11a. *Romeo and Juliet*.

Figure 3-11b. Princess Aurora Asleep.
Eyvind Earle, 1959, production background, celluloid, ink and gouache, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.
Figure 3-12. *Virgin and Child in a Landscape.*
Jan Provoost, early 16th century, oil painting on wood, The National Gallery of London.

Figure 3-13. *Virgin and Child with Saints Catherine of Alexandria and Barbara.*
Hans Memling, 1479, triptych on oak, The National Gallery of London.
Figure 3-14. *Return from the Inn.*
Pieter Bruegel the Younger, c.1620, oil and tempera on panel, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of the Maxwell family in memory of Mrs. Edward Maxwell.
Figure 3-15a. King Stefan’s Castle.
Eyvind Earle, production background, Gouache, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 3-15b. King Stefan’s Castle, Interior.
Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959
Figure 3-15c. Maleficent’s Castle.
1959, production background, gouache, Burbank, California, Walt Disney Feature Animation and the Animation Research Library.

Figure 3-16. Castle Eltz.
Karl Friedrich Lessing, ca.1855, oil on canvas, The Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin.
Figure 3-17. Schloss Neuschwanstein.
Christian Jank, 1869, gouache, Munich, Wittelsbacher Ausgleichsfonds.

Figure 3-18. Le Gai Château [Cheerful Castle].
Victor Hugo, c. 1847, ink, wash and pencil on pasteboard, Paris, Maison de Victor Hugo.
Figure 3-19. *Nocturnal Spires.*

Figure 3-20. *Vue Cavalière du Château de Pierrefonds en Cours de Restauration [Bird’s Eye View of the Château de Pierrefonds During Its Restoration].*
Éugène Viollet-le-Duc, 1858, watercolor, Paris, Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine.
Figure 3-21. Aurora and Prince Philip Dancing at the End of the Film. Snapshot of Sleeping Beauty, 1959.

Figure 3-22. Maleficent’s Throne. Snapshot of Sleeping Beauty, 1959.
Figure 3-23. Flora, Fauna and Merryweather Rescuing Prince Philip Form Maleficent’s Castle. 
Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.

Figure 3-24. Aurora Reaching for the Spindle. 
Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.
Figure 3-25a. *St. George Slaying the Dragon.*

Figure 3-25b. Prince Philip Slaying Maleficent the Dragon.
Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.
Figure 3-26. Prince Philip Fights Maleficent. Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.

Figure 3-27. The Fairies Turn the Arrows to Bubbles. Snapshot of *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959.
Figure 3-28. Cinderella Cleans the Floor on Stepmother’s Demand. Snapshot of *Cinderella*, 1950.

Figure 3-29. Dopey Slides on a Bar of Soap. Snapshot of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937.
I. Works Cited


II. Filmography

*Cinderella*. Dir. Wifred Jackson, Hamilton Luske and Clyde Geronimi. Walt Disney Picture, 1950. Video.
