

Edward Burne-Jones's *Cinderella*: The Magic Cinder

Of the Fortune of the Maid who was called Cinder-Maid and Afterwards a Queen.
-William Morris, Inscription in *Cinderella Cycle*, 1863

Liana De Girolami Cheney
UMASS, Lowell, USA

This article contends that Pre-Raphaelite portrayals of fairy tales should be interpreted as acts of historiographical and psychological reinterpretation rather than mere illustration. By drawing upon narratives already influenced by early modern print culture and socially mediated storytelling, artists like Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris reawakened the suppressed symbolic and affective aspects of the fairy tale, thereby transforming Victorian children's literature into an intricate visual language that embodies temporality, interiority, and imaginative experience. Edward Burne-Jones's *Cinderella* of 1863, a watercolor and gouache on paper, is a painting at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, MA, that embodies the Pre-Raphaelite ideals of beauty, symbolism, and storytelling. Instead of portraying dramatic moments or historical recollections, Burne-Jones focused on a serene, emotionally resonant scene that underscores Cinderella's patience and inner dignity, along with a recollection of a magical dance with a prince, evoking love. Through graceful lines and contemplative compositions, Burne-Jones transformed the familiar fairy tale into a poetic visual narrative aligned with Victorian artistic ideals. The story of Cinderella was inspired by the classic fairy tale recorded by Giambattista Basile in *Pentamerone (Lo cunto de li cunti, 1634-1636)* and later adapted by Charles Perrault in *Histoires or Tales of Past Times (1697)*, which introduced the well-known elements of the glass slipper and the prince's search. In 1800s Britain, scholars and writers began translating and exploring early European folklore. Basile's tales were translated and integrated into 19th-century literary culture. Artists and writers became fascinated by older, darker fairy tales, which influenced the Aesthetic and Pre-Raphaelite movements, particularly in their portrayal of melancholic heroines.

Keywords: children's stories, Cinderella, Pre-Raphaelites, symbolism, magic

Introduction

This study is divided into three sections. First, an introduction discussing children's fairy tales from Basile to the Victorian era, followed by observations on Pre-Raphaelite reinterpretations of these tales. Second, an analysis of the ceramic cycles of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Cinderella*, created by Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris between 1862 and 1863 (Figures 1, 2, and 3). Finally, an examination of the symbolism in Edward Burne-Jones's *Cinderella* (1863), a watercolor and gouache on view at the Fine Arts Museum in Boston, Massachusetts.

From Basile to the Victorians: Repression and Revival

In the second half of the 19th century, the revival of fairy tales and children's literature in Britain coincided

Liana De Girolami Cheney, Ph.D., Emerita Professor of Art History, UMASS, Lowell, USA; Visiting Art Historical Researcher, University of Aldo Moro, Bari, Italy.

with the emergence of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, generating a fertile intersection between narrative tradition and visual culture. The Pre-Raphaelite revival of fairy tales went beyond simply illustrating children's stories; it turned them into means for conveying psychological, moral, and aesthetic messages. Artists like Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris drew heavily from the imagery and structures of classic tales—*Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, along with related stories—yet their work is often viewed too narrowly as simply translating literary content into visual form. Such interpretations risk overlooking the complex historical processes through which fairy tales themselves were constructed, transmitted, and transformed prior to their nineteenth-century reception (MacCarthy, 2011/2012, pp. 142-145; Wildman & Christian, 1998).¹



Figure 1. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrin Smith] Faulkner, painter, William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella*, 1862-1863, ceramic tiles. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, National Museums Liverpool. Photo credit: Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.



Figure 1a. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrin Smith] Faulkner, painter, William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella Cycle*, 1862-1863, ceramic tiles. The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, CA. Photo courtesy: The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, CA.

¹ MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite*, pp. 142-145; Wildman & Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones*.



Figure 1b. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrinsmith] Faulkner, painter, William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella Cycle*, det., 1862-1863, ceramic tiles.
The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, CA.
Photo courtesy: The Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanical Gardens, CA.



Figure 1c. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrinsmith] Faulkner, painter, William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella Cycle*, det., 1863-1864, ceramic tiles.
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, London.
Photo credit: ©William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest.



Figure 1d. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrinsmith] Faulkner, painter, William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella Cycle with Wedding Scene*, 1864, ceramic tiles.

Sold by Sotheby's London in 2009, Lot 7.

Photo credit: Sotheby's London.



Figure 1e. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrinsmith] Faulkner, painter, William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella Cycle with Wedding Scene*, 1864, ceramic tiles.

Two Red Roses Foundation, Palm Harbor, Florida.

Photo credit: Two Red Roses Foundation, Palm Harbor, Florida.



Figure 3. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrin Smith] Faulkner, painter, William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Sleeping Beauty Cycle*, 1862-1863, ceramic tiles. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK.

Photo courtesy and credit: ©Peter and Renate Nahum; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK.

Recent scholarship has fundamentally revised our understanding of these processes. In *Fairy Tales: A New History*, Ruth B. Bottigheimer has demonstrated that many of the tales commonly regarded as products of an immemorial oral tradition were, in fact, decisively shaped by early modern print culture, in which authors like Giambattista Basile (2007, pp. 45-52)² and Charles Perrault (2007)³ established narrative patterns that would later be disseminated across Europe (Bottigheimer, 2009, pp. 33-67).⁴ At the same time, Valerie Paradiz in *Clever Maids: The Secret History of the Grimm Fairy Tales* has emphasized the role of female storytellers in the formation of these tales, particularly in relation to the Brothers Grimm collections, thereby revealing the fairy tale as a hybrid cultural form shaped by the interaction of oral transmission, literary mediation, and social exchange (Paradiz, 2005, pp. 1-28).⁵ Together, these approaches displace the notion of the fairy tale as a stable or purely folkloric genre, instead presenting it as a dynamic and historically contingent mode of storytelling.

These child psychologists of fairy tale, including Bruno Bettelheim in his book *On the Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and the Importance of Fairy Tales*, argued that fairy tales (*Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*,

² Basile, *The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*, pp. 45-52, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Pentamerone,_or_The_Story_of_Stories/Cenerentola.

³ Perrault, *Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper*, trans. and illus. Marcia Brown (Santa Rosa, CA: Paw Prints, Baker & Taylor Publishers, 2007).

⁴ Bottigheimer, *Fairy Tales*, pp. 33-67.

⁵ Paradiz, *Clever Maids*, pp. 1-28.

Sleeping Beauty, and others) deal with elements of darkness, death, witches, and curses and thereby help children to cope with and dispel their feelings of fear (Bettelheim, 1976, pp. 6-12).⁶ The stories also empower children to overcome feelings of abandonment, betrayal, and injustice, while also providing knowledge about individuals, society, and life. Consequently, they aid in the development of children's cognitive abilities by illustrating "patterns of polarization in the world" (Bettelheim, 1976, pp. 225-236; Spencer, 1976, pp. 1642-1644).⁷

Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tale*, described the child's need to confront fear and duality as already evident in the visual and symbolic language of Pre-Raphaelite reinterpretations of classic stories. In *Fairy Tales*, Bottigheimer argued that a specific group of fairy tales, called "rise" tales, originates from certain historical and social contexts. This challenges the usual belief that most fairy tales come from oral traditions. For example, "rise" stories, similar to *Cinderella* or *Puss in Boots*, feature characters who rise from poverty or low social status. Bottigheimer emphasizes stories where magic provides the poor with hope of becoming wealthy. Additionally, she attributes the creation of some children's tales to particular individuals, eras, and places, especially the Venetian author Straparola, who was active in the 1550s. His collection, *Le piacevoli notti* (*Pleasant Nights*), is regarded as the earliest record of these so-called "rise" tales. However, the core elements of fairy tales—such as magical objects and sudden riches—were already present before the 1550s. Conversely, in *Clever Maids*, folklorist Paradiz highlighted the essential link between oral folklore and written traditions in shaping children's stories, especially those by the German scholars Brothers Grimm, authors of the well-known collection of folktales, *Children's and Household Tales* (J. Grimm & W. Grimm, 1812).⁸

But there are earlier oral and written traditions associated with the fairy tale of Cinderella, including the Greek story of Rhodopis from the first century BCE, recorded by the Greek geographer Strabo (64 BCE-21 CE) in one of his 17 books of *Geographica* (XVII.1.33) and also noted by the eminent first Greek historian, Herodotus (484-425 BCE) in *Histories* (2.134-135). In this fairy tale, Rhodopis, a Greek maiden, was kidnapped by Greek sailors and sold into slavery in Egypt. She was beautiful and talented in dancing and singing, which allowed her to rise from a slave girl to a courtesan at the Egyptian court of Pharaoh Psammeticus. One day, while bathing, a falcon stole one of her red sandals and dropped it into the Pharaoh's lap. Fascinated by this magical event and the sandal's beauty, the Pharaoh sought to find its owner; discovering her to be the beautiful courtesan, he married her, making her Queen of Egypt. Notably, this story does not involve an evil stepmother, and the slippers are simply red leather sandals. Fairy-tale influence was likely pervasive throughout Mediterranean culture, especially within the society and culture of ancient Roman spheres (Scheidel, 2010; McLaufhlin, 2016/2020).⁹

Another famous ancient fairy tale is the Chinese story of Ye Xian, written by Duan Chenghi in the collection *Youyang Zazu* (*Miscellaneous Morsels From Youyang*) between 850 and 853 CE (Waley, 1947, pp. 2226-2238; Lai, 2007, pp. 49-56),¹⁰ which narrates how Ye Xian befriends a magical fish with golden eyes. The cruel stepmother kills and eats the fish, but Ye Xian, a household servant, keeps its bones. During a royal spring festival, she uses the fish bones to wish for a beautiful gown and golden slippers. At the festival, she loses a slipper, which

⁶ Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, pp. 6-12.

⁷ Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment*, pp. 225-236; and *The Uses of Enchantment*, review by Joseph Nagy, pp. 1642-1644.

⁸ Jacob Grimm & Wilhelm Grimm, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, 1812 in English. This study does not explore the historical and literary comparisons of the different interpretations of the children's fairy tales from ancient cultures to the Pre-Raphaelite era.

⁹ Scheidel, *Rome and China*, esp. Chaps. 1 and 5; McLaufhlin, *The Roman Empire and the Silk Routes*, intro., Chaps. 1 and 2, on trades of silk and glassmaking techniques and other economic interactions.

¹⁰ Waley, "The Chinese Cinderella Story", pp. 2226-2238; Lai, "Two Translations of the Chinese Cinderella Story", pp. 49-56.

the king later finds and uses to identify its owner. Ultimately, Ye Xian's kindness earns her the king's love, leading to marriage. Meanwhile, the stepmother and stepsister are punished and forced into lifelong slavery for mistreating Ye Xian. It is probable that this tale and others were transmitted in the days of the early Roman Empire, particularly in the 13th century, during the journeys of the Venetian Marco Polo (1254-1324) to China (Spencer, 1958; Ball, 2001).¹¹

The Pre-Raphaelites did more than depict sanitized versions of the stories available to them; they re-engaged with deeper narrative layers. This approach, as mentioned, implicitly reverses the processes of simplification that Bottigheimer identified, thereby restoring some symbolic richness and emotional complexity to the tales. Simultaneously, their work aligns with Paradiz's focus on the social and interpretive versatility of fairy tales, which can be adapted across different contexts and audiences. As Bettelheim's analysis shows, the moral and cultural elements are what make fairy tales a consistently psychologically impactful force.

Pre-Raphaelite Reinterpretation of Fairy Tales

The revival of children's stories during the Victorian era offered a crucial intellectual and imaginative foundation for the work of Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris (Carpenter & Prichard, 1999; Avery, 1965; Lerer, 2008; Crane, 1877; Zipes, 1987; Bottigheimer, 1987).¹² Their artistic practices reflect a deep engagement with the symbolic and narrative elements of traditional fairy tales. Although these stories are often seen as simple entertainment for children, by the 19th century, they were recognized as resulting from a complex process of transmission influenced by both oral traditions and literary adaptations. For example, in *Fairy Tales*, Bottigheimer has shown that many well-known tales, including *Cinderella*, derive their familiar narratives not from an unbroken folk heritage but from early modern print culture, where authors such as Basile and Perrault played key roles in shaping their plot, tone, and moral lessons emphasis (Basile, 2007, pp. 45-52; Perrault, 2007).¹³

Meanwhile, Paradiz complicates this literary model by highlighting the important roles women played in shaping these tales. In *Clever Maids*, Paradiz argues that the stories collected by the Brothers Grimm were often passed down by educated women storytellers, whose social status and storytelling sensibilities subtly yet meaningfully influenced the tales' content. The fairy tale thus appears as a hybrid form—simultaneously oral, literary, and social—shaped through selection, refinement, and adaptation, ultimately leading to its popularity as children's literature during the Victorian era.

Moreover, the creation of these visual ancient fairy tales was connected to traditional children's rhymes and nursery songs, combining visual art, poetry, lyrics, and music, providing an enriching experience for children, as highlighted by the British illustrator Walter Crane's *Baby's Opera: A Book of Old Rhymes With New Dresses* (Figure 4).¹⁴ Crane was aligning with Burne-Jones and Morris in their pursuit of creativity within the Arts and Crafts Movement.¹⁵

¹¹ *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. and ed. Latham; Ball, *Rome in the East*.

¹² Carpenter & Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*; Avery, *Victorian Children's Fiction*; Lerer, *Children's Literature*; Crane, *The Baby's Opera*; Zipes, *Victorian Fairy Tales*, pp. 1-25; Bottigheimer, *Grimms' Bad Girls and Bold Boys*.

¹³ Basile, *The Tale of Tales*, pp. 45-52; Perrault's *Cinderella*, Introduction.

¹⁴ For the book, see: <https://archive.org/details/babyquotsopera00cran>.

¹⁵ For information about the movement, see Parry, *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement*; Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*; and Greensted, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain*.



Figure 4. Walter Crane, *The Baby Opera* (London: Frederic Warne & Co., 1877), illustrations, color and wood engraving by Walter Crane.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Credit Line: Museum Accession, transferred from the Library.

Within this layered context of transmission and transformation, Burne-Jones's approach to fairy-tale themes can be seen as a visual revival of the genre's underlying psychological and symbolic dimensions. His Cinderella interpretation diverges from the conventional narrative climax, focusing instead on a moment of pause, illustrating a young maiden enchanted by magic ashes and glass slippers. This focus on stillness and enclosure creates a sense of inwardness, aligning with Bruno Bettelheim's later interpretation that fairy tales externalize internal emotional struggles through symbolic imagery.

If Burne-Jones depicted fairy tales as dreamlike images, Morris transformed them into tangible, textual forms, highlighting the harmony of story, design, and craftsmanship, as in ceramic tiles. Through the Kelmscott Press, Morris aimed to revive the unified aesthetic of medieval books, blending storytelling with a comprehensive environment of ornament and typography (Figure 5). This approach echoes the same historical trends noted by Bettelheim, Bottigheimer, and Paradiz: the shift of narratives across different media, from oral storytelling to printed books and visual arts. Morris's work actively engaged in and deliberately expanded on the evolution of fairy tales into objects meant for aesthetic appreciation, while also critiquing the industrial conditions that led to the mass production of Victorian children's literature.



Figure 5. William Morris, Frontispiece and First Page, woodcut from *The Wood Beyond the World* (Kelmscott Press, 1894).

Building on this revised historiography, this essay argues that Pre-Raphaelite engagement with fairy tales is not just a secondary act of illustration but a vital reawakening of the genre's inherent symbolism and psychological depth. In the work of Burne-Jones, most notably the *Briar Rose* cycle (1885-1890), narrative is suspended rather than resolved, transformed into a visual meditation on temporality, interiority, and the threshold between stasis and awakening (Cheney, 2021a, pp. 332-360).¹⁶ In Morris's productions, particularly those of the Kelmscott Press, the fairy tale is reconstituted as a total aesthetic environment in which text, ornament, and material form converge to produce an immersive narrative experience.

This essay thus proposes that Pre-Raphaelite art functions as a site where the earlier complexities of the fairy-tale tradition—partially obscured by Victorian moralization and adaptation—are reanimated in visual form. In this context, the Pre-Raphaelites may be regarded as anticipating, in their artistic practice, the insights later articulated by Bruno Bettelheim, who regards fairy tales as symbolic expressions of psychological conflict and transformation. By positioning Pre-Raphaelite painting and design within the broader history of fairy-tale

¹⁶ Cheney, "Edward Burne-Jones's *Sleeping Beauty*", pp. 332-360.

transmission, this study elucidates the extent to which these works engage not only with narrative content but also with the deeper epistemological and affective structures that such narratives encode.

By the late 19th century, Victorian Medievalism and the Interiorization of Myth were viewed as evidence that the epistemological confidence underpinning Renaissance allegory had fractured. Industrial modernity, scientific materialism, and religious doubt destabilized unified cosmology. Within this context, Burne-Jones's mythological imagery did not assert metaphysical order but aesthetic refuge. British art critic John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) moralized aesthetics, still grounding art in spiritual truth.¹⁷ However, the British art historian Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* (1873) shifted the focus of art toward subjective intensity and inward sensation. The emphasis moves from collective philosophy to individual experience.¹⁸

Myth persists—but its role shifts. Cinderella is no longer personified as Maid Cindar (Cinder Maid), embodying a fairy tale. Instead, she now symbolizes a philosophical journey, representing inner reflection on beauty and thought. Viewers do not interpret a structured allegory; instead, they experience mood, atmosphere, and psychological presence. Mythical allegory assumes stable referential translation: Figures represent specific philosophical or moral ideas within shared codes. In Symbolist aesthetics, a symbol resists complete paraphrase. It evokes, suggests rather than explains.

Interestingly, Burne-Jones's and Morris's narrative presented in a fragmented display of episodes from these children's stories, formatted in square or rectangular frames, not only influenced the aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts Movement through design, composition, and registration but also anticipated the modern design movements of comic strips and film strips, which present sequential order.

Burne-Jones and William Morris: Children's Fairy Tales: Ceramic Tiles

Burne-Jones and Morris, through their art, set the stage for exploring beauty as envisioned in their children's fairy tales. Burne-Jones crafted a moment of pregnant aesthetic (Lessing, 1984, Chap. 16)¹⁹ significance for the viewer, capturing an unusual pause that conveys his reflections on art, beauty, and love through fantasy. His flowing lines, luminous colors, and spatial illusions link the narrative scenes across these cycles, creating a visual sense of suspension that engages the viewer. Burne-Jones often explained what painting meant to him:

I mean by a picture a beautiful, romantic dream of something that never was, never will be—in a light better than any light that ever shone—in a land no one can define or remember, only desire—and the forms divinely beautiful—and then I wake up.²⁰ (Cecil, 1969, p. 143; Spencer, 1972, p. 37)

For Burne-Jones, beauty was the ultimate good in life and the primary source of his inspiration. He also articulated his artistic drive through these words: “Only this is true, that beauty is very beautiful, and softens, and comforts, and inspires, and rouses, and lifts up, and never fails”²¹ (Burne-Jones, 1904, 2:125; Fitzgerald, 1975,

¹⁷ Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*.

¹⁸ Pater, *The Renaissance*.

¹⁹ Lessing, *Laocoön* (1776), Chap. 16.

²⁰ Cecil, *Visionary and Dreamer*, p. 143, quoting from a letter Burne-Jones wrote to Morris. See also Spencer, *The Aesthetic Movement*, p. 37.

²¹ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 2:125; Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones: A Biography*, p. 16; Gaunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*, p. 152. Probably Burne-Jones was aware of Walter Pater's philosophical writings, particularly *Plato*

p. 16; Gaunt, 1942, p. 152).

His aesthetic quest was echoed by Morris in a lecture entitled “The Beauty of Life”, delivered at the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design on 19 February 1880. He defined beauty as the integration of individual aspects into a happy and productive life, which can genuinely improve our daily experiences and sense of duty. He stated:

Beauty, which is what is meant by art, using the word in its widest sense is, I contend, no mere accident to human life, which people can take or leave as they choose, but a positive necessity of life, if we are to live as nature meant us to; that is unless we are content be less than men [humans].²² (Morris, 1974)

He further encouraged artists and patrons to seek beauty in decorating one’s homes, stating:

If you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful. And if we apply that rule strictly, we shall ... create a demand for real art, as the phrase goes; and in the second place, we shall surely have more money to pay for decent houses.²³ (Morris, 1974)

The artistic sensibilities of these two Pre-Raphaelite artists were evident in their commissions for patrons’ home décor, such as overmantels on fireplaces featuring children’s fairy tales.

Burne-Jones and Morris created multiple versions of children’s stories using ceramic tiles (R. Myers & H. Myers, 1996, repr. 2004, pp. 28-59).²⁴ To satisfy their patrons, they adjusted their storytelling and design elements. For example, while the core story remains consistent across most versions, extra narrative sequences were sometimes included, such as an addition to a Wedding Scene in the *Cinderella* cycles (Figures 1d and 1e). Additionally, the tile backgrounds vary, featuring blue tiles with daisies, swans, or no background at all (Figures 1 and 1a) (R. Myers & H. Myers, 1996, repr. 2004, pp. 17-19, 67-70).²⁵

In 1854, Archibald MacLaren (1820-1884), a Scottish educator of military gymnastics at Oxford, commissioned Burne-Jones to illustrate a book on *Fairy Family*, a collection of European children’s tales (Harrison & Waters, 1973, repr. 1989, pp. 16-19, illus. pp. 18-19).²⁶ The task consisted of 90 pen-and-ink drawings to be reproduced as engravings for this book. Although Burne-Jones completed several of the drawings, he found the project onerous. The drawings are arid and stiff in treatment of the human form and overall design, showing the assimilation of influences from contemporary illustrators, including Myles Birket Foster (1825-1899) and northern Renaissance artists such as Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528).

After this artistic fiasco, Burne-Jones was ready and pleased to accept a new commission on the theme of fairy tales to demonstrate his artistic drawing talents. In 1862, Myles Birket Foster, a popular English landscape painter and illustrator, commissioned Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company to design furnishings, stained glass, and ceramic tiles for his new house at The Hill House at Witley in Surrey (Christian, 2009, pp. 137-154, esp. pp. 138-140).²⁷ According to the Pre-Raphaelite decorative tradition, fireplaces in children’s rooms were embellished with narrative stories on ceramic tiles over the mantles and on the sides, and Foster wished to use

and Platonism, pp. 241-244, where Pater discusses Plato’s ideas of Beauty and Nature. See also Spencer, *The Aesthetic Movement*, p. 37; and Cheney, “Burne-Jones: Mannerist in an Age of Modernism”, pp. 103-116.

²² <https://www.eb-j.org/pdfViewer/articles/MzI2OA==>; Morris, *The Beauty of Life*.

²³ <https://www.eb-j.org/pdfViewer/articles/MzI2OA==>; Morris, *The Beauty of Life*.

²⁴ Myers & Myers, *William Morris Tiles*, pp. 28-59.

²⁵ Myers & Myers, *William Morris Tiles*, pp. 17-19 on the daisy pattern; and pp. 67-70 on the swan pattern.

²⁶ Harrison & Waters, *Burne-Jones*, pp. 16-19, illus. pp. 18-19. Several drawings and the title page for the *Fairy Family* are in a private collection in London.

²⁷ Christian, “The Briar Rose Series”, pp. 137-154, esp. pp. 138-140.

representations of fairy tales in this manner. Morris and Burne-Jones composed designs for three sets of tales or cycles for the mantels and single figures from the tales below the fireplace: *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Sleeping Beauty* (Wildman & Christian, 1998, p. 92).²⁸

Burne-Jones produced drawings and sketches for the tales, while Kate Faulkner (1841-98) and Lucy Faulkner Orrinsmith (1839-1910) applied vibrant colors to the ceramic tiles, supplied by Morris (Morris, Marshall, Faulkner Company). Additionally, Philip Webb (1831-1915) carried out the architectural design based on Burne-Jones's designs. Morris composed and decorated these areas, utilizing Dutch tiles and tile painters for the decorative details. The ceramic tiles were made of tin-glazed earthenware and then hand-painted. The design is set within a large rectangular frame, whose background and borders feature blue-and-white tiles with painted swans.²⁹

The narrative is presented in a rectangular or registry format, like notes on a musical score. It is horizontally displayed and surrounded by a border of tiles. There are six sets of painted tiles: three on the upper level and three on the lower level of the ceramic platform. A long inscription as a painted scroll informs the viewer about each tale: "This is the story of the maid with the shoe of glass and of how she became Queen, who was before called Cinder-wench", in the *Cinderella* cycle: "How she lost her shoe of glass at the feast and the Prince made to be cried that he would wed her that could wear the shoe and how Cinder-Maid done could wear it".

In the *Beauty and the Beast* cycle, the inscription reads: "How a Prince who by enchantment was under the form of a beast became a man again by the love of a certain maiden".

And in the *Sleeping Beauty* cycle, the tile inscription reads: "Of a certain Prince who delivered a king's daughter from a sleep of a hundred years, wherein she and all hers had been cast by enchantment".

The stories' cycles of *Cinderella* and *Beauty and the Beast* each have six large rectangular panels, while the *Sleeping Beauty* cycle has nine panels. Within each rectangular panel, there are two square tiles illustrating the scene. The panels are seen from left to right, much like in illustrated reading books for children.

The architectural settings and backgrounds of the scenes are highly inventive, shifting from interiors to exteriors. The exterior or outdoor scenes depict palaces with courtyards, landscapes with cultivated lands, forests, and enclosed gardens with elaborate trellises covered with flowers, mostly roses (Figures 2 and 3). The interior scene depicted various alcoves from different parts of a noble residence, such as parlors, dining rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, palace ballrooms, and royal audience chambers. Each background design is thoughtfully detailed: The kitchen shows an ornate cupboard filled with dishes, windows that open onto cultivated land, large fireplaces with roaring fires and cooking pots, and ceramic floor tiles (Figures 1b and 1c). In the palace ballroom, a large decorative tapestry or cloth of honor hangs along the walls, while the floor features carpets and a wooden surface (Figure 1a).

The panel design demonstrates an astute utilization of various materials in constructing a castle, including bricks and pebbles for the surrounding grounds. Internally, the surfaces transition from wooden flooring to

²⁸ Wildman & Christian, *Edward Burne-Jones*, p. 92. These authors note that Burne-Jones recorded numerous entries about the tiles over the fireplace mantles between 1862 and 1864, e.g., "September 30, 1862: 10 designs for Tiles Cinderella L 7.10.0"; "July 26, 1863: Beauty & the Beast L 6.0.0"; and "January 1864: To 10 designs of Sleeping Beauty of 30 [shillings ea[ch] L 15.0.0". See also Myers & Myers, *William Morris Tiles*, pp. 28-59.

²⁹ In Irish mythology, the swan is associated with music, as bards were poets and musicians who wore cloaks made of swan down feathers. See T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*. For the legend, see <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/cwt/cwt12.htm>.

terracotta tiles and carpeted areas. The walls are adorned with diverse wallpapers suited to each room's function. The furnishings are minimalist yet remain aligned with the ideals of the Pre-Raphaelite era. These elaborate decorative details exemplify Burne-Jones and Morris's pursuit of aesthetic ideals, thereby promoting the decorative aspects of the Arts and Crafts Movement (Parry, 1989).³⁰

Unfortunately, Forster fell ill in 1893 and relocated to a smaller house in Weybridge; The Hill House was demolished and its contents—including the ceramic cycles—were auctioned off and relocated to three museums. The Victoria and Albert Museum acquired the entire *Sleeping Beauty* cycle (Figure 3) (Parry, 1989, p. 189; Conrad, 2009, pp. 157-177),³¹ while the *Beauty and the Beast* cycle was acquired by the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow (Figure 2), and the *Cinderella* cycle is now in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool (Figure 1) (R. Myers & H. Myers, 1996, repr. 2004, pp. 28-59, esp. p. 31).³² Although intriguing, this essay does not aim to cover all of Burne-Jones's cycle drawings and Morris's ceramic variations for these fairy tale cycles.³³

The earliest version of the fairy tale in ceramic tile was probably commissioned by the Moor family for Cronkbourne House, also known as Tromode House, on the Isle of Man. It was later dismantled at an unknown date and is now owned by Graham Warwick (Figure 2a).³⁴ Surrounded by beautiful formal gardens, Tromode House, was owned by William Fines Moor and his wife, Hannah, who managed a sailcloth and flax factory. Morris decorated the house with stained glass and the fireplace with ceramic tiles. The library fireplace tile decoration is best known for the story of *Beauty and the Beast*, designed by Burne-Jones and installed by Morris (Figure 2a).³⁵ Another curious feature of the house is a hallway fireplace with Cinderella's side panel showing the before-and-after of her transformation from servant to princess (Figure 6). Unfortunately, after the house was sold and restored, some tiles were removed and auctioned by Christie's.

A short overview of the cycles from Foster's The Hill House, though not all versions are included in this study, highlights Burne-Jones's and Morris's efforts to illustrate traditional fairy tales while also demonstrating their innovations.

³⁰ Parry, *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement*.

³¹ Parry, *William Morris*, p. 189; Conrad, "The Quest of the Sangreal and Religious Themes", pp. 157-177.

³² Myers & Myers, *William Morris Tiles*, pp. 28-59, esp. p. 31.

³³ The Morris Firm reproduced different versions at different times. This study only considers a limited version.

³⁴ See https://williammorristile.com/articles/english_arts_and_crafts.html.

³⁵ See commentary by Wildman (12/7/2018) and Cormack (1/9/2020) in <https://eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/NjM4>. This study does not explore the historical and literary comparisons of the different interpretations of the Beauty and the Beast tale from ancient cultures to the Pre-Raphaelite era.



Figure 6. Edward Burne-Jones, designer, Lucy Jane [Orrinsmith] Faulkner, painter, and William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella, Before and After*, 1863, ceramic tile. Hallway Fireplace side panels. Cronkbourne House (Tromode House), Isle of Man, UK. Now in the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow at Water House, London.
Photo credit: William Morris Gallery.

The Sleeping Beauty Cycle

Burne-Jones started visualizing this romantic saga in his drawings between 1862 and 1865.³⁶ In his *Account Books* of 1864, at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, he recounted completion of “10 designs of Sleeping Beauty at the mean and unremunerative price of 30/[1.50 pound] each.”³⁷ Between 1862 and 1864, Burne-Jones’s designs were reproduced as hand-painted tiles by the firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner Company. These

³⁶ Burne-Jones composed a large number of drawings, sketches, and studies for this cycle. Unfortunately, only a few can be discussed in this essay. For the image, see <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8053/tile-panel-burne-jones-edward>. See MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite*, p. 72, according to whom Burne-Jones’s interest in this subject was inspired by Louise MacDonald, his wife’s sister, who at a young age liked to draw and color images about *Sleeping Beauty*. See Myers & Myers, *William Morris Tiles*, pp. 28-31.

³⁷ Victoria and Albert Museum, London, panel description, 2015; and <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8053/tile-panel-burne-jones-edward>. This study does not examine the historical and literary comparisons of different interpretations of the Sleeping Beauty tale from ancient cultures to the Pre-Raphaelite era, nor does it analyze the various cycles and numerous drawings created by Burne-Jones and Morris.

tiles were made for the painter Myles Birket Foster to decorate his new house, The Hill House, including mantels above fireplaces and side areas of fireplaces.

The story of Sleeping Beauty is depicted across nine colorful ceramic tiles arranged around the fireplace in The Hill House, with border lines featuring swan patterns organized in three horizontal layers within a rectangular layout (Figure 3). At the bottom of the decoration is a scroll with an inscription as noted above: “Of a certain prince who delivered a king’s daughter from a sleep of a hundred years, wherein she and all hers had been cast by enchantment”. Each tile narrates its story through two frames, seamlessly connected by architectural features in the background illustrations. Burne-Jones crafted a unique visual space, composed of close-up images or filmic frames. The design features no middle ground: The background presents small vignettes, while the foreground depicts the action. The figures, settings, and ornaments are intentionally rendered with a bright, naive palette to evoke a childlike style; the absence of perspective recalls children’s drawings. Since the imagery was meant for a child’s bedroom, Burne-Jones created a clever, cheerful decoration.

Inside this rectangular frame, the Sleeping Beauty story unfolds across three levels: At the top, the first scene shows the christening of the new princess with the king, queen, good fairies, and the evil fairy’s curse. The second scene depicts soldiers destroying spinning wheels and spindles, announcing the king’s decree: no spindles allowed in the palace. The third scene features a young princess entering a mysterious room after hearing odd noises. Inside, she finds an old woman spinning. Burne-Jones vividly captured this tense moment using the contrast between open and closed spaces to portray the dramatic scene. This area is split into two parts: one shows an empty room with a large window, a partially open big door, and a cat peeking from behind a wall—hints of impending doom. The other part depicts a curious princess opening a small door and looking into a tiny room where an old woman is spinning with a spindle.

The middle section starts with scene four, where all the court members have fallen asleep while performing their chores. Sleep is symbolized by the poppies on the cloth of honor on the ruler’s throne. Here, Burne-Jones repeated the same composition from scene one (the christening and the curse) above, suggesting why all the figures are asleep in this scene. In scene five, an armed knight or young prince enters a dense forest filled with brambles, thorns, and wild roses to find sleeping court knights. Their shields, hanging on twisted branches, identify their kingdom.

This scene stands out for its lack of a receding background. The green backdrop features twisted tree branches and thorny rosebushes, suggesting an impenetrable forest. While Burne-Jones created sketches for these ceramic tiles, only one pen-and-ink drawing on paper, comparable in size and design to the tile, is known today. This drawing was a gift from Burne-Jones to his pupil Matthew William Webb (1851-1924), as indicated by an inscription in ink at the top left of the paper: “A drawing by Sir Edward Burne-Jones given to me his pupil by him—an early drawing for the Knight Entering the Briar Rose series 1 Matthew Webb-August 10th 1908” (Wildman, 2004, p. 6).³⁸ It was most likely used for tracing, transferring the design onto the tile surface.³⁹

The horizontal layout of the design and reclining figures evokes the style and arrangement of ancient sarcophagi. The expressive illustration depicts a brave knight entering a dense, thorny woodland, where thick branches have ensnared the sleeping knights. Four hanging shields symbolize the soldiers’ knighthood, while large roses suggest the type of briar. The lush foliage creates a barrier—a shield—highlighting the forest’s density

³⁸ Wildman, *Waking Dreams*, p. 6.

³⁹ Webb had traced Burne-Jones’s drawing in numerous cases. See Webb, “Sir Edward Burne-Jones and *The Golden Stairs*”.

and the challenge it presents to the young knight. He stands in full armor, holding a shield and attempting to cut the branches with his sword. His anxious expression contrasts sharply with the still, lifeless forms of the fallen knights.

Scene six depicts the prince entering the princess's bedroom and breaking the curse with his kiss as she sleeps. The scene is cleverly designed: Half the room features a large open window overlooking a garden where peacocks are visible. One male peacock, noticing a peahen, begins a courtship dance, forming a large wheel with his tail feathers, which shimmer in green and blue like iridescent fans. Burne-Jones drew a parallel between the outdoor scene—where the peacock courts his mate—and the indoor scene, where the knight shows self-important affection by kneeling before the princess and trying to kiss her. The knight's act will rescue the princess from her curse, just as the male peacock's display wins over the female. The theme of a peacock captivated Burne-Jones (1899), as indicated by several drawings in his *Secret Book of Designs of 1885* at the British Library in London.⁴⁰ One drawing shows a peacock making a wheel similar to the one in the ceramic tile (1899-T-13-541).⁴¹

On the third or bottom tier of the Sleeping Beauty cycle, scene seven depicts the awakened princess holding hands with her knight as they leave the bedroom. The space's design closely resembles that of scene three. In scene eight, the court awakens, and everyone resumes their chores—cleaning, cooking, and preparing banquets—as the princess and her knight enter to greet her parents. Burne-Jones skillfully replicated the compositional elements from scenes one and four here, creating a visual connection within the story.

The final scene, number nine, depicts a wedding. Similar to scene six, there is no recession of space. At the center, a priest conducts the marriage ceremony. Burne-Jones illustrated a wedding with nine muses or damsels. All are crowned with roses; eight hold torches, and the ninth holds the train of the bride's dress and carries a sunflower, symbolizing adoration. This complements the red rose held by the princess, which represents love and passion.

To complement Burne-Jones's scenes, Morris designed tiles featuring swans for the background and border. In Celtic legend, the *Children of Lir*—four young children of King Lir—were turned into singing swans by a jealous stepmother, making swans a symbol of children's innocence and the victory of goodness. Additionally, swans were associated with beautiful music because Irish bards wore cloaks made from fine swan down feathers.⁴² Morris likely linked the tragedy of innocent children in the Celtic legend to the Sleeping Beauty story, both of which involve an evil fairy or stepmother. Burne-Jones and Morris drew on folkloric children's tales to create visual, moral, and aesthetic representations of the victory of good over evil. Additionally, swans were symbols of love and fidelity, as they mate for life, embodying a legend of eternal commitment.⁴³

The Beauty and the Beast Cycle

Burne-Jones and Morris decorated the *Beauty and the Beast* cycle for The Hill House at Witley in Surrey, which is now kept at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, at Water House (Figure 2). They also produced another version, probably the original edition of the fairy tale, for the Library Fireplace at Cronkbourne House

⁴⁰ Edward Burne-Jones, *Secret Book of Designs of 1885*, a collection of drawings in manuscript at the British Library Prints and Drawings (1899.0713.322-544) in London.

⁴¹ For further study on this topic, see Cheney, "Edward Burne-Jones's Sleeping Beauty", pp. 332-360.

⁴² As noted previously, the swan was associated with music in Celtic culture. For the legend, see <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/celt/cwt/cwt12.htm>.

⁴³ In ancient mythology, the swan was associated with Venus, the Goddess of Love because of its grace and beauty.

(Tromode House) on the Isle of Man. This house has since been dismantled, and Graham Warwick now owns the cycle (Figure 2a).⁴⁴

In *Beauty and the Beast*, a smaller cycle in ceramic, the tile's long inscription reads: "How there was a Prince who by enchantment was turned into a bear how a merchant was made to bring his youngest daughter and how the Prince became a man and married her" (Figure 2).

The narrative of the tale is presented in two registers, each containing three painted tiles, while the entire background is covered with beautiful blue tiles depicting swans, similar to the *Sleeping Beauty* cycle (compare Figures 2 and 3). The earliest version of this story was written by the French author Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve (1685-1755) as *La Belle et la Bête*, which appeared in *La Jeune Américaine et les contes mains* by an anonymous Parisian publisher in 1740. In 1756, the French writer Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711-1780) published de Villeneuve's timeless tale, *Beauty and the Beast*, in a reimagined and shortened version in the *Magasin des enfants, ou dialogues entre une sage gouvernante et plusieurs de ses*.

The story of *Beauty and the Beast* is a timeless fairy tale about a young woman, Beauty (or Belle), who sacrifices herself by living in a castle with a monstrous Beast to save her father. Over time, she falls in love with him and lifts the curse that transformed him into a beast, restoring him to his handsome prince form. The story begins with a merchant who loses his fortune and must support his family. He encounters an enchanted castle and takes a rose from the garden for his daughter, Beauty, which angers the Beast, king of the castle. The Beast is depicted as a large Brown Bear, based on sketches created by Burne-Jones and Philip Webb, who likely observed the animals, particularly the Bear, at the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens (the London Zoo) (Blunt, 1976).⁴⁵

These scenes appear in the top three strips of the Burne-Jones and Morris cycle (Figure 2). The narrative continues to tell that, in order to pacify the Beast, Beauty agrees to stay with the Beast in exchange for her father's life. As the days go by, she starts to see past his terrifying appearance, recognizing his kind heart and dreaming of a handsome prince. She is allowed to visit her family but must return, or the Beast will die. When she finds him dying, she confesses her love, and her tears break the curse, turning him back into a prince. These events are depicted in the second tier of the cycle across three frames (Figure 2). The unusual setting of a landscape framed by trellises and rose bushes may suggest the extensive gardens ornamenting the area behind Tromode House. The tale of *Beauty and the Beast* features enchanted castles, transformations, medieval romance, and ultimately symbolic love stories.

When comparing the two cycles from the residences of The Hill and Tromode, the background tiles differ: swans adorn The Hill House version, while a spiral vine with flowers decorates the scenes in a vertical frame in the Tromode House version. Additionally, a wedding scene appears at the end of the cycle in the Tromode House version. This scene is not part of The Hill House cycle but shows the Bear transforming into a Prince and kissing the Princess (Bella). Interestingly, the Tromode House version reverses some scenes, starting with Bella's father facing the Bear while stealing a rose from the animal's garden, a scene that appears second in The Hill House version. Once again, artists demonstrate their prerogatives in visualizing a narrative.

The tale of *Beauty and the Beast* inspired other Pre-Raphaelite artists. In 1874, British illustrators, in particular Walter Crane, published a beautiful edition with color and wood-engraving of the tale of *Beauty and*

⁴⁴ See https://williammorristile.com/articles/english_arts_and_crafts.html.

⁴⁵ Blunt, *The Ark in the Park*.

the Beast, a copy now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, from the Elisha Whittelsey Collection (Figure 7).⁴⁶



Figure 7. Walter Crane, *Beauty and the Beast* (London: John Lane, 1874/1901), illustrations, color and wood engraving by Walter Crane.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Credit Line: The Elisha Whittelsey Collection and Fund, 1972.

The Cinderella Cycle

Three sets of the Cinderella series are currently documented. One, made for The Hill House, is now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (Figure 1). Another belongs to the Sandford & Helen Berger Collection at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California (Figures 1a and 1b) (Waggoner & Fairman, 2004/2005).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For the book, see: <https://archive.org/details/Beautybeast00CranA>.

⁴⁷ Waggoner & Fairman, *The Beauty of Life*.

There are some collections of the Cinderella cycle without backgrounds, notably the William Morris Gallery's set of 1863-1864, which displays the colors used during firing, indicating they were likely trial samples or rejects and were kept by Lucy Faulkner. It was likely commissioned by James Leathart (1820-1895), a Newcastle lead manufacturer, avid collector, and patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, either for his own house or for the property adjacent to Brackendene House, Low Fell, Gateshead, UK. (Figure 1c).⁴⁸ Another set was sold at Sotheby's London in 2009, with Lot 7 showcasing a new Cinderella ceramic cycle. This set included tin-glazed Dutch blanks with polychrome decoration and overglazed enameled designs, consisting of seven two-tile panels. The final scene included the Wedding Scene (Figure 1d).⁴⁹ A previously unrecorded cycle, also featuring a Wedding Scene, is part of the collection of the Two Red Roses Foundation, dated around 1860, and is located in Palm Harbor, Florida (Figure 1e).⁵⁰ A partial ceramic set of Cinderella, including a Wedding Scene at the end of the cycle, was sold at Christie's London on 12 May 1999, Lot 227.⁵¹

In 1881, the Morris Firm (Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.) produced a set of tapestries for the Merton Abbey Mills in the Southwest of London. This bucolic area with watermills was initially a religious site established by the Augustinian Merton Priory in 1117. In the 19th century, it evolved into the renowned Morris textile mill and printing facility (Miller & Saxby, 2007).⁵²

Burne-Jones's and Morris's earliest version of the *Cinderella* cycle contains six sets of tiles aligned in two rows (Figure 1). The inscriptions are placed horizontally above and below the tiles, which read:

How the sisters would go to the Prince's feast without her, but her god mother gave her the shoes of glass where she went to the Prince's feast and danced with him.

Of the fortune of the maid who was called Cinder-Maid and was afterwards queen.

How she lost her shoe of glass at the feast and the Prince made to cry that he would wed her that could wear the shoe and how Cinder-Maid alone could wear it.

In the *Cinderella* cycle, Burne-Jones created delicate, romantic images that emphasize mood and emotion rather than dramatic action. He approached fairy tales almost like poetry in image (*ut pictura poesis*) (Cheney, 2013).⁵³ His Cinderella focuses less on magical spectacle and more on subtle beauty, longing, and destiny, aligning with the dreamy style of Pre-Raphaelite art. He linked fairy tales with Arthurian-style chivalric quests, a theme that fascinated him throughout his career. Burne-Jones's portrayal of love reflects medieval romance stories, incorporating a moral dimension into the pursuit of justice and symbolizing the healing of Cinderella's injustice through her kindness and humility. Ultimately, it emphasizes the significance of trusting fate, as the prince persists in his quest, believing that the true woman remains out there, symbolizing that truth is eventually revealed to all.

Burne-Jones produced drawings of Cinderella in the early 1860s, around 1863, when he was experimenting with illustration.⁵⁴ These studies were not part of a large commercial book but were independent designs inspired

⁴⁸ For the separate images of the whole Cinderella cycle, see <https://www.wmgallery.org.uk/?s=Cinderella+>.

⁴⁹ See <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2009/fine-20th-century-design-109825/lot.7.html>.

⁵⁰ See <https://www.tworedroses.com/news/news06062010.php>.

⁵¹ See commentary by Myers & Myers (11/28/2021) in <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjYzNTA=#:~:text=Only%20a%20handful%20of%20sets,in%20the%20Huntington%20Library%2C%20California>. There are other separate tiles from the narrative scene of Cinderella cycle, at the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington.

⁵² Miller & Saxby, *The Augustinian Priory of St Mary Merton*.

⁵³ Cheney, "Edward Burne-Jones' Allegories of Love and Music".

⁵⁴ The discussion of these drawings is outside the scope of this study. Most are housed in collections at the British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, and The Tate Gallery in London.

by the well-known fairy tale from Charles Perrault's *Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre* (1697).⁵⁵ Briefly, Perrault's traditional story unfolds as follows. After her father dies, Cinderella lives under the harsh rule of a stepmother and stepsisters who treat her as a servant. A fairy godmother protects her by magically allowing her to attend the prince's ball, with the condition that she must leave before midnight when the magic fades. In her rush to escape at midnight, she accidentally loses a glass slipper while fleeing the palace. The prince, captivated by her beauty, searches the kingdom for the woman whose foot fits the slipper. He finally finds Cinderella, the woman it fits, reveals her identity, and they marry. Therefore, several magical changes take place: the attendance at a royal ball, the loss of a pair of glass slippers, and the servant girl all turn into the prince's beloved.

Burne-Jones and Morris illustrated the story in their typical registry style in vibrant colors. The top section, read from left to right like a book, shows Cinderella's stepsisters and stepmother preparing for the ball. The next scene features Cinderella crying in large kitchen when the fairy godmother suddenly appears at the door. The third scene shows Cinderella in full regalia dancing at the ball with the prince (Figure 1). The lower strip also contains three panels that depict Cinderella running away from the palace while being chased by the prince. This panel is most intriguing because it comprises an interior and an exterior space. The interior space consists of a large room with windows, where the prince crosses to pursue Cinderella; on the floor lies one of her slippers. The exterior scene features a picturesque landscape of forest trees and hills, under a moonlit sky. Cinderella is dashing across the meadow, eagerly awaiting the end of the enchantment (Figure 1). The following second panel shows the royal announcement to the people about the prince seeking the owner of the slipper. The final panel humorously depicts the stepsisters desperately trying to fit into the magical slipper, but unfortunately, it only fits Cinderella's foot. Thanks to the fairy godmother's magic, her life transforms from that of a servant to that of a princess, moving from a kitchen filled with ashes to a luxurious palace.

Unlike the swan decorations on the blue ceramic tiles of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast*, Morris chose borders of daisies for the tiles in this fairy tale scene. These daisies allude to the Old English Chaucerian term "day's eye" because their petals open at dawn. The flower symbolizes innocence, patience, and simplicity (D'Ancona, 1977, p. 124).⁵⁶ As noted, Burne-Jones and Morris incorporate historical and literary elements and references into their artwork, revealing their appreciation for symbolism and aesthetics.

A second version in better physical condition and coloration is housed at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California (Figures 1a and 1b). It depicts the story through overglaze polychrome decoration on tin-glazed Dutch earthenware, framed by an ebonized oak border. The border is decorated with daisies, contrasting with the swan designs seen at the Walker Art Gallery. The iconography and narrative remain consistent across both versions, namely Liverpool and San Marino.

The Boston Cinderella

Burne-Jones portrayed fairy-tale themes using a romantic medieval style that reflects his connection with the Pre-Raphaelites. His visualization of the story of "Cinderella: Magic Cinder" is linked to an older Italian fairy tale, *Pentamerone (Lo cunto de li cunti)*, authored by Basile, in which he named Cinderella (*Cenerentola*), meaning the "little ash [cinder] girl" (Basile, 2007, pp. 45-52).⁵⁷ In his 1634 version, Basile entitled the story

⁵⁵ In 1812, the Brothers Grimm composed in German a Cinderella tale entitled *Aschenputtel*, a gloomy interpretation of the traditional fairy tale, lacking the fairy godmother, and featuring magical birds and gold slippers instead of glass.

⁵⁶ D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance*, p. 124.

⁵⁷ Basile, *The Tale of Tales*, pp. 45-52; https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Pentamerone,_or_The_Story_of_Stories/Cenerentola.

The Cat Cinderella (*La Gatta Cenerentola*) because the heroine resembles a quiet, alert cat near the fireplace ashes, symbolizing her hidden identity, resilience, and humble status. In 1863, Morris, in his literary inscriptions for Cinderella's ceramic tiles, referred to Cinderella as the "Cinder-Maid". He combined the descriptive and literary significance of Basile's name for Cinderella, "the little ash girl", with the physical and metaphysical symbolism of a "cinder" (*cindar*), thus calling Cinderella the "Cinder Maid" (Figure 1a).

The contrast between Basile's *Pentamerone*, especially the story of "Cat Cinderella", and its Victorian adaptations highlights how the fairy tale was modified to meet the moral and educational expectations of a bourgeois audience. In Basile's version, the heroine's involvement in violence and deception adds a moral complexity largely absent from nineteenth-century retellings.

Cinderella's name alludes to cinder, as noted in Morris's tile inscription in the ceramic of the *Cinderella* cycle (Figure 1). The name represents the wood's resistance to fire and ties into the story by emphasizing two points: first, Cinderella's living situation in a kitchen and sleeping area close to the fireplace ashes, which illustrates her poor living conditions and humble life. Metaphysically, "cinder", like "ashes", alludes to the transitory nature of earthly life (Biedermann, 1994, p. 20).⁵⁸ Cinderella's resilience of character symbolizes moral endurance and the ability to survive, much like the "cinder" that survived the fire's destruction. Her innocent and noble spirit can also be compared to the Phoenix, a mythical bird that is purified by the flames and rises rejuvenated from the ashes (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 752; Biedermann, 1994, p. 264).⁵⁹ Cinderella, once a humble, mistreated maid, is transformed into a palace queen. Therefore, the moral lesson highlights the triumph of goodness over envy and jealousy.

Unlike the *Cinderella* ceramic cycle, the *Boston Cinderella* features only one figure, on paper in watercolor and gouache. The painting is signed and dated in the lower left: "EBJ 1863", and is located at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, an anonymous gift in memory of Charlotte Beebe Wilbour (compare Figures 1, 1a, and 8). This Cinderella was one of the initial four works Burne-Jones submitted to the Old Water-Color Society (now the Royal Watercolor Society) after becoming an Associate in 1864 (White, 1975, Cat No. 40, pp. 29-30).⁶⁰

Burne-Jones composed several drawings for this solo *Boston Cinderella*. A brief review of these highlights his careful attention to detail and creativity in designing the solo image and finalizing his artistic conceit for the Boston painting. It also demonstrates his adeptness with line, tone, and composition in visualizing his imaginative concepts. Among the drawings is a pen-and-ink drawing from 1863, now held by the Department of Engraving, Illustrations and Design at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (compare Figures 8 and 8a). The drawing shows a standing female figure, dressed in a long, simple chemise, her head tilted to the left, as if lost in a daydream. Only one foot, wearing a slipper, is visible. Behind her is a traditional cupboard displaying dishes.

In 19th-century British households, displaying blue-and-white China dishes in cabinets, cupboards, or sideboards was very popular, reflecting a refined and artistic sense of household décor (Careswell, 2000).⁶¹ In

⁵⁸ Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ Chevalier & Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 752; Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism*, p. 264, on the symbolism of the Phoenix.

⁶⁰ Eric Walter White, ed. *Arts Council 1975-76*, Cat No. 40, pp. 29-30. Some of the other watercolors were the *Green Summer* (<https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTMwMQ==>) and *Fair Rosamund* (<https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTMwMQ==>).

⁶¹ Careswell, *Blue & White*, see <https://asia-archive.si.edu/exhibition/the-peacock-room-in-blue-and-white>, for the reconstruction of the British shipowner and patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, Frederick Leyland's Peacock Room, decorated with blue-and-white Chinese porcelains, now displayed at the Freer Gallery in Washington, DC.

an album at the Victoria and Albert Museum with forty-four historical photos of the Foster's The Hill House, taken by photographer A.M.H., two images show the fireplace and dining display, with the cupboards filled with blue-and-white dishes (compare Figures 12 and 12a with 8, 8a, and 1c).⁶² These photographs exemplify Burne-Jones's familiarity with this style of domestic ornamentation and functionality, as well as his appropriation of the design as the backdrop for a cupboard containing the blue-and-white dishes in his drawing for the *Boston Cinderella* (Figure 8a).



Figure 8. Edward Burne-Jones, *Cinderella*, 1863, watercolor and gouache on paper.

Signed and dated lower left: EBJ 1863.

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.

Photo credit: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.

Other drawings by Burne-Jones of the solo figure of Cinderella depict various models. Among them was his wife, Georgiana, known for her gentle features and slender build, which he used in his early sketches of the same

⁶² For information on the album photographs, see <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjA1MDU=>.

subject from 1862 to 1863.⁶³ This is evident in *Study of Cinderella*, a pencil sketch over red chalk on cream-toned paper, housed at the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery (Figures 8b). In other drawings, Burne-Jones highlighted the elegant movement of the standing female figure through her arm gestures and the way she handled an apron. He depicted her with a more voluptuous form, featuring characteristics similar to those of Fanny Cornforth (1835-1905), a model who was Dante Gabriel Rossetti's muse and mistress during this period (1859 to 1865). For example, Burne-Jones's *Drapery Study for Cinderella* from 1862-1863 is a graphite drawing on paper with an inscribed note in sepia ink by Fairfax Murray: EB-J Cinderella, now housed at the Tate Britain Museum in London (Figures 8c).⁶⁴ The gentle Maid-Cinder stands calmly, resting her head on her right arm while extending her apron with her right hand in a dance gesture. Cinderella seems to be recalling the magical, beautiful moment when she danced with the prince at the royal ball.

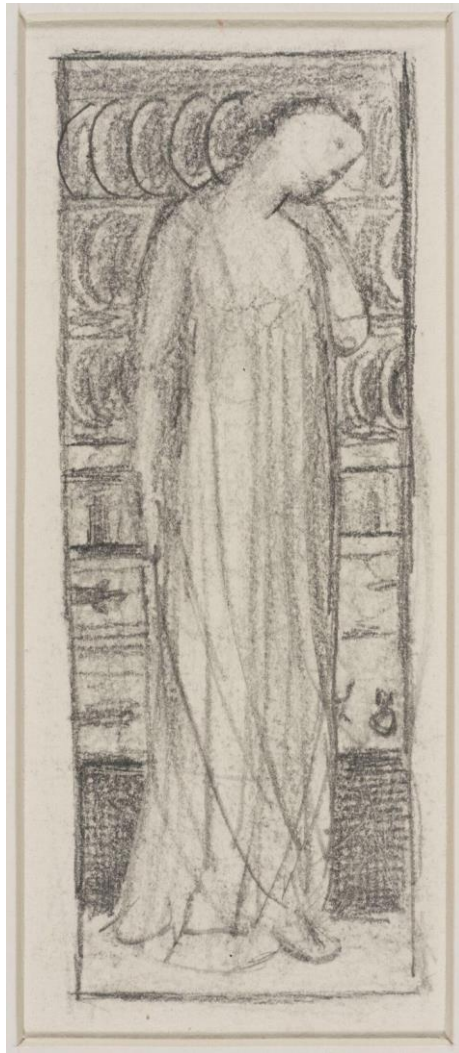


Figure 8a. Edward Burne-Jones, *Cinderella*, 1863, pencil drawing.

Department of Engraving, Illustrations and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Photo credit: ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

⁶³ See <https://eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjExODM=>; <https://eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTk2Ng==>.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTk2Ng==>; and <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjI5Mzg=>, a detail of the upper area.



Figure 8b. Edward Burne-Jones, Study of *Cinderella*, 1862-1863, drawing, pencil over red chalk, cream-toned paper.
Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery.
Credit Line: Birmingham Museums Trust. Photo credit: Alamy Photos.



Figure 8c. Edward Burne-Jones, Drapery Study for *Cinderella*, 1862-1863, graphite on paper. Inscribed in sepia ink by Fairfax Murray: EB-J Cinderella. Tate Britain Museum, London. Photo credit: Alamy Photos.

In 19th-century England, an apron symbolized two ideas: Physically, it signified domesticity (household work), social class, and occupation (a maid). Metaphorically, it divides the human body into two parts: the upper, seen as the seat of spirituality, and the lower (the abdomen), which hints at more primal aspects such as feelings and sexual desires (Higgins, 1914/2010, pp. 10-16; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 37).⁶⁵ Within the collection of drawings by Burne-Jones at the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, there exists a pencil sketch on cream paper, dated 1863, depicting Cinderella. In this particular work, Burne-Jones has bestowed particular intricacy upon the depiction of Cinderella's chemise (compare Figures 8c and 8d) (Korb, Sidney, & Christian, 2007, p. 65).⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Higgins, *The Apron*, pp. 10-16; <https://archive.org/details/apronitstraditio00higg/page/n5/mode/2up>; Chevalier & Gheerbrant, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, p. 37. This interpretation partly reflects Freemasonry symbolism, which has had a notable influence in Britain. Undoubtedly, the Pre-Raphaelites, as a brotherhood, would resonate with their ideals of fraternity, love, and philanthropy. See Harrison, *Rediscovered Rituals of English Freemasonry*.

⁶⁶ Korb et al., *Hidden Burne-Jones*, p. 65.



Figure 8d. Edward Burne-Jones, *Study of Cinderella*, right arm to head, 1862-1863, pencil on cream paper, Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, UK.
Photo credit: Alamy Photos.

Another drawing in this collection, crafted in pencil on watermarked “Whatman” 1862, depicts the full-length figure of Cinderella (Figure 8e). Burne-Jones emphasized the positioning of her arms: her right hand grasping her dress belt and her left hand supporting her head. The long apron now tied at the waist hangs in front of her chemise, accentuating her domesticity. This reference to the apron’s function diverges from the implied dance depicted in the Tate drawing (compare Figures 8e and 8c).⁶⁷ The Birmingham drawings were donated by James Richardson Holliday (1840-1927), a Birmingham solicitor, avid collector of Pre-Raphaelite works, and close friend of Burne-Jones and Morris. As an art patron, he left the majority of his collection to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (Korb et al., 2007, p. 65).⁶⁸ At the Whitworth Art Museum at the University of Manchester, also bequeathed by J. R. Holliday, there is a Burne-Jones drawing on paper in pencil and black chalk, inscribed by Fairfax Murray: E.B.J. and Cinderella (D.1927.86).

⁶⁷ For comments, see <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjEyNTA=>.

⁶⁸ Korb et al., *Hidden Burne-Jones*, p. 65.

Dated around 1864, it depicts a similar composition and pose, with the standing figure resting her right arm on her head, as seen in the Tate and Birmingham drawings (compare Figures 8c and 8d) (Cartwright, 1894).⁶⁹



Figure 8e. Edward Burne-Jones, *Study of Cinderella*, head resting on left arm, 1862-1863, pencil on cream paper.

Watermarked: Whatman 1862.

Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, UK.

Photo credit: Alamy Photos.

In the *Boston Cinderella*, Burne-Jones depicted a scene of a young woman in the kitchen (Figure 8):

It is the day after the ball, and in her worn and patched green gown, only one slipper on her foot, she leans there dreamily playing with the corner of her apron; a pink rose is in a glass on the shelf, and, on the ground beside her, half lost in the shadow, are the pumpkin and the rat which have known such strange transformations [into coach and coachman].⁷⁰ (De Lisle, 1904, p. 68)

⁶⁹ For comments, see <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjEwODE=>; and <https://whitworthcollections.manchester.ac.uk/collections>; Cartwright, *The Art Annual 1894*, Entry on Cinderella, np.

⁷⁰ De Lisle, *Burne-Jones*, p. 68; for further comments by Willam Water (2019), see <https://eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/NjM3#:~:text=By%20Sir%20Edward%20Coley%20Burne,once%20remarked%20that%20%22you%20get.>

Although dressed as a servant, Cinderella's graceful, elongated, elegant figure stands in a dreamlike pose, reflecting her inner grace, nobility, and patience. Interestingly, she is not shown holding her glass slipper. Instead, she is barefoot on one foot and wears an unusual indoor slipper, resembling a glass slipper, on the other (Burne-Jones's clever way of referencing the fairy tale about the missing slipper). Her simple, patched emerald-green clothing mirrors her melancholy, humanity, and gentle spirit, highlighting her hope for a better life and renewal. Her simple, flowing dress that looks like a chemise features a round neckline, pleats at the top, and is gathered at the waist, accented by long details that echo Burne-Jones's garments worn by the *Princess Sabra in the Garden* and the figure in the *Rose Garden* (Figures 9 and 11).



Figure 9. Edward Burne-Jones, *Princess Sabra* (model Augusta Jones), 1865, oil on canvas. Signed EBJ 1855-6.

Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Photo credit: ©Musée d'Orsay, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Patrice Schmidt.



Figure 10. Edward Burne-Jones, *Princess Sabra* (model Augusta Jones), 1865, pencil drawing. Signed EBJ, lower left.
British Museum, London.

Photo credit: ©The Trustees of the British Museum.



Figure 11. Edward Burne-Jones, *Rose Garden (Portrait of Georgiana Burne-Jones)*, 1864, oils and tempera on canvas/panel with gold paint. Signed and dated 1862 (1864).

The Mass Gallery, London.

Photo credit: ©The Mass Gallery, London/Bridgeman Images.

In the *Memorial of Edward Burne-Jones*, Georgiana Burne-Jones described Princess Sabra's model, Augusta Jones, as "a noble looking girl" whom the artist held in "much regard and admiration and respect" (Burne-Jones, 1904, pp. 302, 360).⁷¹ Jones (b. 1843) served as a model for several Burne-Jones paintings, including works in gouache, watercolor, and gum Arabic, such as *Astrologia* 1865.⁷² She stopped modeling in the late 1860s, possibly around the time she married Frederick Vincent Hart (1843-1915), an architect, designer, and glassmaker.

⁷¹ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, pp. 302 and 360.

⁷² See Christie's, New York, 11 July 2011, Lot 12; Nahum's comments (02/11/2019) in <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/NTYw>; and Charles Fairfax Murray, "Princess Sabra, The King's Daughter, St George and the Dragon Series (Model Augusta Jones)", <https://eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTUzMA>.

Burne-Jones produced multiple sketches in pencil and watercolor depicting the Princess Sabra, based on the legend of Saint George and the Dragon as recounted in Jacobus de Voragine's medieval collection of saints, the *Golden Legend* (*Legenda aurea*, 1260s). A beautiful pencil drawing on paper, a study for the painting, is signed "E.B.J." on a brick tile on the left side of the drawing (Figure 10) (Wood, 1998, Figure 46).⁷³ The drawing depicts a standing figure walking slowly while reading a book in an enclosed garden (*hortus conclusus*). She holds onto the drapes of her long gown to prevent tripping on the garden path.

The flowering garden has two sections: a forest of blooming trees beyond the treillage or trellis fence, whose lattice is intertwined with briar roses. The fence is supported by a brick wall. In the front, a cluster of tulips, daisies, and carnations enhances the walking path where Princess Sabra reads. In the painting at the Musée d'Orsay (compare Figures 9 and 10), Burne-Jones made several artistic adjustments: He reduced the prominence of the heavy tree trunks in the forest, enlarged the roses that pierce through the lattice of the fence, emphasizing their rosy cream hues, replaced the brick supporting wall with a stone parapet, and placed various flowers and peony bushes in front. Small white daisies also populated the grass path where Princess Sabra is walking. The painting's overall palette features rustic greens and gentle coral shades, highlighted by the long, simple gown the royal is wearing. The unidentifiable inscriptions on the pages of the Princess Sabra's open book vary in design.

Burne-Jones deliberately selected specific flowers—roses, daisies, and peonies—for their symbolic meanings: roses representing love, daisies symbolizing innocence, and peonies, regarded as a "divine plant" because of their connections in ancient mythology with Apollo and in Christian iconography with Christ (D'Ancona, 1977).⁷⁴ Additionally, the peony was known as the "rose of Saint George", linking Princess Sabra to Saint George in Voragine's *Golden Legend* (D'Ancona, 1977, p. 301).⁷⁵

Burne-Jones's concern with designing appropriate attire for Cinderella also drew on other studies created around this time, such as *Rose Garden* of 1864, at The Mass Gallery in London (Figure 11), a painting also connected with several drawings, in particular the two studies now at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (1904P57 and 1904P58) (Figure 11a).⁷⁶ The model for the figure was his wife, Georgiana. In the painting, the arched golden frame, reminiscent of an Italian Renaissance altarpiece, features a three-quarter-length figure set amid a lush rose garden. She holds a book with a green cover, possibly of hours or poems, in one hand, while her other hand gently secures a green belt around her waist. Her cream-colored outfit is modest, with a round neckline, long sleeves, and pleated folds that gently downplay her figure. A red sash drapes around her arms, matching the red of the roses in the garden. The image of Georgiana among a red rose bush portrays her as a flourishing mythical rose, reminiscent of Burne-Jones's later drawings and paintings related to the *Romaunt of the Rose* (Romance de la Rose) project (Cheney, 2021b, pp. 161-314).⁷⁷

⁷³ Wood, *Burne-Jones*, Figure 46, for a pencil drawing at the British Museum of London, see <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjQwOA==>; for a recent drawing sold at Sotheby's London, see <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjAxMzg=>; for the 1893 platinotype paper image, see <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/Mjg4NTQ=> (at the British Museum, London); and for another recent watercolor and bodycolor on linen of 1866, sold at Sotheby's London, see <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjAxMzk=>.

⁷⁴ D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance*, for the symbolisms: 124 daisy, 301 peony, and 330 rose.

⁷⁵ D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance*, p. 301.

⁷⁶ See William Water's analysis and commentary, "The full-length image of the androgynous woman is painted against a background of flowers and trees, evoking a medieval tapestry, and adding a decorative character to the work", <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjI2ODI=>.

⁷⁷ Cheney, "Romaunt of the Rose", pp. 161-314; Water's comments in <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTk5NzI=>; and Nahum's comments (3/16/2022) in <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MTUwOA==>.



Figure 11a. Edward Burne-Jones, Study for *Rose Garden* (Portrait of Georgiana Burne-Jones), 1864, drawing and chalk. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Photo credit: Alamy Photos.

The harmonious, vivid coloration and astonishing, luminous, and subtle light effects seen in the paintings of *Princess Sabra* and *Rose Garden* are echoed in the *Boston Cinderella*. Here, Burne-Jones delved into the richness of color, highlighting emerald greens in Cinderella's dress, dark green, gold, and maroon/purple kitchen utensils, as well as striking blue-and-white China plates in the cupboard.

The compositional design and the selected time period in the tale of Cinderella differ between the *Boston Cinderella* and the ceramic tile representations. In the ceramic cycles, Cinderella is depicted doing household chores like cooking in the kitchen, while expressing her sorrow and crying into her apron, as shown in the cycles at the Walker Art Gallery, the Huntington Library, the Morris Art Gallery, Sotheby's Sale, and Two Red Roses Foundation (Figures 1, 1b, 1c, 1d, and 1e). In other individual tiles, Cinderella is portrayed as a cleaning maid with a melancholic expression, dressed in patched servant's clothes and wearing a long apron and a handkerchief over her head. She stands barefoot on a clay floor, holding a broom in a basement area where only an iron-gated window is visible, as in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the William Morris Gallery (Figures 13 and 6).



Figure 12. The fireplace room, The Hill House, Witley, Surrey, England.

Old photograph by Sarah Gertrude Ann Glasson, from the Album at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Photo credit: ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 12a. The dining room, The Hill House, Witley, Surrey, England.

Old photograph by Sarah Gertrude Ann Glasson from the Album at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Photo credit: ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figure 13. Edward Burne-Jones (designer) and Lucy Faulkner (painter), William Morris, Marshal, Faulkner and Co., tile makers, *Cinderella*, 1863-1864, earthenware tiles, painted enamel.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Gift: Friends of the William Morris Gallery, 1992. Photo credit: ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

In the *Boston Cinderella*, Burne-Jones depicted his standing, elegant muse in a refined setting, perhaps a formal kitchen with a wooden floor rather than tiles (Figure 8). She neither performs cooking or sweeping activities, nor does she shed tears; instead, she languidly indulges in daydreaming, evoking her desire to love. The composition is split into two vertical sections: a descriptive background of a kitchen household; and Cinderella standing at the front in her domain. The background of the painting depicts a large cupboard composed of two parts: an open top filled with blue-and-white dishes and cups arranged in four rows. On top of the counter are set out a large jug, water, wine glasses, and fruit, perhaps lemons. The lower part of the wooden cupboard is divided into three sections: at top a row of large cabinets, one of which is partially open; in the middle a row of small, closed cabinets; and beneath, a spacious open area that contains a wine fiasco (a type of Italian straw wine

bottle) along with another dark-glazed bottle or decanter, featuring a four-leaf clover design on the front. More blue dishes are displayed behind the bottles, and an unusually large, tilted golden bowl is present.

Some intriguing elements are visible through the cupboard. In the open-top section, there is a round crystal bowl filled with water, holding a single pink rose, or English rose. The rose has historically been linked with love, as it was considered an attribute of Venus, the Goddess of Love, in ancient times (D'Ancona, 1977, p. 330).⁷⁸ In Elizabethan English tradition, the pink rose symbolized feminine gracefulness, innocent love, and joy, as cited in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (Act 2, Scene 2). It was also referred to as a "damask rose" (*Rosa damascena*), known for its delightful fragrance, as mentioned in Shakespeare's Sonnet 130.⁷⁹ Interestingly, Burne-Jones depicted the pink rose facing Cinderella at her eye level, aligned with her dreamy blue eyes. This links the rose's meaning to both Cinderella's physical presence and her spiritual innocence, evoking feelings of love.

In his *Flower Book*, Burne-Jones developed a visual and textual narrative that details his interpretation of his dreams and the symbolism of flowers.⁸⁰ His mythical and romantic vision in his painting is also linked to his fascination with the study of nature (Cheney, 2021b).⁸¹ In his *Flower Book*, Image XIV, Burne-Jones depicted a scene titled *Love Within a Triangle*, in which Fair Rosamunda (*Rosa mundi*, 1140-1176), the great love of English King Henry II (1133-1189), sits on a bench enclosed by a wooden trellis fence filled with pink roses, representing a labyrinth of love he designed for her (Burne-Jones, 1999, p. 44; Cole, 1825, pp. 5-13, esp. p. 6).⁸² His fascination with Celtic folkloric symbolism is further evident in the book's depiction of the scene titled *Witches Tree*, where Merlin's flowering enchantment induces eternal sleep (Burne-Jones, 1999, p. 46).⁸³ Burne-Jones's green bottle in the lower cupboard displays a Celtic four-leaf clover at its center, a symbol traditionally linked in fairy tales to good luck, fortune, and magic (Davidson, 1988, pp. 112, 178-181).⁸⁴ Not by accident, Burne-Jones placed a *cartello* or tablet bearing his initials and date, "EBJ and 1863", diagonally opposite this Celtic bottle. This could allude to two ideas: his personal creativity in illustrating magic and his portrayal of Cinderella as a symbol of luck and artistic achievement, or it might metaphorically indicate the power of magic within the image (Hernandez, 2022, Preface; Freedberg, 1989, Chaps. 1, 11, and 12)⁸⁵—Cinderella's magical longing for a transformation in her life and her hope for love from a prince.

Another unusual detail in the painting is the small mouse climbing into a tilted golden bowl located in the lower section of the open cupboard. It references the good fairy's magical act of turning Cinderella's kitchen

⁷⁸ D'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance*, p. 330.

⁷⁹ For a study on Shakespeare's love of roses (2021), see <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/all-flowers-methinks-rose-best-illustrations-roses-rare-and-early-printed-books>.

⁸⁰ In 1905, after Burne-Jones's death, his wife Georgiana published the collection of the original album of flower paintings through Henri Piazza et Cie for the Fine Art Society in London. Explore Peter and Renate Nahum's album collection of 300 images, which includes Burne-Jones's original collotypes and lithographs enhanced with gouache, along with William Water's commentary at <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/NTIX>; and references to Nahum & Waters, *Burne-Jones—A Quest for Lov*, Cat. 37, 62.

⁸¹ Cheney, *Edward Burne-Jones on Nature*, Introduction.

⁸² Edward Burne-Jones, *The Flower Book*, p. 44, XIV image. See also Cole, *The Unfortunate Royal Mistresses*, pp. 5-13, esp. 6, with a beautiful poem by Stowe's *Annals* (1631), p. 154, on her tomb at Godstow Abbey in Oxfordshire, the inscription read as a *memento mori*: "Hic jacet in tumba, Rosa mundi, non Rosa munda; Non redolet, sed olet, quae redolere solet" [Here lies in the tomb, the Rose of the world, not the pure Rose: It does not smell, but smells what is wont to smell], meaning, Rosa of World used to smell sweet, still smells but not sweet (death).

⁸³ Edward Burne-Jones, *The Flower Book*, p. 46, XV image.

⁸⁴ Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe*, pp. 112, and 178-181.

⁸⁵ Hernandez, *The Iconography of Magi*, Preface; Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, Chaps. 1, 11, and 12.

mice into horses that pull her enchanted carriage to the royal ball, while the rounded golden bowl, resembling a pumpkin, evokes the pumpkin's transformation into a golden carriage in the fairy tale.

Burne-Jones skillfully guides the viewer's emotional response with his painting, using cool, calm colors, and tones that flow harmoniously, revealing his artistry and inventiveness. For example, the glass fiasco, with the wine bottle's neck and shoulder painted in maroon-purple, mirrors the same hue as Cinderella's undergarment, which is positioned diagonally across. Additionally, Cinderella's emerald-green dress includes a rectangular patch at the bottom, perpendicular to her slipper. This guides the viewer's eye toward both the maroon-purple of her undergarment and her grayish glass slipper, which contrasts with her other bare foot. It also horizontally parallels the position of the tilted golden bowl where the mouse enters, evoking Cinderella's magical transformation by the fairy godmother, who turned her dress into a ball gown and the mouse into a horse for her carriage.

Furthermore, the metallic glass slipper's color not only matches her short apron but also contrasts with other design movements in the composition. Cinderella's stance corresponds to the initial ballet position, hence alluding to a dance. The glass slipper refers to the magical shoe she wore to the royal ball, but she accidentally lost one there, which is why she is missing a slipper on her right foot. Her way of gripping the apron's edge resembles holding a ball gown's skirt lifter. In 19th-century Britain, it was fashionable to design an integrated hem and attach it to a belt on a ball gown to make dancing easier (Edwards, 2004; Cunnington, 1937, repr. 1990).⁸⁶ In contrast to the metaphorical allusion to the lifting of the apron, echoing the ball gown's skirt lifter, the metal keys hanging from her waistline recall her role as a maid. Therefore, Burne-Jones is guiding the observer in understanding the fashion culture depicted in his narrative, integrating elements of reality with those of fiction. This paradoxical pursuit employs the visualization of magic via lines, shapes, forms, and pigments to generate images, while simultaneously conveying cultural realities through imagery.

In the *Boston Cinderella*, Burne-Jones skillfully captures an aesthetic suspension ("pregnant moment") (Lessing, 1984, Chap. 16)⁸⁷ and a magical transformation, portraying Cinderella's gentle pose, dreamy expression, languid gaze, subtle tilt of the body, and her head resting on her arm. These elements evoke the memory of tender words whispered by her lover, the prince, during their dance. Through beauty and grace, Burne-Jones elevates Cinderella from a mere cinder maid to a regal ballerina.

Conclusion

In composing these fairy tales for Foster—*Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Sleeping Beauty*—Burne-Jones perhaps recalled his own unpleasant experience of losing his mother at the age of six and being cared for by a governess who mistreated him while his father ignored his needs (Burne-Jones, 1904, 1:1-3).⁸⁸ Brief descriptions of some of the cycles were discussed here, elucidating Burne-Jones's and Morris's quest to visualize some traditional fairy tales.

Burne-Jones and Morris's compositions for children's fairy tales not only excelled in artistic technique and inventiveness but also advanced the ethical purpose of art, thereby aligning with the aims of the Arts and Crafts Movement (Orr & Calloway, 2011, Introduction; Cumming & Kaplan, 1991).⁸⁹ They also provided the initiative

⁸⁶ Edwards, *A History of English Dress*; Cunnington, *English Women's Clothing in the 19th Century*.

⁸⁷ Lessing, *Laocoön* (1776), Chap. 16.

⁸⁸ Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, 1:1-3.

⁸⁹ Orr & Calloway, *The Cult of Beauty*, Introduction; Cumming & Kaplan, *Arts & Crafts Movement*.

for the painted decorative cycle of the Briar Rose. As Burne-Jones wrote to his friend Charles Eliot Norton in 1869, “[The painter’s] lively imagination is continually designing more than he can execute. His fancy creates a hundred pictures for one that his hand can paint” (Norton & DeWolfe, 1913, 1:346).⁹⁰

Simultaneously, these visual reinterpretations can be seen as a reaction to the moral simplification and pedagogical adjustments typical of Victorian children’s literature. By revisiting the underlying symbolic frameworks—more clearly identifiable in earlier editions like those in *Lo cunto de li cunti*—the Pre-Raphaelites reintroduced ambiguity, tension, and psychological complexity into stories that had been somewhat sanitized for a bourgeois readership. In this sense, their work subtly corresponds with Bruno Bettelheim’s later theory, which views fairy tales as symbolic representations of inner conflict and growth.

This study’s implications show that fairy tales function as active cultural forms, constantly evolving through oral, literary, and visual channels in Pre-Raphaelite art. This insight allows us to rethink the connection between storytelling and imagery in the 19th century more generally. The Pre-Raphaelites’ use of children’s stories highlights how these tales remained influential in Victorian culture and also acted as media for deeper considerations of time, identity, and art.

Furthermore, integrating Bottigheimer’s and Paradiz’s research on Pre-Raphaelite art reveals that Victorian fairy tales were neither static nor naive; instead, they were dynamic cultural expressions. Through acts of authorship, sharing, and reinterpretation, these tales became influential tools for exploring psychological and moral themes. Artists such as Burne-Jones and Morris used fairy tales as a means to merge artistic and intellectual pursuits, combining visual art, storytelling, and personal inner experiences in their ongoing pursuit of beauty in art. Their work highlights that fairy tales remained prominent in 19th-century culture and continually adapted—explaining their lasting relevance in fields such as art history and psychology.

Ultimately, the fairy tale is presented not just as a fixed genre but as a way of thinking—allowing artists like Burne-Jones and Morris to navigate the conflicts between tradition and modernity, simplicity and detail, and outer depiction versus inner feeling. By bringing to life the underlying frameworks of these stories, the Pre-Raphaelites did not just depict existing narratives; they turned them into a visual language that expressed the psychological and aesthetic issues of their time. Both adults and children who view Burne-Jones’s *Boston Cinderella* are captivated by Cinderella’s desire for extraordinary encounters and the magic of love. Like her, they pursue a magical experience and dream of love.

References

- Avery, G. (1965). *Victorian Children’s Fiction*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Ball, W. (2001). *Rome in the East: Transformation of an Empire*. London: Routledge.
- Basile, G. (2007). *The Tale of Tales, or Entertainment for Little Ones*. (N. L. Canepa, Trans.). Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Bettelheim, B. (1976). *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. New York: Knopf.
- Biedermann, H. (1994). *Dictionary of Symbolism: Cultural Icons and the Meaning Behind Them*. (J. Hulbert, Trans.). New York: Meridian Books.
- Blakesley, R. P. (2006). *The Arts and Crafts Movement*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Blunt, W. (1976). *The Ark in the Park: The Zoo in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Bottigheimer, R. B. (1987). *Grimms’ Bad Girls and Bold Boys: The Moral and Social Vision of the Tales*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Bottigheimer, R. B. (2009). *Fairy Tales: A New History*. Albany: SUNY Press.

⁹⁰ Norton & DeWolfe, *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 1:346.

- Burne-Jones, E. (1899). *Secret Book of Designs of 1885*. Original drawing manuscript (1899.0713.322-544). British Library Prints and Drawings, London.
- Burne-Jones, E. (1999). *The Flower Book*. Cologne: Taschen.
- Burne-Jones, G. (1904). *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*. 2 vols. London: Macmillan.
- Careswell, J. (2000). *Blue & White: Chinese Porcelain Around the World*. London: British Museum Publications.
- Carpenter, H., & Prichard, M. (1999). *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/oxfordcompanion00hump>
- Cartwright, J. M. (1894). *The Art Annual 1894: The Life and Works of Edward Burne-Jones*. London: Art Journal Office.
- Cecil, D. (1969). *Visionary and Dreamer: Two Poetic Painters, Samuel Palmer and Edward Burne-Jones*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cheney, L. G. (1994). Burne-Jones: Mannerist in an Age of Modernism. In *Pre-Raphaelite Art in Its European Context* (pp. 103-116). S. Casteras and A. Faxon, (Eds.). Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, Associated University Press.
- Cheney, L. G. (2013). Edward Burne-Jones' Allegories of Love and Music. In *Festschrift for Professor Alicia Faxon* (Chap. 4). M. Hanni, (Ed.). Washington, DC: New Academia.
- Cheney, L. G. (2021a). Edward Burne-Jones's Sleeping Beauty: Mysterious Dormancy. *Artibus et Historiae*, 82, 332-360.
- Cheney, L. G. (2021b). Romaunt of the Rose. In L. G. Cheney, *Edward Burne-Jones on Nature: Physical and Metaphysical Realms* (pp. 161-314). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Chevalier, J., & Gheerbrant, A. (1994). *A Dictionary of Symbols*. (J. Buchanan-Brown, Trans.). London: Blackwell.
- Christian, J. (2009). The Briar Rose Series. In *Edward Burne-Jones: The Earthly Paradise* (pp. 137-154). S. Rainbird and M. Frehner, (Eds.). Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz.
- Cole, W. (1825). *The Unfortunate Royal Mistresses, Rosamond Clifford, and Jane Shore, Concubines to King Henry the Second, and Edward the Fourth*. London: Printed by William Cole.
- Conrad, C. (2009). The Quest of the Sangreal and Religious Themes. In C. Conrad et al., *Edward Burne-Jones: The Earthly Paradise* (pp. 157-177). Staatsgalerie Stuttgart & Kunstmuseum, Bern: Hatje Cantz.
- Crane, W. (1877). *The Baby's Opera*. London: George Routledge.
- Cumming, E., & Kaplan, W. (Eds.). (1991). *Arts & Crafts Movement*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Cunnington, C. W. (1937, repr. 1990). *English Women's Clothing in the 19th Century*. London: Faber and Faber.
- D'Ancona, M. L. (1977). *The Garden of the Renaissance*. Florence: Olschki.
- Davidson, H. R. E. (1988). *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- De Lisle, F. (1904). *Burne-Jones*. London: Methuen.
- Edwards, F. (2004). *A History of English Dress or Fashions Past and Present*. London: Kessinger Publishing.
- Fitzgerald, P. (1975). *Edward Burne-Jones: A Biography*. London: Hamish Hamilton Paperback.
- Freedberg, D. (1989). *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gaunt, W. (1942). *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- Greensted, M. (2010). *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Grimm, J., & Grimm, W. (1812). *Grimm's Fairy Tales: Children's and Household Tales*. Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (in English).
- Harrison, D. (2020). *Rediscovered Rituals of English Freemasonry*. Cambridgeshire, UK: Lewis Masonic.
- Harrison, M., & Waters, B. (1973, repr. 1989). *Burne-Jones*. London: Barrie & Jenkins.
- Hernandez, R. M. (Ed.). (2022). *The Iconography of Magi: Images of Power and the Power of Images in Ancient and Late Antique Magic*. London: Peeters Pub & Booksellers.
- Higgins, F. C. (1914/2010). *The Apron: Its Tradition, History and Secret Significances*. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing.
- Korb, E., Sidney, T., & Christian, J. (2007). *Hidden Burne-Jones, Works on Paper by Edward Burne-Jones from the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery*. Exh. Cat. B71. Birmingham: D Giles Ltd.
- Lai, A. L. (2007). Two Translations of the Chinese Cinderella Story. *Perspectives*, 15(1), 49-56.
- Lerer, S. (2008). *Children's Literature: A Reader's History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lessing, G. E. (1984). *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1776). (E. A. McCormick, Trans.). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Paperbacks.
- MacCarthy, F. (2011/2012). *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, and London: Faber & Faber.

- McLaufflin, R. (2016/2020). *The Roman Empire and the Silk Routes: The Ancient World Economy and the Empires of Central Asia*. Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword Books.
- Miller, P., & Saxby, D. (2007). *The Augustinian Priory of St Mary Merton, Surrey: Excavations 1976-90*. London: MOLA.
- Morris, W. (1974). *The Beauty of Life*. London: Brentham.
- Myers, R., & Myers, H. (1996, repr. 2004). *William Morris Tiles: The Tile Designs of Morris and His Fellow-Workers*. Shepton Beauchamp, Somerset: Richard Dennis.
- Nahum, P., & Waters, B. (1993). *Burne-Jones—A Quest for Love*. London: Peter Nahum, Ltd.
- Norton, S., & DeWolfe, M. A. (Eds.). (1913). *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*. 2 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Orr, F., & Calloway, L. (Eds.). (2011). *The Cult of Beauty: The Victorian Avant-Garde 1860-1900*. London: Victoria & Albert Publishing.
- Paradiz, V. (2005). *Clever Maids: The Secret History of the Grimm Fairy Tales*. New York: Basic Books.
- Parry, L. (1989). *William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement*. London: Gramercy.
- Parry, L. (Ed.). (1996). *William Morris*. London: Philip Wilson and Victoria and Albert Museum.
- Pater, W. (1873). *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. London: Macmillan.
- Pater, W. (1893). *Plato and Platonism*. London: Macmillan.
- Perrault, C. (1697). *Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre*. Paris: Claude Barbin.
- Perrault, C. (2007). *Cinderella or the Little Glass Slipper*. (M. Brown, Trans. and Illus.). Studio City, CA: Paw Prints, Baker & Taylor Publishers.
- Ruskin, J. (1851-1853). *The Stones of Venice*. London: Smith, Elder and Company.
- Scheidel, W. (Ed.). (2010). *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Spencer, R. (1958). *The Travels of Marco Polo*. (R. Latham, Trans. and Ed.). Baltimore, MD: Penguin Classics.
- Spencer, R. (1972). *The Aesthetic Movement: Theory and Practice*. London: Studio Vista Ltd.
- Spencer, R. (December 1976). *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* by Bruno Bettelheim. Review by Joseph Nagy, *MLN* 91, 6, *Comparative Literature*, 1642-1644.
- Waggoner, D., & Fairman, E. (Eds.). (2004/2005). *The Beauty of Life: William Morris and the Art of Design*. Exh. Cat. San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, and New Haven, CT: Yale Center for British Art.
- Waley, A. (Trans. and Ed.). (1947). The Chinese Cinderella Story. *Folklore Journal*, 58(1), 2226-2238.
- Webb, M. (December 1908/January 1909). Sir Edward Burne-Jones and *The Golden Stairs*. In *The School Arts Book* 8, 4, 312-323; and 8, 5, 421-430.
- White, T. H. (1958). *The Once and Future King*. London: Collins.
- White, E. W. (Ed.). (1975). *Arts Council 1975-76*. London: The Arts Council of Great Britain.
- Wildman, S. (2004). *Waking Dreams: The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites From the Delaware Museum of Art*. Alexandria, VA: Art Service International.
- Wildman, S., & Christian, J. (1998). *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*. Exh. Cat. New York: Harry N. Abrams and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Wood, C. (1998). *Burne-Jones: The Life and Works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898)*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang.
- Zipes, J. (1987). *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves*. New York: Routledge.