1999


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REAWAKENING SLEEPING BEAUTY: FAIRY-TALE REVISION AND THE MID-VICTORIAN METAPHYSICAL CRISIS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of English

by
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ABSTRACT

Despite growing scholarly recognition of subversive social and political content in Victorian fairy tales, their significance in relation to the oft-cited Victorian "spiritual crisis" remains largely unexplored. This interdisciplinary study addresses that critical gap by examining three literary revisions of Sleeping Beauty from the early 1860s as pointed efforts to enter the intensified religious debate following the publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species.

The three revisions--Charles Dickens's novel Great Expectations (1860-61), Christina Rossetti's narrative poem "Goblin Market" (1862) and George MacDonald's fairy-tale "The Light Princess" (1864)--all appropriate the popular Sleeping Beauty narrative to create a vivid and emotionally compelling model of human interaction with an invisible spiritual world. Each features a narcissistic individual who acquires the unselfish ability to love others only after "awakening to" and "embracing" ultimate spiritual reality. The revisions not only depict an encounter with the supernatural realm as transformative, but they concurrently portray the material world as relatively insubstantial and incapable of satisfying human need--producing sharp critiques of Victorian materialism.
The primary interest of these metaphysical revisions lies in their alternative perspective on the contemporary "crisis of faith," attributing growing religious uncertainty not to contemporary theory in science and other intellectual disciplines but to a failure of the imagination and philosophical inconsistency—or even hypocrisy—within religious orthodoxy. Collectively, the Sleeping Beauty revisions indict Victorian society for smugness, superficiality, obsession and delusion. Moreover, through their deliberate contrast with contemporary literary and artistic representations of Sleeping Beauty, the revisions argue that this fairy tale has become a false societal emblem of material advancement and domestic security.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time in Victorian England, fairy tales played a sovereign role in the cultural imagination. Fairy tales not only enthralled a wide reading audience—composed of adults as well as children—but they were dramatized in spectacular stage productions, painted by leading artists, and reworked in "serious" literature, ranging from poetry to history to the realistic novel. The best-known fairy tales—including Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Beauty and the Beast and Sleeping Beauty—all in circulation long before the Victorian era—provided a stock of characters, scenes and images whose familiarity made them a cultural idiom—a set of easily recognized references employed for comparison or description in public discourse in much the same way that the Bible furnished an almost limitless supply of quotes and allusions. Also similar to the Bible, these popular tales could be treated as a form of wisdom literature, being held up to the reader as trustworthy paradigms providing guiding principles for individual and societal conduct. In certain instances, fairy tales served as vignettes of "golden days" of greater social order, as examples of material rewards to be gained through individual effort, and as models of "woman's mission" as
wife and domestic goddess in the home. Moreover, the older fairy tales inspired a host of imitators. Amateurs as well as some of the era's leading literary figures picked up their pens to retell well-known stories or to compose their own using traditional motifs and settings. In consequence, the Victorian fairy tale reflected and shaped Victorian culture in innumerable ways.

In recent years Victorian fairy tales have attracted considerable scholarly interest; they have been scrutinized using methodologies ranging from feminist to psychoanalytic; and they have been probed to illuminate facets of the Victorian experience ranging from politics to gender roles to conceptions of childhood. In keeping with a current trend in a number of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, much of contemporary fairy-tale criticism can be placed in the somewhat loose category known as "cultural studies"; that is, these studies do not examine fairy-tale works exclusively for aesthetic features, but rather from an intense historical standpoint seeking to understand how they embody and interact with their social and political milieu. However, despite the growing amount of literature illuminating some of the diverse interconnections between the fairy tale and aspects of Victorian culture, exploration of the relationship
between fairy tales and one primary facet of Victorian cultural life remains woefully incomplete. This facet is the role that fairy tales played in the Victorian “spiritual crisis,” and the purpose of this study is to address that critical gap.²

This study examines three richly symbolic revisions of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale—Charles Dickens’s novel Great Expectations (published serially 1860-61); Christina Rossetti’s narrative poem “Goblin Market” (1862); and George MacDonald’s prose fairy story “the Light Princess” (1864)—as pointed efforts to enter, and make contributions to, the vigorous Victorian spiritual debate—amid the religious controversy following the publication of Charles Darwin’s landmark Origin of the Species. Though the focus of this study is restricted in several ways (in the number of closely analyzed literary works, in time span and in the reworking of a single fairy-tale narrative), the opportunity for detailed analysis provided by these limits will be shown to have distinct advantages in illuminating some of the complex interconnections between the Victorian interest in fairy tales, established religion, empiricism, capitalism, Romanticism and efforts for social reform. Most of all, this study exposes an underlying issue in the gradual loss of religious faith over the course of the
nineteenth century—a struggle over the definition of reality.

The three Sleeping Beauty revisions from the early 1860s enter the spiritual debate as metaphysical fiction; that is, imaginative literature dealing with the nature of ultimate reality, the topic of that branch of philosophy known by the somewhat off-putting term of metaphysics. Each Sleeping Beauty revision presents a distinct view of reality as dual in nature, both physical and spiritual. Yet these dual realities are not simply co-existent; in Platonic fashion they exist in a hierarchical relationship. These metaphysical retellings of Sleeping Beauty assert the primacy, or greater and “absolute” reality, of the invisible spiritual world, creating a contrast with the less “real” empirical world which they portray as not only inadequate to offer purpose and fulfillment to humankind but also as a potential source of illusion and misinterpretation. Although a few scholars have addressed metaphysical aspects of selected Victorian fairy tales, the evaluation of the tales within their religious and social context has been limited.³

Perceiving the symbolic and imaginative as providing access to the spiritual world, Dickens, Rossetti and MacDonald present the familiar story of a princess’s
physical awakening to romance as a metaphor for human awakening to a spiritual reality that emanates from and is presided over by God. Though the fairy-tale revisions have an immediate religious context, they also have a broad cultural relevance, sharply critiquing the dominant values of the marketplace as well as Victorian societal emphasis on gender and class hierarchy. Collectively, the fairy-tale revisions touch upon a wide range of topical issues ranging from spiritualism to Pre-Raphaelite painting to evolution and the redemptability of the fallen woman. The aesthetic and social concerns are not incidental, however; they arise from the authors' attempts to offer a unified alternative philosophy that applies to the whole of human experience, including religious, aesthetic and social aspects.

Beyond the social commentary, one potentially surprising facet of these metaphysical Sleeping Beauty revisions is the depth of psychological insight incorporated into their alternative conceptions of human interaction with and experience of spiritual reality. However, Victorians did hold some basic modern-day psychological conceptions. As Jenny Bourne Taylor has observed, the "obscure recesses of the mind" were a subject of fascination as far back as the eighteenth century and continued to be so in the nineteenth. Although Freud would
make significant contributions in the development of psychoanalysis, Bourne points out that his work was informed by earlier efforts at psychological understanding:

We tend to read even self-conscious representations of unconscious mental processes in nineteenth-century fiction within the later framework of psychoanalysis, as anticipating or prefiguring later interpretations. But, in developing his theory of the unconscious, Freud, with Breuer, was drawing on and transforming not only clinical practice (particularly Charcot's use of hypnotism in the study of hysteria) but also well-known theories of the pervasive influence of unconscious mental processes.... The prevailing conception of the unconscious in Victorian England hovered between what Freud would term the 'preconscious', or subconcious [sic](a state just below the threshold of consciousness), and what he saw as the unconscious proper--in which the process of repression is itself absolutely inaccessible.

(140) 

Variously presenting Sleeping Beauty's dream state as involving what might be considered fantasizing, projection and repression, the metaphysical Sleeping Beauty revisions clearly show a recognition of psychological action below the level of consciousness. The writers locate access to the spiritual somewhere within the psychological realm, and collectively interpret the Sleeping Beauty narrative in what might be considered psychoanalytic terms. The latter conclusion can be drawn from correspondences between the revisionists' interpretation of the fairy story and some of
the psychoanalytical observations on *Sleeping Beauty* by the child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim.

In his study *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Bettelheim reads Sleeping Beauty’s state of enchantment as mirroring “the long, quiet concentration on oneself” that is a natural part of male and female adolescence. This inward concentration “happens when internal mental processes of such importance go on within the person that he has no energy for outwardly directed action” (225). However, Bettelheim also sees a warning in the *Sleeping Beauty* story regarding the dangers of narcissism and a modeling of psychological maturity, which involves developing a harmonious relationship with “the other” in the figure of the prince:

A natural reaction to the threat of having to grow up is to withdraw from a world and life which impose such difficulties. Narcissistic withdrawal is a tempting reaction to the stresses of adolescence, but, the story warns, it leads to a dangerous deathlike existence when it is embraced as an escape from the vagaries of life. The entire world then becomes dead to the person; this is the symbolic meaning, and warning, of the deathlike sleep into which everybody surrounding Sleeping Beauty falls. The world becomes alive only to the person who herself awakens to it. Only relating positively to the other “awakens” us from the danger of sleeping away our life. The kiss of the prince breaks the spell of narcissism and awakens a womanhood which up to then has remained undeveloped. Only if the maiden grows can life go on. (234)

Similar to Bettelheim’s interpretation, the three fairy-
tale revisions in this study all present the dream state of the Sleeping Beauty figure as featuring narcissism and arrested psychological development. Moreover, a component of the Sleeping Beauty figure's awakening is showing an ability to love another. The primary distinction between the Sleeping Beauty interpretations of Bettelheim and the Victorian authors appears to be one of application. While Bettelheim interprets the fairy tale as modeling the natural process of adolescent development, the Sleeping Beauty revisions present the fairy tale as modeling a divine design for human spiritual development whose fruition in love beyond the self involves an apprehension of and response to spiritual reality.

In order to provide the cultural context of the three Sleeping Beauty revisions, Chapter 2 of this study establishes the background for the intensified Victorian spiritual crisis of the early 1860s and describes its interconnection with Victorian fascination with the fairy world and the fairy tale. This chapter also discusses the history of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale and analyzes representative Victorian literary and artistic representations of Sleeping Beauty, in elite and popular culture, for the way they generally embodied dominant Victorian values. An understanding of more conventional
representations of *Sleeping Beauty* is necessary both to illuminate the subversiveness of the revisions and to specify the difficulties encountered by the authors in adapting the fairy tale for metaphysical themes. All three authors faced the daunting task of detaching the fairy tale from strong contemporary associations with materialism and the cult of domesticity, two of the ideologies they most particularly desired to refute. At the same time, however, the widespread familiarity of *Sleeping Beauty* offered these subversive authors the opportunity to make alterations to the story whose precise nature—and implications—would be easily recognized by the vast majority of their readers.

The subject of Chapter 3 is Dickens’s creation of an overarching *Sleeping Beauty* narrative in *Great Expectations*, recasting Sleeping Beauty’s enchantment as a spell of materialistic illusion cast on the narrator, Pip, by the wealthy spinster Miss Havisham. As the true Sleeping Beauty, Pip undergoes a progressive awakening to humankind’s essential spiritual equality underneath the material trappings, including social class and gender, on the basis of which society makes distinctions. Dickens’s revision derives incredible power through its presentation of Pip’s illusions as based on false mental pictures of the *Sleeping Beauty* story, visual images that the contemporary
Victorian reader would easily recognize from his or her own exposure to conventional Victorian depictions of *Sleeping Beauty*. As a result, both Pip and the reader are taken through a process of image-shattering. This destruction of Pip's and the reader's preconceived images of *Sleeping Beauty* suggests the misleading nature of surface visual appearance in general in regard to underlying spiritual reality.

Chapter 4 examines Christina Rossetti's fusion of the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale and Christian narrative in "Goblin Market." Recognizing the popular interpretation of *Sleeping Beauty* as an illustration of the personal fulfillment offered by romantic love, Rossetti presents the Prince as a Christ figure, transferring the fairy-tale's metaphorical and emotionally compelling depiction of romance as "life itself" to apply to an encounter with the spiritual Christ. Within this context of Christ as the source of ultimate fulfillment and satisfaction, "Goblin Market" presents material reality as insubstantial in comparison to the spiritual and incapable of supplying true personal fulfillment or satisfaction. Correspondingly, the poem characterizes all human desire for the material world as involving a type of mental projection. Rossetti implies that as with the popular Victorian misinterpretation of the
Sleeping Beauty story as referring to romantic rather than spiritual love, the human mind projects its needs for spiritual satisfaction onto physical objects, constructing false mental images of the material world.

George MacDonald’s “The Light Princess,” the subject of Chapter 5, has numerous correspondences to “Goblin Market,” including the major device of presenting the Sleeping Beauty narrative as an allegory of the Christ story. However, one of MacDonald’s key emphases is God’s revelation of himself in Creation, including humanity. “The Light Princess” presents a picture of earthly reality very similar to that of Fairyland, where the supernatural invades ordinary experience. To MacDonald, the key to awakening the sleeping human consciousness to a universe steeped in spiritual symbolism and permeated with the invisible presence of Christ himself is based on an imaginative understanding of a human event. MacDonald portrays Christ’s self-sacrifice (or the love of the Prince) as humankind’s necessary model of selfless love.

This study concludes in Chapter 6 with remarks on the potential significance of a chronological study of Sleeping Beauty representations throughout the Victorian period. Beginning in the late 1860s, the fairy tale appears to have become connected with a need to escape from rather than
awaken to reality, a feature which suggests opportunities for additional cultural understanding.

In re-awakening Sleeping Beauty to express their conceptions of a primary spiritual reality, Dickens, Rossetti and MacDonald strove to awaken the Victorian reader to an expanded consciousness of reality. They took a familiar story closely allied with the Victorian status quo and transformed it into a paradigm of a divine design for human interaction with spiritual reality. These three fairy-tale revisionists saw this awakening as prerequisite for personal development and societal reform. Moreover, they took Victorian religious debate to a higher level, raising it from relative trivialities to metaphysical speculation about humanity and the universe.

Endnotes

1. In Crusoe’s Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America, Brantlinger’s “cultural studies” approach in the humanities and social sciences can be characterized “not as a tightly coherent, unified movement with a fixed agenda, but as a loosely coherent group of tendencies, issues, and questions” (ix). In the analysis of texts, cultural studies recognizes the interconnectedness of social community. In crediting the significant influence of Marxist historian Raymond Williams on this contemporary approach, Brantlinger states that Williams “taught us especially that intellectual work cannot and should not stop at the borders of single texts, single historical problems or controversies...” (ix).

2. Those wishing more information on Victorian fairy tales may wish to consult historical overviews in Thwaite’s From Primer to Pleasure in Reading and Darton’s Children’s Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life. Recent
anthologies of some of the more significant tales include Zipes's *Victorian Fairy Tales: The Revolt of the Fairies and Elves*, Hearn's *The Victorian Fairy Tale Book* and Cott's *Beyond the Looking Glass: Extraordinary Works of Fantasy and Fairy Tale*. Auerbach and Knoepflmacher's *Forbidden Journeys: Fairy Tales and Fantasies by Victorian Women Writers* seeks to increase the availability of tales by female writers, including Anne Thackeray Ritchie, daughter of William Makepeace Thackeray, and Christina Rossetti.


Victorian fairy tales have also proved a particularly rich ground for feminist criticism, including analysis of the stereotypical roles for women depicted in popular fairy tales and the influence of these roles on female consciousness. See Rowe’s "Feminism and Fairy Tales" and "'Fairy-Born and Human-Bred': Jane Eyre's Education in Romance," as well as Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Female Literary Imagination*. More recent feminist criticism emphasizes the ways in which female writers developed their own literary tradition by subverting the ideology in popular tales. See, for example, the introduction and commentary in Auerbach and Knoepflmacher’s *Forbidden Journeys*, Mei’s *Transforming the Cinderella Dream: From Frances Burney to Charlotte Brontë*, and Mermin’s *Godiva's Ride: Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*. For an examination of fairy-tale configurations of gender and power that reflect Queen Victoria's conflicting cultural roles as female and sovereign, see Brown, "The Influence of Queen Victoria on England’s Literary Fairy Tale."

The proliferation of fairy-tale writing during the Victorian period was only one manifestation of an overall cultural fascination with fairies and their lore, a subject examined in detail in Silver’s *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness*. Although literary
fairy tales are not emphasized in her book, Silver speculates on reasons for their appeal in her article “When Rumpelstiltskin Ruled: Victorian Fairy Tales.” Jeremy Maas’s *Victorian Fairy Painting* not only includes an illustrated catalog of an exhibition by the same name, held at the Royal Academy of Arts from November 1997 to February 1998, but includes essays on the fairy vogue as reflected in Victorian music, theater, book illustration and painting.

3. Stephen Prickett’s *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* and *Victorian Fantasy* together illuminate metaphysical aspects in various works that could be characterized as either fairy tale or fantasy. Though providing a historical context, Prickett’s books emphasize literary and philosophical features of fairy-tales/fantasy rather than their cultural context.
CHAPTER TWO
METAPHYSICAL FAIRY TALES: THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Crisis of Faith

Although the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* has come to be popularly linked with Victorian loss of faith, this landmark book only intensified an ongoing Victorian "spiritual crisis." Darwin's theory of natural selection, with its emphasis on sheer chance as the mechanism in the evolution of life forms, struck a sharp blow to the popular idea that the operations of Nature revealed God's design and benevolence. However, *Origin of the Species* not only appeared long after scientists had begun considering various forms of evolutionary theory, but also following numerous other developments in conflict with Victorian religion. Darwin's controversial book simply arrived at a climactic point in the growing tension throughout the Victorian period between opposing conceptions of the nature of reality.

The various influences damaging to the prevailing Christian orthodoxy of the Victorian period can be grouped into four major categories: evolutionary theory in the sciences; "Higher Criticism," or theology and biblical criticism derived from Germany and reflecting concurrent developments in studies of folklore and mythology; the specific character of the Victorian evangelical ethos; and
radical societal transformation accompanying industrialism and the flourishing of the capitalist economic system. These forces worked cumulatively to undermine orthodox religious faith, or even faith in the existence of an invisible spiritual reality.

Evolutionary theory shook Victorian religious certainty because it contrasted with the traditional theological view of "special creation," based on a literal interpretation of Genesis. This concept involved God's creation of individual species essentially in their present form. Moreover, a legacy of Anglican theological writing from the eighteenth century had sought to support special creation on rationalist grounds, finding external evidence of God's wisdom and intended provision for human needs in the complexity of design and interrelationships in the natural world. One particularly influential book in the nineteenth century was Archdeacon William Paley's 1802 *Natural Theology*, packed with detailed illustrations from nature, which was a standard textbook at universities and key text in "the staple apologetic theology for generations of clergymen" (Altholz 68). In contrast to the idea of special creation, new conceptions of evolutionary theory began to raise questions regarding God's direct involvement
in the process of creation, as well as the literal accuracy of the account of Creation in Genesis.

One particularly problematic scientific work was Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33). Dismissing earlier geological theory that had attempted to explain discoveries of extinct fossil species by attributing them to catastrophes (such as the biblical flood), Lyell presented a "uniformitarian" theory of geological change, suggesting that currently recognized forces of geological change, "the slow, ceaseless action of wind and water, the elevation and depression of land masses," had been uniform throughout the history of the earth. Such slow processes of change necessitated assigning a vast age to the earth—"and the miniature scale of history explicit in the Old Testament was accordingly rendered all the more incredible" (Altick 223).  

Another challenge to the biblical Creation account was Robert Chambers's quasi-scientific *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, published in 1844, which proposed that individual species had evolved according to general laws established by God, rather than by special creation. The "storm" of criticism greeting Chambers's book has been termed "a sign of the uneasiness of the times, the unsettlement of minds produced by the scientific picture of
impersonal nature functioning without direct divine interposition" (Altholz 67).

Evolutionary explanations for the natural world not only undercut faith in the authenticity of the Scriptures, but they put the operations of Nature in a different light, suggesting a long history of death and violence to which God paid a blind eye. Anguish over such implications appears in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's masterpiece In Memoriam A.H.H., published in 1850. In the poem, Tennyson, who had read both Lyell and Chambers, struggles with grief over the death of his close friend Arthur Henry Hallam and wonders whether man, "Who trusted God was love indeed,/And love Creation's final law—/Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw/With ravine, shriek'd against his creed" (56.13-16), has an afterlife. Darwin's Origin of the Species, with its emphasis on the role of chance in biological evolution, simply laid more fuel on the fire of doubt kindled by earlier evolutionary theory.

Though evolutionary theory challenged the literal interpretation of Genesis and altered the "evidence" for the Christian faith, a much more direct challenge to the underpinnings of Christianity derived from the German method of studying the Scriptures known as Higher Criticism. German critics turned a skeptical eye toward
traditional assumptions regarding the authorship, accuracy and interpretation of biblical texts, viewing them not as history but information regarding the overall progress of human consciousness. One particularly controversial work of Higher Criticism was David Friedrich Strauss’s Leben Jesu (The Life of Jesus), first translated into English by George Eliot in 1846. Building on previous criticism that supernatural events in the Bible were supernatural examples of the “mythus,” a form of expression “for the first efforts of the human mind” (52), Strauss argued that these “mythi” impugned the historicity of the gospels as a whole:

It may be that a narrative, standing alone, would discover but slight indications, or perhaps, might present no one distinct feature of the mythus; but it is connected with others, or proceeds from the author of other narratives which exhibit unquestionable marks of a mythical or legendary character; Every narrative, however miraculous, contains some details which might in themselves be historical, but which, in consequence of their connexion [sic] with the other supernatural incidents, necessarily become equally doubtful. (90)

Strauss’s radical conclusion is that the Christ described in the gospels did not exist, and that Christianity is basically the mythical embodiment of the idea “that the negation of the merely natural and sensual life ... is the sole way to the true spiritual life” (780).

Basically, Strauss asserted humanity’s need to suppress its baser impulses and follow its higher ones.

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Another work of Higher Criticism debunking Christianity was Ludwig Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*, translated from German by George Eliot in 1854. Feuerbach’s work gave a psychological explanation for belief, presenting it as a type of mental projection:

> Man--this is the mystery of religion--projects his being into objectivity, and then makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject. (30)

Feuerbach asserts here that the idea of a transcendent God is invalid since humanity only projects its own nature onto an infinite being. Elsewhere in *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach argues that the imaginary concept of God can actually be detrimental to the human pursuit of morality and justice because divine authority is considered unquestionable:

> Wherever morality is based on theology, where the right is made dependent on divine authority, the most immoral, unjust infamous things can be justified and established.... To place anything in God, or to derive anything from God, is nothing more than to withdraw it from the test of reason, to institute it as indubitable, unassailable, sacred, without rendering an account why. Hence self-delusion, if not wicked, insidious design, is at the root of all efforts to establish morality, right, on theology.... Where man is in earnest about ethics, they have in themselves the validity of a divine power. (274)

Feuerbach’s secular religion of humanity influenced George Eliot’s realistic novels, and both Feuerbach’s and
Strauss's works prompted wide discussion. Yet, prior to 1860 and the publication of a controversial theological work by members of the Church of England, "for the mass of the religious public the historical criticism of the Bible had made remarkably little impact on the way in which it was read" (Prickett, "Romantics and Victorians" 214).

In *Essays and Reviews*, however, six Anglican clergymen and one layman attempted to employ German biblical criticism to reassess the Scriptures. The introductory note to the book characterized it as "an attempt to illustrate the advantage derivable to the cause of religious and moral truth, from a free handling, in a becoming spirit, of subjects peculiarly liable to suffer by the repetition of conventional language, and from traditional methods of treatment" (n.p.). Although the individual articles in *Essays and Reviews* did attack or raise questions about various traditional beliefs, including miracles and eternal damnation, it was not a wholesale dismissal of religious faith. Yet the defensive reaction of the religious establishment to *Essays and Reviews*, Darwin's new biological theory and other controversial publications has been credited as the prime factor in the subsequent loss of orthodox faith among educated Victorians, or in other words, Christianity's loss of intellectual credibility.
According to Josef Altholz, most religious spokesmen condemned evolutionary theory, "often without regard to its scientific merits, on the ground of its repugnance to the text of the Bible and its tendency to degrade man to the level of the beasts" (70). *Essays and Reviews* was also highly denounced; it was given an official condemnation by the Anglican church, and two of the writers were prosecuted in church courts. A debate at Oxford between Anglican archbishop Samuel Wilberforce and Darwin proponent Thomas Huxley is illustrative of the way in which orthodox Christians were responsible for the association of traditional belief with anti-intellectualism:

... Wilberforce ... went beyond the scientific arguments in which he had been briefed to refute evolution by sarcasm, asking Huxley, "was it through his grandmother that he claimed his descent from a monkey?" Huxley's reply was simple but devastating: "He was not ashamed to have a monkey for an ancestor; but he would be ashamed to be connected with a man who used great gifts to obscure the truth."² (qtd. in Altholz 71)

Huxley's quickwittedness in answering Wilberforce shows the way in which scientists positioned themselves as seekers of truth. Altholz says such a characterization forced educated Victorians to side with the defenders of science rather than attempt to synthesize new findings with Christianity:

From the 1860s, the intellectual leadership of England turned, first tentatively and in single cases, then in a growing flood, away from that deep concern with matters religious which had
characterized mid-Victorian England. I am not speaking of that minority which, as in previous generations, was naturally attracted by philosophical radicalisms. I speak of those who yet retained much of the evangelical heritage, particularly in morality, but who, becoming increasingly suspicious of an orthodoxy so ineptly defended, drifted away from formal Christianity. (75)

Ironically, the belief in the importance of moral convictions that survived the Victorian defection from orthodox Christianity seems to have been responsible for the defection itself. The general character of religious orthodoxy in Victorian England carried the seeds of its own destruction.

Religious judgmentalism and close-mindedness was undoubtedly crucial in the formal abandonment of Christian orthodoxy, but an even more powerful force affecting Victorian religious expression and, in turn, the spiritual crisis, appears to be the increasing materialistic focus of capitalist society. Eighteen-sixties England falls within the subdivision of the Victorian era variously referred to as the Mid-Victorian period, the High Victorian Period, or the Age of Equipoise, and this relatively short period is often considered to be the highpoint of the age. The dates variously defining the Mid-Victorian Period are sometimes given as 1851, the year England displayed its technological and material superiority at the international exhibition.
held at Crystal Palace in London (there were more than 13,000 exhibitors3), and 1867, the year of the passage of the Second Reform Bill, when the vote was extended to almost a million men, including most town workers.

During the economic expansion of the Mid-Victorian Period, middle-class Victorians experienced a new affluence, which they vaunted through materialistic display. Ambition for upward economic and social mobility dominated the marketplace. "Success" literature, including Samuel Smiles's extremely popular chronicle of self-made men, Self-Help (1859)—which opens by quoting the maxim "Heaven helps those who help themselves"—fueled this drive for material advancement. Although some prominent Victorians had rejected religious orthodoxy outright, or even the idea of God, far more uncritically assimilated the individualistic and materialistic outlook of a society that implicitly denied faith in an invisible kingdom of heaven, whose goals were spiritual and whose citizens would be rewarded in the afterlife.

Although a materialistic orientation would appear to conflict with the practice of faith, the Victorian virtue of "respectability" offered individuals a potential means of accommodating, or at least appearing to accommodate, spiritual and materialistic pursuits. "Respectability"
referred to a display of traits ranging from piety to thrift to industriousness and sexual prudery. Although these qualities would be viewed positively by many societies, their external nature made "respectability" easily exploitable for advantage in business and other self-serving ends.

One prominent Victorian unbeliever, the poet and literary critic Matthew Arnold, highlighted the external nature of Victorian religious practice in *Culture and Anarchy*, first appearing serially in the *Cornhill Magazine* (July 1867-Aug. 1868). The thesis of *Culture and Anarchy* was that Protestant religion should be replaced by "a faith in culture" (408), culture being defined as ideals for human perfection revealed historically in a wide range of knowledgeable and cultural pursuits, ranging from art to science and philosophy, not simply religion. Arnold describes "the life imaged" in the *Nonconformist* newspaper as "a life of jealousy of the [Anglican] Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons" (418-19), and offers the following scathing hypothetical answer to an article in another religious newspaper in which a reporter, referring to a crowd at the horseraces, suggests that "all this vice and hideousness" could not be combatted
without the aid of religion:

I confess I felt disposed to ask the asker this question: and how do you propose to cure it with such a religion as yours? How is the ideal of a life so unlovely, so unattractive, so incomplete, so narrow, so far removed from a true and satisfying ideal of human perfection, as is the life of your religious organisation as you yourself reflect it, to conquer and transform all this vice and hideousness? Indeed, the ... clearest proof of the inadequacy of the idea of perfection held by the religious organisations ... is to be found in the state of our life and society with these in possession of it, and having been in possession of it I know not how many hundred years. (419)

Arnold presents Victorian Christianity as preoccupied with petty concerns and incapable of supplying all human immaterial needs. Moreover, he points out that religious organizations have dominated Victorian society without transforming it.

The Interest in Fairyland

Although, as previously shown, the most obvious aspects of the 1860s Victorian spiritual crisis arose from intellectual conflicts over religious faith, the materialistic orientation of society suggests a "spiritual crisis" of far greater magnitude. Though they did not necessarily articulate or even recognize it, Victorians collectively experienced a cultural tension between material and spiritual conceptions of reality, a tension that involved questions of human purpose as well as meaning.
and significance in life. I argue that in part this growing metaphysical tension accounts for a parallel interest throughout the Victorian period in what Carole Silver has termed "the secret kingdom of the fairies" (Strange and Secret 3).

Victorian interest in the supernatural fairy world manifested itself in numerous ways, ranging from a vogue in the art world for painting fairies; to the immense popularity of Shakespeare's fairy plays, The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream; to avid interest in collecting living folklore in pockets of England where a belief in fairy beings had never died. The Victorian interest in spiritualism, primarily manifested in séances held to contact "occult beings," was also linked to interest in fairies.4

Janet Oppenheim points out that the spiritualist movement, which invaded orthodox Christian as well as anti-ecclesiastical circles, attracted individuals "squarely amidst the cultural, intellectual and emotional moods of the era" (4):

The impetus behind modern spiritualism came ... from the thousands (over the second half of the nineteenth century) who looked to spiritualism for far more urgent reasons than mere titillation. It came from men and women who searched for some incontrovertible reassurance of fundamental cosmic order and purpose, especially
Spiritualist activities included attempts to contact people who had died and thereby obtain evidence of an afterlife for the soul. This focus on experiential evidence illustrates the metaphysical tension at work even within what might be termed a spiritually-oriented endeavor. Though the object of desire was recognized as immaterial or at least invisible, spiritualists sought empirical confirmation of its existence.

Victorian interest in fairyland, fairies, spiritualism and psychic research reached a poetic climax with the notorious Cottingley fairy incident. In this debacle, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, an ardent spiritualist, announced the sensational discovery of authentic photographs of fairies in a 1920 article in the *Strand* magazine—"An Epoch-Making Event--Fairies Photographed"--which he followed up in a 1922 book *The Coming of the Fairies* (Silver, Strange and Secret 232n5). Though Doyle's alleged discovery evoked considerable skepticism as well as public enthusiasm (190-92), the incident expresses an intensity of Victorian desire for objects of faith, and was presented as such in the 1997 film *Fairy Tale: A True Story*.

Despite their name, fairy tales do not always include fairies, but the collective association of these stories
with fairies, enchantment and alternate worlds made them an integral part of the overall Victorian fascination with fairies, as well as imaginative opportunities to explore the supernatural. Since the word "fairy tale" was used somewhat indiscriminately during the Victorian period, it is important to note the modern use of the term by folklorists. To this scholarly group, the English term "fairy tale" properly describes an oral folk narrative, or folktale, containing magical or supernatural occurrences, that is told for entertainment. These orally transmitted fairy tales reflect the collective shaping of numerous tellers; however, most of the popular Victorian "fairy tales" are the production of individual authors, who either reworked oral folktales or invented their own using folktale motifs and settings, and are more accurately identified as "literary fairy tales."

The versions of *Sleeping Beauty* familiar in Victorian England were literary fairy tales, not native folklore, and they are traceable to two primary literary sources--both of them foreign. In fact, while a limited number of oral versions of *Sleeping Beauty* (classified as tale type 410 in Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson's standard index, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*) have been recorded internationally, Thompson asserts in his
individual study *The Folktale* that *Sleeping Beauty* "has never become a real part of oral folklore." He considers the recorded oral versions as "obviously mere retellings of one or other of [the] printed variants" (97). The print sources he cites include the seventeenth-century collection of tales within a frame story known as the *Pentamerone*, written in the Neapolitan dialect by Giambattista Basile; Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé* (1697); and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Haus- Märchen*, published in three volumes from 1812 to 1822. Thompson's assertion of *Sleeping Beauty*'s lack of oral tradition--at least in England--is supported by more recent indexes of English folktales compiled since Thompson's 1946 work. *The Sleeping Beauty* tale type does not appear in Ernest Baughman's *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America* nor Katherine Briggs's massive *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language* (1970). However, much English oral narrative went unrecorded up to the late eighteenth-century when "the collectors of 'popular antiquities' began to turn their attention to narratives and legends" (Katherine Briggs, *Dictionary* 4).

*The Types of the Folktale* places *Sleeping Beauty* within the folktale category of "Supernatural or Enchanted..."
Husband (Wife) or Other Relatives." It is summarized as follows: "The king’s daughter falls into a magic sleep. A prince breaks through the hedge surrounding the castle and disenchants the maiden" (137). The episodes are described as follows: (1) "The Wished-for Child" in which a "frog announces the birth of the much-desired daughter of the king"; (2) "The Fairies' Gifts," in which a "fairy who has not been invited to the celebration (christening) makes a wish that the princess shall die of a wound from a spindle" and "[a]nother fairy changes the death into a hundred-year sleep"; "The Enchanted Princess," in which "[t]he prophecy is fulfilled; with the maiden all the dwellers in the castle sink into a magic sleep and all about grows a hedge of thorn"; and (4) "The Disenchantment," brought about when "[a]fter a hundred years a prince breaks through the hedge, awakes the princess with a kiss and holds a happy marriage" (138).

The Sleeping Beauty story’s debut in England was in 1729 in the first English translation of Perrault’s Histoires, ou contes du temps passé, avec des Moralitez, rendered by translator Robert Samber as Histories, or Tales of Past Times. The collection soon became known as Mother Goose’s Tales. Perrault’s “La Belle au bois dormant,” for the English now forever mistranslated as “The Sleeping
Beauty in the Wood," began circulating separately in chapbook form as early as 1764 (Opie 83). Chapbooks were extremely cheap printed books, often sold by peddlars, which reached a wide popular audience including children. Sleeping Beauty also began to be presented as a pantomime by at least 1806.

Although in seventeenth-century France the fairy tales of Perrault and other writers originated as sophisticated entertainment in the court circles of the Sun King, in eighteenth-century England they were not esteemed by an intellectual world devoted to rationalism and thus their primary reading audience was among the lower classes. In the early nineteenth-century, moralists continued to criticize irrational fairy tales as unfit material for the young. However, a significant boost to the appreciation and popularity of fairy tales, which developed into a vogue by mid-century, occurred with the publication in English of tales collected by the German Grimm brothers. Iona and Peter Opie describe the impact of the Grimms' fairy tales in their introduction to The Classic Fairy Tales:

In 1823 fairy tales became, almost overnight, a respectable study for antiquarians, an inspiration for poets, and a permissible source of wonder for the young. The event that brought this about was the publication of German Popular Stories, translated by Edgar Taylor and his family from the Kinder- und Haus-Märchen of the brothers Grimm. This enterprising duodecimo
volume was, firstly, a highly readable collection of stories for 'young minds'; secondly, an instantly acceptable gift, illustrated by the best illustrator of the day, George Cruikshank; and thirdly, a learnedly annotated revelation of the antiquity and diffusion of traditional tales. (25)

In 1826, Taylor published a second volume of the Grimm brothers' stories, and these tales continued to appear in publication in numerous forms. Taylor’s two-volume work contained a variant of the Sleeping Beauty story entitled "Rose-Bud" (the German "Dornröschen"; also translated "Little Briar-Rose"), which the Grimms had recorded from an oral storyteller. However, the Opies note, the Grimm version of Sleeping Beauty "undoubtedly derived from Perrault’s text, however reluctant the Grimms were to recognize it" (81). The primary difference between the Perrault and Grimm versions is the omission by the Grimms of a second portion of the tale in which the awakened queen is threatened by but survives an ogress mother-in-law. This second portion, however, is often omitted from Victorian retellings.

From before Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne in 1837 until her death in 1901 and beyond, Sleeping Beauty was a familiar story to a wide spectrum of the Victorian public, both adults and children. Beyond the numerous printed versions of the fairy tale, illustrated by popular
artists of the day ranging from Noel Paton to Richard Doyle and Gustave Doré, *Sleeping Beauty* was the subject of various spectacular theatrical productions, including one of J.R. Planché's fairy extravaganzas. *Sleeping Beauty* was among the miniature stage sets produced for children's toy theaters. Tennyson retold the fairy tale in his poem "The Day-Dream." Novels incorporating the *Sleeping Beauty* theme included Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Mrs. Gaskell's *Cousin Phyllis* and George Du Maurier's *Trilby*. *Sleeping Beauty* motifs were incorporated into designs for furniture, wallpaper and other decorative items. *Sleeping Beauty*'s preeminence among fairy tales at the end of the century is suggested by a late-Victorian board game of uncertain date entitled "The Prince's Quest--A Fairy Race Game." The individual players or "princes" set out from "The King's Palace" along a winding route with opportunities for advancement or orders to backtrack depending on adventures, drawn from a variety of fairy tales, that they encounter along the way. Nonetheless, despite assistance from magic aids ranging from "The Seven League Boots" to "The Golden Key," or delays from being wounded in the "Dragon's Den" or slipping back down "The Glass Mountain," the object of the game is to be the first to the "Bower of Sleeping Beauty."
Of most importance to this study, however, are the literary and artistic representations of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale in the 1830s, '40s and '50s, which contributed to its composite "image" in the early 1860s. This image was a conservative one that embodied dominant Victorian values. By the 1860s the prevailing Victorian conception of Sleeping Beauty was not of an imaginary world, but rather a materialistic spectacle endorsing the gospel of success and societal expectations for and idealization of the domestic state. As with Victorian culture in general, the conventional representation of Sleeping Beauty expressed tension between opposing concepts of primary reality. On the one hand, Sleeping Beauty took place within a supernatural world; on the other hand it was an emblem of materialism.

The materialistic message of conventional Victorian representations of Sleeping Beauty lay in its French Ancien Régime roots. The Ancien Régime, or period of the French monarchy prior to the French Revolution, was characterized by ostentatious wealth and splendor. As previously noted, Perrault's "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," was written in connection with the fairy-tale vogue in late seventeenth-century France. The French fashion for fairy tales originated in Parisian literary "salons" presided
over by highly educated women. Imaginative folktale-based stories from these salons reached print by the 1690s, during the latter portion of Louis XIV's reign. These witty, romantic French fairy tales incorporated details of contemporary French aristocratic life and fashion; yet they were far from complete or accurate representations of their times. Ironically, according to American fairy-tale scholar Jack Zipes, the utopian French tales actually expressed dissatisfaction with life under the absolutist Sun King. Perrault, who fell in his later years into disfavor with the king, embellished his tales less than others, but Zipes's explanation of the idealized and exaggerated elements in the literary fairy tales of the 1690s appears equally applicable to Sleeping Beauty:

The fairy tales were meant to make readers realize how deceived they were if they compared their lives to the events in these tales. There was no splendid paradise in Louis XIV's court, no genuine love, no reconciliation, no tenderness of feeling. All this could be ... found in fairy tales, and in this regard the symbolic portrayal of the impossible was a rational endeavor on the part of the writers to illuminate the irrational and destructive tendencies of their times. (Beauties, Beasts and Enchantments 8-9)

One might add to Zipes's comments that on a manifest level the subtly subversive French fairy tales appeared complimentary rather than critical of Ancien Régime.
conditions, in keeping with other literature glorifying and idealizing the late French monarchy.

As Peter Burke notes in the *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, the Sun King’s “glory enterprise” involved the commissioning of literary and other cultural productions promoting the splendor and magnificence of himself and his court in a manner that has been compared to contemporary publicity efforts (4). On a manifest level the fairy tales of the 1690s could appear as yet another venue for promoting the Sun King’s court, or the French aristocracy in general. For this reason, an understanding of the original subversive nature of late seventeenth-century French fairy tales was obviously lost on Victorians when these cross-cultural stories began to appear in literary works and the middle-class children’s book market with ever-increasing frequency. In the case of *Sleeping Beauty*, its depiction of Ancien Régime conditions simply accorded with other Victorian idealized views of the French aristocracy—and of monarchy, aristocracy and wealth in general.

Victorian sage Thomas Carlyle appears to be the first Victorian to interweave the *Sleeping Beauty* fantasy with a purportedly historical account of the French Ancien Régime. In his 1837 *The French Revolution: A History*, Carlyle
invokes the *Sleeping Beauty* narrative as a paradigm for the ideal relationship between an aristocratic ruling class (Sleeping Beauty) and its people (the prince). Unfortunately, Carlyle suggests, the French Revolution reveals a potentially dynamic fairy-tale relationship gone berserk. The nightmare of the French Revolution is the result of *Sleeping Beauty* characters who don't know their roles. For example, in a passage describing the popular response to announcement of representative elections several months before the storming of the Bastille, Carlyle shows that the masses view themselves as the *Sleeping Beauty* heroine:

How the whole People shakes itself, as if it had one life; and, in thousand-voiced rumour, announces that it is awake, suddenly out of long death-sleep, and will thenceforth sleep no more! The long looked-for has come at last; wondrous news, of Victory, Deliverance, Enfranchisement, sounds magical through every heart. (121-22)

Carlyle skillfully employs the narrative viewpoint of the awakened storybook princess as a metaphor for the self-fashioning of the French common people. A formerly silent and passive populace has been given a voice. They are delivered from the spell of political powerlessness. Like the awakened princess, they foresee their destiny is to reign.
However, in a later passage from *The French Revolution*, Carlyle suggests that the populace has mistaken its storybook role. When a group of insurrectionists survey Versailles, seat of the monarchy, from a hilltop, the figure of Sleeping Beauty materializes before their eyes:

[N]ow Versailles, and the Château of Versailles, and far and wide the inheritance of Royalty opens to the wondering eye. From far on the right, over Marly and Saint-Germain-en-Laye; round towards Rambouillet, on the left: beautiful all; softly embosomed; as if in sadness, in the dim moist weather! (260)

The site (sight) of royalty is personified as a beautiful, reclining woman, whose misty-eyed sadness suggests her presentiment that the Prince has come to destroy, not awaken her.

Carlyle's message that the real Sleeping Beauty is the monarchy/aristocracy and the prince the potentially revivifying energy of the populace is further affirmed by the contrast of muddy members of the populace with aesthetically splendid aristocrats. Common people invade the National Assembly building in October 1789. Bread, wine and sausages are circulated among the hungry. The invaders interrupt discussion of the penal code with vulgar comments and display of emotion. Carlyle suggests that the populace is inherently incapable of presenting the refined,
aesthetically pleasing spectacle that should characterize governmental proceedings:

in the dusky galleries, duskier with unwashed heads, is a strange 'coruscation [brightness],'--of impromptu bill-hooks. It is exactly five months this day since these same galleries were filled with high-plumed jewelled Beauty, raining bright influences; and now? To such length have we got in regenerating France....

... they [the populace], chewing tough sausages, discussing the Penal Code, make night hideous. (272-73)

Carlyle collectively depicts the fashionably dressed aristocratic women formerly peopling the galleries as a personification of abstract beauty. This female Beauty's "bright influences" accord with emanations of Perrault's ideal princess, "whose bright resplendent beauty had somewhat in it luminous and divine" (Perrault 88).

Carlyle apparently perceives aristocratic display as inspiring the populace with positive aspiration.

Part of Carlyle's agenda in The French Revolution is to extinguish smoldering discontent with the English monarchy and class hierarchy at the time of the Chartist movement. The dynamic relationship depicted in the Sleeping Beauty paradigm provides him with a vehicle for urging the reformation or awakening, rather than destruction, of a ruling class he perceives to be asleep with passivity and neglect of duty. If properly awakened or spurred to activity, the glory of a reigning Beauty
would be her beneficial patronage of the people. Carlyle does not suggest his utopian *Sleeping Beauty* paradigm represents historical actuality in the reign of Louis XVI, but rather an ideal, distorted by French aristocrats and ultimately destroyed with the mass guillotinings of the upper class. However, while he does distinguish the fairy tale and the historic moment, his presentation of *Sleeping Beauty* as an ideal incorporates ostentatious material display. In fact, in his conflation of the material, the aesthetic and the ideal, Carlyle appears to be alluding to Edmund Burke’s famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which Burke uses Marie Antoinette’s appearance as a metaphor for the figurative beauty of the chivalrous principles governing class relations within a monarchy:

*It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning-star, full of life and splendor, and joy. (1277; emphasis added)*

In Burke’s description of the young Marie Antoinette, wealth, beauty and divinity converge to produce an ideal image of monarchical government. Carlyle appears to rely on Burke’s image of ideal monarchy in using *Sleeping Beauty*
as a metaphor for ideal monarchy. Both writers freely intermingle fact and fantasy within a purportedly historically based text. Though Carlyle alludes only briefly to Sleeping Beauty and its Ancien Régime setting in presenting a paradigm of ideal monarchy, other influential representations of Sleeping Beauty placed it in the context of French Ancien Régime splendor in full and realistic detail.

Playwright and antiquarian J.R. Planché, responding to the entertainment possibilities of the Sleeping Beauty story, turned it into one of his famous "fairy extravaganzas" in 1840. Based on Perrault's literary fairy tale, Planché's The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood premiered at Easter at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden in London. The playscript sets the fairy tale in an imaginary kingdom in the years 1583 (the christening), 1601 (the enchantment), and 1701 (the awakening). Considering Planché's devotion to historically accurate costuming, the production undoubtedly featured dress appropriate to these dates, probably French. Another feature sure to emblazon this spectacle on popular memory was elaborate special effects, or stage devices, recreating some of the fairy-tale's magical occurrences. These included a "fiery dragon" (Planché, The Extravaganzas 72). Also, when Prince
Perfect approached the impenetrable forest, it changed color and parted for him. But when a woodcutter attempted to follow the prince, briars and thorns rose up in his path and the trees beat him with their branches (95-96). The musical's finale included a stunning "coup de théâtre," in Planché's phrase, which took two performances to master. Planché described it thus: "the chairs in which the seven fairies were seated were by unseen machinery to ascend with their occupants, illuminated by coloured fires, to nearly the height of the proscenium" (67). Extremely light-hearted and full of the puns and contemporary political allusions better-known today in connection with Gilbert and Sullivan's operettas of the later Victorian period, Planché's verse extravaganza mingled comedy, song and dance. Planché recorded the enthusiastic audience reception to The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood in his memoirs:

I was rather nervous before the curtain rose, as it was a first experiment on so large a stage, and the responsibility was entirely on my shoulders; but the hearty roar from all parts of the house at an early line in the first scene, "We stop the press to say—we've no more news," relieved me of all anxiety.

(Planché, Recollections 268)

Moreover, Planché noted that the extravaganza "brought crowded houses to the end of the season" and was the

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opening production the following season (268). It later was revived at the St. James's theater.

Planché's *Sleeping Beauty* spectacle appears the likely inspiration for a fantastical *Sleeping Beauty* painting by Daniel Maclise exhibited the following year at the Royal Academy. The sweeping panorama of the interior of a gilded French palace, crowded with highly ornamented furnishings and architectural features and numerous sleeping figures, apparently attempts to follow Perrault's version of an Ancien Régime *Sleeping Beauty*. Not only did the picture enjoy the celebrity of also being exhibited at the Suffolk Art Gallery as the winner of that year's Art Union Prize, it gained in notoriety from a savage attack in *Punch* and a mixed review in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. *Punch* seemed to go to the heart of the matter, asserting that Maclise had turned the fairy story into a dehumanized materialistic spectacle. Commenting that the painting's inanimate objects are depicted in more detail than the animate, the notice proceeds—with ever greater irony—to elaborate on the folly of the work, concluding by comparing the painting to a pantomime:

The toilet-table takes precedence of the lady—the couch before the sleeper—the shadow, in fact, before the substance; and as it is a sure mark of a vulgar mind to dwell upon the trifles, and lose the substantial—to scan the dress, and neglect the wearer, so we opine the capabilities.
of D. Maclise, R.A., are brought into requisition to accommodate such beholders. He has, moreover, carefully avoided any approximation to the vulgarity of flesh and blood, in his representation of humanity; and has, therefore, ingeniously sought the delicacy of Dresden china for his models. To conclude our notice, we beg to suggest the addition of a torch and a rosin-box, which ... would render it perfect ... as a first-rate imitation of the last scene in a pantomime. ("Fine Arts" 108)

In this notice, the editors of Punch view Maclise as catering to a public appetite for glitter over substance in his Sleeping Beauty painting. Clearly, such an appetite for the visual image contributed to the popularity of Madame Tussaud’s waxwork exhibition in London, where, by at least 1851, a mechanized Sleeping Beauty figure that appeared to breathe furthered the association of the fairy story with the material ostentation of the French Ancien Régime.

Madame Tussaud brought her traveling waxwork exhibition to the British Isles from Paris, where she had worked for a wax modeler, lived at Versailles as an art tutor to Louis XVI’s sister, and was later forced to create death masks from the heads of famous guillotine victims (Chapman 1-2). She established a permanent, virtual shrine to the lost French aristocracy on Baker Street in London. Although life-size models of well-known English figures were continually added to her collection, the core of Madame Tussaud’s exhibit remained figures of guillotined
French aristocrats and a replica of the notorious guillotine. She also published an autobiography, undoubtedly furthering her ethos as an eye-witness historiographer of the French Revolution. The actual historical model for her Sleeping Beauty figure has not been determined (Concannon). However, at least by 1851 it was identified in the gilded, high-ceilinged rooms of Madame Tussaud's on Baker Street as that of Madame Ste. Amaranthe, a guillotine victim.

American Benjamin Silliman, who visited the museum in 1851, adopted a demeanor of awe in approaching the Sleeping Beauty figure similar to that of the tiptoeing prince in Maclise's *Sleeping Beauty* painting:

> Another lady, Madame----, afterwards a victim of Robespierre's cruelty, because she indignantly refused to become the victim of his lust, lies asleep on her couch in her day dress.... She breathes, and her bust, with her dress, rises and falls so naturally with the respiration, that you instinctively move softly, lest she should be disturbed in her slumber. (431)

Automata, or early robots, were not original to Madame Tussaud's; neither was the simulation of breathing. The uniqueness of the mechanized sleeping woman at Madame Tussaud's lies in its contribution to and capitalization on the early Victorian association between the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale and French Ancien Régime splendor. The number of visitors for whom Sleeping Beauty came alive at Madame
Tussaud's undoubtedly is enormous. In 1851 the popular waxworks was able to attract additional viewers from the huge crowds drawn to London by the Great Exhibition, a fact which does not escape the observant and class-conscious Silliman:

A throng of visitors were in the apartments, but from their dress and appearance, it was obvious that they belonged not to the upper ten thousand, but to the lower million, and most of them were probably of that class, who, having been drawn to London by the great exhibition, take the opportunity to see other wonders of the great metropolis.... (432)

The association of French fairy tales—not merely Sleeping Beauty—with historical moments under the French Ancien Régime was kept alive in literary works by Planché. He made English translations of French fairy tales by Madame d'Aulnoy in 1855, a collection which was abundantly praised in a review in Household Words. The reviewer takes note of the magnificence of Madame d'Aulnoy's descriptions:

Hers ... is a courtly, Louis Fourteenthly, notion of grandeur, which displays how "the dukes and marquises of the kingdom seated the Great Prince on a throne of gold and diamonds, with a magnificent crown on his head, and robes of violet velvet embroidered all over with suns and moons." And look at Fintette in her best clothes, when "her gown was of blue satin, covered with stars in diamonds. She had a sun of them in her hair, and a full moon on her back; and all these jewels shone so brightly, that one couldn't look at her without winking." (Morley 512)

The above reviewer would likely have found similar delight
in Planche’s 1858 publication of a new translation of tales by Perrault and others (Four and Twenty Fairy Tales). An illustration by James Godwin appearing in this second fairy-tale collection shows the enchanted Sleeping Beauty within a bedchamber of a Baroque French palace. The illustration could easily be mistaken for a detail from Maclise’s painting of The Sleeping Beauty.

Other Victorian representations of Sleeping Beauty set the story in the Middle Ages rather than the French Ancien Régime but retain an awe-producing effect through details of wealth and splendor. One particularly influential Sleeping Beauty revision was Romantic poet John Keats’s sensuous poem “The Eve of St. Agnes,” which was first published in 1820, the year before his death. Filled with exquisite word-paintings, “The Eve of St. Agnes” overtly refers to an actual saint’s legend. It describes the seduction of a noble medieval maiden, Madeline, who has piously gone to sleep hoping to see the vision of a future lover promised to those who observe a ritual associated with the feast-day of St. Agnes.

As the story unfolds, Madeline anticipates her evening ritual, while Porphyro, an ardent admirer of Madeline toward whom her relatives have vowed enmity, arrives secretly at the castle and persuades an old servant,
Angela, to tell him where Madeline is. His plan, as he reveals to Angela, is for her

... to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline’s chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
(19.164-67)

Porphyro is able to carry out his plan, hiding before Madeline enters her bedchamber and voyeuristically watching her undress.

Later, Porphyro wakes Madeline by playing an authentic medieval ballad close to her ear with her own lute. Madeline’s dream of a lover materializes into the real Porphyro. Seeing him frozen on his knees beside her bed, “Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,/Fearing to move or speak, she look’d so dreamingly” (35.305-06), she is frightened and begs him to speak. There follows a passage of metaphorical splendor strongly suggestive of their premarital sexual union:

Beyond a mortal man impassion’d far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush’d, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven’s deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love’s alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes’ moon hath set. (36.316-24)

The implications of Keats’s celestial and floral imagery

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take on somewhat less ambiguity as a result of the concluding line in the stanza. Legend restricts the opportunity for an extraordinary experience of St. Agnes's miraculous influence to the course of a single night. The setting of the moon signals that the night, and the opportunity for fulfillment of the legend, is over. Yet, the cessation of St. Agnes's influence also conveys the message that Madeline has become permanently ineligible for assistance from the patron saint of virgins.

"The Eve of St. Agnes" may be interpreted on one level as a symbolic representation of dualistic tendencies in human nature, presenting humanity's imaginative, artistic and religious aspirations in perpetual conflict with baser instincts toward lust and violence. Yet as a tale of human romance, "The Eve of St. Agnes" closely parallels the narrative pattern of Sleeping Beauty.

Baldwin Peter has argued that a Sleeping Beauty pattern enables Keats to turn folk belief into narrative:

The essential parallel to the Sleeping Beauty is the awakening of Madeline by a prince who travels to a castle to find her and marry her. It is by means of this sleeping-beauty motif that the St. Agnes folklore becomes more than a mere vision of a future husband in a dream. Porphyro makes sure that Madeline is not deceived in her belief in the old legends ... by re-enacting in effect, the sleeping-beauty pattern. (1)

While locating the "archetypal narrative" of Sleeping
Beauty in Porphyro's awakening of Madeline (1), Peter states that he is not claiming that the poem is a "version" of Sleeping Beauty revision, nor that there is "conclusive evidence that the poet used Perrault as a source" (6), yet he also enumerates numerous details in the poem's imagery that correspond to details in Perrault's Sleeping Beauty.

Peter asserts that Angela resembles a fairy godmother and that Madeline's dazed state while anticipating the fulfillment of the saint's legend is depicted as enchantment. Peter also argues that "[an] emphasis on sleep pervades the poem" (2) and cites a variant reading for line 122 in which Angela invokes the Sleeping Beauty hedge of thorns by telling Porphyro he must be a fairy lord "[to] venture so about these thorny ways" (3).

Another significant parallel occurs in Porphyro's frozen stance at the bedside of Madeline. His kneeling position corresponds to that of the prince who awakens Sleeping Beauty. Peter's various evidences of connections between Perrault's fairy tale and Keats's poem appear to have more weight than he attributes to them, and it seems highly possible that Keats intentionally employed Perrault's story. Such a conclusion is supported by two Pre-Raphaelite painters who apparently interpreted "The Eve of St. Agnes" as a retelling of Sleeping Beauty.
Though he influenced several major Victorian poets, Keats lapsed into obscurity following his death. According to George Ford, “For nineteen years after [Keats’s] death not a single reprint of his poems appeared in England,” though individual poems “appeared occasionally in anthologies and gift books” (2). Until the late 1840s, Keats was virtually unknown to the Victorian public. However, Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who soon joined forces through the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of painters, individually rediscovered Keats. Holman Hunt exhibited a painting of “The Eve of St. Agnes” at the Royal Academy in 1848. His scene emphasizes the alternate states of sleeping and waking in the poem by depicting the fleeing lovers making their way past sleeping, stupefied revelers. This stress on the contrast between sleeping and waking may spell Hunt’s attempt to indicate the poem’s relationship to the Sleeping Beauty tale. A second visual work based on Keats’s poem was Pre-Raphaelite associate Arthur Hughes’s narrative painting series exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1856. Hughes clearly interprets “The Eve of St. Agnes” as a retelling of Sleeping Beauty. Hughes’s series, which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market,” is centered on the awaking of
Madeline and emphasizes correspondences rather than distinctions between the poem and fairy tale.

Both Hunt and Hughes were faithful to the poem's aristocratic medieval setting. Hughes's series is noteworthy for its rich hues capturing Keats's sensuous details of moonlight filtering through the stained-glass window and for evoking the lushness of Madeline's bedchamber. In so doing, the artwork maintains the conventional Victorian association of Sleeping Beauty with aesthetic beauty, aristocracy and wealth.

Hunt's and Hughes's depictions of "The Eve of St. Agnes" are also noteworthy for the way they reinterpret a somewhat licentious version of Sleeping Beauty to accord with Victorian ideas of respectibility. Comments by the extremely pious Hunt suggest he may actually have failed to recognize the poem's seduction scene. He observed that the poem, "brimful of beauties that will soon enchant you," showed "the sacredness of honest responsible love and the weakness of proud intemperance" (qtd. in Ford 101). Judging from Hunt's juxtaposition of awake lovers and drunken revelers in his painting, Madeline and Porphyro were the embodiments of "honest responsible love" and the drunken revelers the victims of "proud intemperance." Hughes's treatment of "The Eve of St. Agnes" consciously or
unconsciously effectively removes any possible taint of licentiousness from the poem. Hughes frames his narrative series as a triptych, a traditionally religious format. He thereby turns "The Eve of St. Agnes" (or Sleeping Beauty) into an emblem of holy matrimony.

The Pre-Raphaelite paintings of "The Eve of St. Agnes" illustrate how societal ideals for domestic behavior were stressed in Victorian Sleeping Beauty representations. Feminist critic Karen Rowe has pointed out that other popular Victorian fairy tales, in addition to Sleeping Beauty, shaped female aspirations according to prevailing societal standards for behavior. These tales taught females to perceive marriage as the purpose for their lives:

> Popular tales for young girls, including Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, portrayed acquiescent females who cultivated domestic virtues in dreamy anticipation of a prince's rescue by which the heroine might magically enter into marriage—her highest calling.... [H]eroine tales, we may assume, perpetuated romantic paradigms that profoundly influenced women's fantasies and the subconscious scenarios for their real lives. (69)

Beyond promoting the ideality of marriage, then, heroine fairy tales influenced females to accept male hierarchy and a constricted domestic role.

While popular fairy tales reinforced the Victorian value of domesticity, much of their conservatism derived from the seventeenth-century French milieu in which many
were composed. Though Zipes has found subversive elements in the original French tales, he has also explored ways in which they incorporated contemporary ideals for the socialization of male and female children, including gender roles. Zipes argues that the French fairy-tale writers, conscious of French prestige, intentionally strove to adapt oral folk tales to the seventeenth-century upper-class ideals for society:

We must remember that the fairy tale for children originated in a period of absolutism when French culture was setting standards of civilité for the rest of Europe. Exquisite care was thus taken to cultivate a discourse on the civilization process through the fairy tale for the benefit of well-raised children. (Fairy Tales 9)

Zipes finds a highly specified feminine ideal imbedded in the fairy tale directed at females in Perrault's *Histoires, ou contes du temps passé*. These heroine tales include *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Cinderella*. Using the portrayals of the heroines, Zipes constructs a composite of Perrault's ideal woman:

His ideal 'femme civilisée' of upper-class society, the composite female, is beautiful, polite, graceful, industrious, properly groomed, and knows how to control herself at all times.... If she fails the obedience test, she is punished.... The task confronted by Perrault's model female is to show reserve and patience, that is, she must be passive until the right man comes along to recognize her virtues and marry her. She lives only through the male and for the marriage. The male acts, the female waits. She must cloak her instinctual drives in polite
speech, correct manners, and elegant clothes. If she is allowed to reveal anything, it is to demonstrate how submissive she can be. (25)

Zipes supplements this composite of Perrault's heroines, with an explanation of the specific outworking of Perrault's feminine ideals in "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood":

... the princess is actually endowed with the following 'gifts' by the fairies: beauty, the temper of an angel, grace, the ability to dance perfectly, the voice of a nightingale, and musicality. In other words, she is bred to become the ideal aristocratic lady. Further, she is expected to be passive and patient for a hundred years until a prince rescues and resuscitates her. Her manner of speech is such that she charms the prince and he marries her....(24)

Clearly, both Perrault's portrayal of heroines as a whole, and his portrayal of the heroine in Sleeping Beauty correspond in many ways to Victorian expectations. In fact, Zipes notes that the basic content in not only Perrault's fairy tales but many other tales during the Victorian period, including those collected and recorded by the Grimms, and the original fairy tales of the Danish Hans Christian Anderson was conservative and "not contrary to the civilizing purposes" of the increasingly powerful middle class in nineteenth-century England. "The fairy-tale discourse was controlled," Zipes states, "by the same sociopolitical tendencies" at work in society at large (98).
Metaphysical Fairy Tales and Writers

Although conventional representations of the Sleeping Beauty reflected the overall metaphysical tension in Victorian culture by their reinforcement of Victorian materialistic values via a genre that asserted the existence of a supernatural world, the three writers of the metaphysical Sleeping Beauty revisions of the 1860s under discussion here sought to eliminate this tension. As shown in the following chapters, they attempted to dissociate Sleeping Beauty from its conventional connections with aristocracy, wealth and a submissive matrimonial role for women, while at the same time they worked to present the magical narrative as a metaphor for human spiritual experience. In their individual constructions of reality, the Sleeping Beauty revisionists attempted to address many of issues in the religious and spiritual controversy of the times, both the publicly articulated issues and others not formally identified. The following profiles of these authors should illuminate not only their positions on the diverse Victorian religious spectrum but various circumstantial factors affecting their efforts to provide an alternative response to the spiritual crisis.

By 1860, Charles Dickens (1812-70), born in Portsmouth to a clerk in the Navy payroll office, was a best-selling
necolyst on both sides of the Atlantic. He was established at Gad’s Hill Place in Kent, “the first piece of property that any member of the Dickens family, past or present, had ever owned” (Kaplan 361). As editor of the All the Year Round, Dickens produced the serial installments of Great Expectations to shore up the flagging circulation of the London journal. Despite his adult success, however, he nursed a secret only made public after his death of having to go to work, at age 12, in the deplorable conditions of a shoe blacking factory. This humiliating experience, during which he consoled himself with an imagination steeped in fairy tales and other popular literature, related to his father’s imprisonment for debt. Dickens’s blacking warehouse experience lay at the root of his lifelong advocacy for social reform and sympathy for the poor.

Dickens’s novels described Victorian social conditions with unflinching realism; however, they also had what Edward Eigner terms a strong visionary or romantic component. Eigner has argued that Dickens’s fiction belongs to the subgenre of “the metaphysical novel,” a term coined by prolific Victorian novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Eigner’s definition of the metaphysical novel is one featuring clashing worldviews. One of these views, which he
terms materialistic, is allied with rationalism and empiricism:

Half the world of the metaphysical novel appears legitimately to warrant the designation of novel as opposed to romance. This half is firmly based in what the nineteenth century commonly regarded as reality. Its philosophy is positivist and/or utilitarian, its psychology and aesthetics are associational, its materialistic world view derives from John Locke and his empirical followers. (5)

Opposing this materialistic worldview, Eigner asserts, is an ideal or mystical view of reality suggested allegorically:

The metaphysical novelists tried to defeat the one philosophy in order to set up the other, to expose materialism and its consequences, so that metaphysics, which the positivists had banned from philosophy might be restored as a legitimate province for human inquiry. (7)

Eigner includes *The Scarlet Letter* in the subgenre of the metaphysical novel, pointing out that it "is primarily concerned with explaining the why rather than the how of reality, its philosophical or metaphysical meanings rather than its psychological effects" (3). I would add to Eigner’s observations that Dickens relied on fairy-tale patterns and imagery, as well as folk traditions, to delineate the clashing worldviews in his metaphysical novels.

In contrast to Dickens’s obviously strong moral convictions and focus on the immaterial, his religious
beliefs are difficult to categorize, based in part on some inconsistency in his representation of them. Reared in a nominally Anglican family, he attended religious services sporadically and for a short period in the 1840s joined a Unitarian congregation. He did not express his faith in mystical terms, but rather in sentimental ones, declaring himself a Christian, perceiving Christ as the embodiment of goodness and the essence of Christianity as doing good. He told a friend, "[I]n this world ... there is no stay but the hope of a better, and no reliance but on the mercy and goodness of God" (qtd. in Ackroyd 506). Different interpretations of his religious faith stem in part from Dickens's lack of interest in religious institutions, disgust with controversy over doctrine and sectarianism, and ambiguity concerning the divinity of Christ. However, primarily based on the private version of the New Testament that Dickens wrote for his children, which incorporates miraculous events from the gospels, N.C. Peyrouton argues that Dickens was relatively orthodox, and his beliefs would align him with the liberal thought of the Broad Church movement within the Anglican Church. Peyrouton argues that Dickens's views on various doctrinal particulars will remain speculative:

If anything can be concluded definitely, I would say it is.... that Dickens was unable or
unwilling to come to a conclusion about the Virginity of Mary, the Divinity of Christ, the Fatherhood of God, or the Holy Ghost. Moreover, I am convinced he did not believe the distinctions ultimately significant. (106)

In other words, Dickens apparently considered definitions of spiritual mysteries to be unnecessary for grasping the fundamental truths of Christ's extraordinary nature and God's desire for individuals to commit to goodness.12

In contrast to Dickens, Christina Rossetti (1830-94), reared in a literary Italian family in London and considered today one of the greatest female poets of the nineteenth century, was a devout High Anglican influenced by the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement, also known as Tractarianism. Rossetti never married, though she entertained the prospect at least once. She worked regularly for a number of years at a home for "fallen women" run by an Anglican sisterhood and became an "associate" there. D.M.R. Bentley has even speculated on the possibility that "Goblin Market" was written as an exemplary tale for reading aloud to the reclaimed prostitutes (58).

Rossetti's intense spiritual fervor, evidenced by her large output of devotional poetry and devotional commentary for a female audience, clearly placed her outside the Victorian female norm. Harrison has pointed out radical
features within the High Anglican movement itself. By
resurrecting Anglican sisterhoods, High Anglicanism
challenged the societal ideal of bourgeois domesticity
(99), according to which women were expected to aspire to
marriage and family. Such female religious communities,
Harrison notes, implicitly questioned economic security as
the ultimate goal in life. As one Tractarian stated:

Home and comfort have been too long the idols of
Englishmen, a settlement and establishment in
life the *sumnum bonum* of Englishwomen. It is a
great point to have it admitted that there may be
something nobler and more desirable than these
acknowledged blessings. (qtd. in Harrison 99)

The High Anglican faith in a higher calling for women is
reflected in Rossetti’s life and literary work. According
to Harrison, Rossetti did not seriously consider joining a
convent, even though her sister Maria entered a religious
community. However, Rossetti espoused the radical priority
of devotion to Christ over marriage and other material
goals:

For Rossetti, becoming a bride of Christ was the
only vital alternative to the stereotypical roles
of prostitute, wife, and lovelorn spinster, and
it is one she advocates repeatedly in her poems
and devotional works, sometimes with
extraordinary passion. Renunciation of the world,
with all its misguided social institutions and
material temptations, is the unique route to
self-fulfillment. (97)

Yet this utter seriousness in Rossetti’s approach to life
did not preclude her from writing in whimsical modes,
including children's verse and fairy tales. "Goblin Market" is one of two highly regarded narrative poems she presented in a *Sleeping Beauty* format. Rossetti referred in a letter to "The Prince's Progress" (1866), about a loitering prince who arrives to find his waiting princess dead, as "my reverse of the Sleeping Beauty" (qtd. in Marsh 298).

George MacDonald (1824-1905), born in the Scottish town of Huntly, earned an M.A. in 1845 from King's College in Aberdeen, where his studies included chemistry and natural philosophy (physics). As a youth he began to question the strict Calvinist views of Scottish Presbyterianism and, over a long period of grappling with religious questions, underwent a conversion to a mystical and highly personal Christian faith before training as a Congregationalist minister. MacDonald would have been in close sympathy with Dickens's humanitarian religious philosophy, although his attention to theology and sense of God's involvement in the world was far more intense.

Like Dickens, MacDonald saw the essence of Christianity as emulating the character of Christ. However, MacDonald used his concept of Christ as the basis for a comprehensive personal philosophy incorporating all aspects of life, from the theological to the scientific and
aesthetic. For example, insisting that God's character be interpreted as consistent with that of a loving Christ, MacDonald thought suffering would ultimately be revealed as part of God's benevolent purpose to develop individual human goodness. He interpreted Nature as speaking messages of God's love, and he seems to have viewed biological evolution as part of natural revelation, finding changes in species emblematic of the evolutionary human spiritual journey. Asserting Christ as ultimately more important than the Bible, MacDonald resolved for himself the contemporary controversy over the accuracy and historicity of the Scriptures:

[The common theory of the inspiration of the words, instead of the breathing of God's truth into the hearts and souls of those who wrote it, and who then did their best with it, is degrading and evil; and they who hold it are in danger of worshipping the letter instead of living in the Spirit, of being idolaters of the Bible instead of disciples of Jesus.... It is Jesus who is the Revelation of God; not the Bible.... The book is indeed sent us by God, but it nowhere claims to be his very word. If it were--and it would be no irreverence to say it--it would have been a good deal better written.

("To an Unknown Lady," Sadler 154)

A Greek scholar (Raeper 246) who was aware of developments in biblical criticism, MacDonald concluded that the Bible combined both historical and poetic truth, but he acknowledged the possibility of error.
In contrast to the asceticism and suspicion of culture that often characterized Victorian evangelicals, MacDonald incorporated love of Beauty into his religion, as he explained to his father in 1847:

One of my greatest difficulties in consenting to think of religion was that I thought I should have to give up my beautiful thoughts & my love for the things God has made. But I find that the happiness springing from all things not in themselves sinful is much increased by religion. "God is the God of the Beautiful, Religion the Love of the Beautiful, & Heaven the House of the Beautiful--nature is tenfold brighter in the sun of righteousness, and my love of nature is more intense since I became a Christian, if indeed I am one.

(“To His Father,” 11 April 1847, Sadler 18)

MacDonald’s view of a Christ-like God also led to his rejection of eternal damnation and speculation that animals would go to heaven. These last ideas, conceived very early in his career, caused consternation among the parishioners in his one and only pastorate, and he resigned, thereafter supporting himself and his growing family through writing lecturing and teaching, including serving as a professor at Bedford College for Ladies in London.

Eventually, through his friendship with the controversial founder of the Christian Socialist Movement, the Rev. Frederick Maurice, MacDonald joined the Anglican Church. Though his pastorate had been short-lived, he disseminated his religious ideas throughout his life.
through his more than 50 published volumes ranging from fairy tales to novels and sermons.

The backgrounds and social circumstances of Dickens, Rossetti and MacDonald suggest that each may have experienced aspects of the prevailing metaphysical crisis in deeply personal ways. Dickens's distressing experience of childhood factory labor appears to have stamped him indelibly not only with an impression of the great social and economic inequity present in the laissez-faire capitalist economic system but also increased his sensitivity to the contradictions between social reality and the allegedly dual devotions of the middle-class business world to material progress and religious faith.

As a deeply religious woman, whose awareness of her own sexuality is suggested in her personal and literary writings, Rossetti suffered the conflict between flesh and spirit imposed upon Victorian women by a strictly defined gender and marriage code that could be construed as replacing God with a husband as the object of devotion and source of ultimate significance.

Of the three authors, MacDonald appears to have been the one most closely affected by the Victorian polarization of religion and philosophical and empiricist demands on the Victorian intellectual. College-educated in chemistry and
the contemporary equivalent to physics; ordained in the Congregationalist ministry; and a reader of German familiar with biblical criticism and Romantic philosophy, MacDonald's free-thinking cost him his pastorate, requiring him to earn a living expounding his religious philosophy in novels and fantasy. Although the conceptions of reality presented by the three subjects of this study in their metaphysical fairy tales share many similarities, their most deeply felt personal experience of the Victorian metaphysical crisis seems to account for many of the differences.

Endnotes

1. Any person reading the authorized (1611 King James version) of the Bible would have the dating dilemma underscored for him or her in the margins of the book, where Archbishop Ussher's chronology dated creation as 4004 B.C. (Altholz 66).

2. Various accounts of this debate cited by Altholz include [Isabel Sidgwick], "A Grandmother's Tales."

3. This figure is given by Asa Briggs in Victorian People: A Reassessment of Persons and Themes, 1851-67, 38.

4. Silver notes Victorian attempts to connect "occult beings" with "the elfin species known to folklore" (Strange and Secret 4).

5. The original English translation of the Grimms' Sleeping Beauty, entitled "Little Rose-bud," is reprinted in the 1868 German Popular Tales, for which Ruskin wrote an introduction. All subsequent references to the Grimm version refer to this text.
6. The text of Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood" used in this study is taken from the first published English version of Perrault's tale, a translation by Robert Samber appearing in 1729. It is reprinted in the Opies' The Classic Fairy Tales. All quotes from Perrault's story throughout this study refer to Samber's translation.

7. A reproduction of the actual game board is included in Olivia Bristol's Victorian Board Games. The board does not list a specific British manufacturer.

8. Interestingly, Bettelheim, in accord with Dickens, Rossetti and MacDonald, would be at odds with the early Victorian association of Sleeping Beauty with the French Ancien Régime—or any historical time period. Bettelheim asserts that the details of French fashion and contemporary witticisms that Perrault introduced into his Sleeping Beauty version "grossly detract from his work." Bettelheim continues:

   The dress detail, for example, destroys that mythical, allegorical, and psychological time which is suggested by the hundred years of sleep by making it a specific chronological time.... By such details, which were meant to amuse, Perrault destroyed the feeling of timelessness that is an important element in the effectiveness of fairy tales. (230n)

9. Planché's script does not record whether his costuming reflected French fashion or not. However, Daniel Maclise's 1841 painting The Sleeping Beauty, whose French court scene appears to be an attempt at a historically accurate recreation of the setting of Perrault's Sleeping Beauty--and which was ridiculed in Punch for resembling a pantomime--appears to have borrowed specific details from Planché's spectacle. For example, the script describes the princess's apartment as follows: "It is richly furnished and adorned with vases full of beautiful flowers, cages of rare birds, musical instruments of every description, globes, maps, books, &c.—The PRINCESS is discovered playing with her parrot" (Planché, The Extravaganzas 85). Maclise's painting of the palace interior and its elaborate furnishings includes a vase of flowers, caged and free birds, musical instruments, and court figures asleep with books in their laps. One may speculate that if Maclise borrowed some details from the stage production, his painting also reflects its historical setting. Planché's general interest in historical accuracy is reflected in
prefatory comments in the script for a production of Blue Beard, which Planche co-produced with Charles Dance in 1839 (the year before the premiere of The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood:

The Melo-Dramatists of the past century converted "Blue Beard" into an Eastern story, but every child knows that the old nursery tale, by Mons. Charles Perrault, is nothing of the sort. At Nantes, in Brittany, is preserved among the records of the Duchy the entire process of a nobleman (the original of the portrait of Blue Beard) who was tried and executed in that city for the murder of several wives, A.D. 1440. In accordance, therefore with the laudable spirit of critical inquiry and antiquarian research, which distinguishes the present era, the scene of the Drama has been restored to Brittany, and the Costumes selected from authorities of the period above mentioned. (The Extravaganzas 35)

10. Upon awakening to the prince’s kneeling admiration, Sleeping Beauty’s ladylike exchange with the prince is as follows:

... looking on him with eyes more tender than the first view might seem to admit of; is it you my Prince, said she to him, you have waited a great while. The Prince charm’d with these words, and much more with the manner they were spoken in, knew not how to shew his joy and gratitude; he assured her that he lov’d her better than he did himself. (Perrault 88)

Zipes concludes his description of the submissive characteristics of Sleeping Beauty with the following observations on the second half of Perrault’s tale:

Then she must demonstrate even more patience when her children are taken from her by the ogress. Such docility and self-abandonment are rewarded in the end when the prince returns to set things right. Perrault then adds a verse moral which sings a hymn of praise to patience. (Fairy Tales 24)

I have omitted this last portion of Zipes’s statement because, as previously observed, the last half of Perrault’s Sleeping Beauty narrative was frequently omitted in Victorian retellings and also was not included in the Sleeping Beauty version published by the Grimms. Moreover, even Robert Samber’s first English translation of “The
Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," which includes the ogress material, omits the moral.

11. For an analysis of Dickens's lifelong debt and allegiance to the fairy tale, see Stone's *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making*. For a discussion of the folk traditions imbedded in Dickens's work, see Katherine Briggs's "The Folklore of Charles Dickens."

12. Other criticism addressing the nature of Dickens's belief and his relationship to contemporary religion includes Larson's *Dickens and the Broken Scripture* and Walder's *Dickens and Religion*.
CHAPTER 3
DICKENS AND THE "BEAUTIFUL DORMOUSE": SUBLIME
TRANSFORMATION OF SLEEPING BEAUTY SPECTACLE IN GREAT
EXPECTATIONS

The first of three countercultural revisions of
Sleeping Beauty published in London in the 1860s is the
grittily realistic Bildungsroman of a young male social
climber. Yet at the same time that Charles Dickens's Great
Expectations suggests that wealth and romantic bliss do not
necessarily follow high aspirations, and that all levels
of society are interconnected participants in the
grotesqueness and folly of humankind, the novel presents
the Sleeping Beauty fairy story as a paradigm for the
spiritual development divinely intended for an essentially
spiritual humanity. To Dickens, the awakening of the
enchanted princess represents the human individual who
becomes conscious of his or her spiritual equality with
other members of flawed humanity and, embracing available
spiritual grace, acts for the good of others. Such an
interpretation of the Sleeping Beauty story directly
opposes the focus on economic and social advancement and
class distinctions in mid-Victorian society. It implies
the primacy of invisible spiritual reality and personal
character over the visible and tangible material world.

Dickens's dissatisfaction with his society's material
values is well-recognized. An admirer of Carlyle (to whom

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his 1854 novel *Hard Times* is dedicated), Dickens followed Carlyle's lead in deploring many of the effects of the Industrial Revolution, including the adoption of machine principles in matters involving relationships between human beings. Like Carlyle, Dickens also freely employed the fairy-tale idiom in describing social phenomena, and saw the troubled condition of England as linked to the prevailing metaphysics—a failure to distinguish between a transcendental reality and the material. While a growing body of scholarly literature explores Dickens's employment of fairy-tale motifs in his fiction, including *Great Expectations*, the central role in the novel of the *Sleeping Beauty* story has gone unnoticed, as well as its emblematic function in representing the journey of life. Viewing *Great Expectations* as a symbolic re-enactment of *Sleeping Beauty* allows for a more precise understanding of Dickens's metaphysical assertions. Moreover, it exposes the intertextuality between *Great Expectations* and contemporary visual depictions of scenes from the fairy story, revealing the richness of the novel's multi-level attempt to subvert the materialistic consciousness.

*Great Expectations* invokes *Sleeping Beauty* early in its narrative through Pip's experiences at Satis House. Certain visual images associated with the fairy story as
well as cryptic information given by Miss Havisham work over Pip's childhood and adolescence to convince him that Satis House is a sleep-stricken Sleeping Beauty palace and his destiny is to lift its curse as the Prince. One of the most persuasive factors is that while Satis House sits on the town property of a bourgeois brewer, its capaciousness and furnishings are products of wealth that in pre-industrial times exclusively denoted aristocracy.

Numerous details in the aristocratic-seeming Satis House suggest the stoppage of time. The timepieces in the house are fixed at twenty minutes to nine. Pip's first sight of Miss Havisham is of a woman in bridal attire frozen in the mid-point of dressing. She sits at a dressing table with one shoe off and one shoe on; "her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for bosom lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayerbook" (58; vol. 1, ch. 8). The sense of an interrupted narrative, created in Miss Havisham's dressing room, is echoed in a second room where a rotting bridal cake remains the centerpiece on a once-festive dining table. Pip learns that Miss Havisham's tragic wound—her broken heart—occurred on her birthday, the same occasion in the Grimm version of Sleeping Beauty when the princess
fell under enchantment. And, as in both the Grimm and Perrault versions, the longtime suspension of human activity is underscored by sharply contrasting, relentless botanical growth outside the mansion. Ivy has overgrown the house to embrace even the chimneys (232; vol. 2, ch. 10). Grass pokes through every crevice in the courtyard, and the garden is “overgrown with tangled weeds” (65; vol. 1, ch. 8). Pip’s imagination provides another Sleeping Beauty correspondence—the “wilderness of empty casks” (64; vol. 1, ch. 8; emphasis added) he spies outside the brewery.

Although the Grimm version of Sleeping Beauty omits details of dress, Perrault’s version wittily notes the princess’s out-of-date, old-fashioned attire—“she was drest like my great grandmother” (Perrault 89). Within the logic of the fairy-tale, Sleeping Beauty’s palace offers the prince an historical tableau—and so does Satis House. Not only Miss Havisham’s trousseau, already disintegrating when Pip first meets her, but the older furnishings, decorative accessories and architectural features, including the “old-fashioned grate” (84; vol. 1, ch. 11), bespeak another era. According to the chronology worked out by Jerome Meckier (“Dating”), Miss Havisham was jilted around 1800, when she was 28, and Pip first meets her 13
years later. In this case, Miss Havisham’s family home and its decor could well date back to the late 1770s or early 1780s, several years before the French Revolution.4

Miss Havisham is considerably older than Pip, but there is also a beautiful young girl being reared in Satis House, who gives “Manor House” as its alternate title and displays the arrogant, imperious manner of nobility. “She was as scornful of me as if she had been one-and-twenty, and a queen” (58; vol 1, ch. 8), Pip observes, and Estella’s conversation reinforces this impression. By commenting on Pip’s coarse hands and thick boots, Estella emphasizes her leisure-class status. When playing cards, she stresses the original royal court symbolism of the high cards by insisting that the jack be referred to as a knave. Estella, who is to be Miss Havisham’s heir, is also associated in Pip’s mind with the interrupted Sleeping Beauty narrative.

Another compelling evocation of the Sleeping Beauty story at Satis House is its association for Pip with sleep. The perpetual darkness inside the mansion, faintly lit by candles, connects it with the night. Toward the conclusion of his first visit there, Pip is stunned by the rush of daylight when an outer door is opened. “I had fancied,” Pip notes, “without thinking about it, that it must
necessarily be night-time" (63; vol. 1, ch. 8). Satis House is again associated with sleep the fateful day when Pip’s speculations about Miss Havisham’s plans for him change to conviction. Pip has been living in London for at least several months, indulging in the gentlemanly pursuits financed by the anonymous benefactor he believes to be Miss Havisham, when Joe Gargery brings him word that Miss Havisham desires him to visit her. Back in Rochester, Pip takes a walk before his social call, enlarging his previous fantasy—that Miss Havisham is his fairy godmother destining him for riches—into a full-blown recreation of the Sleeping Beauty story in which Miss Havisham vicariously completes her interrupted story via Estella:

[Miss Havisham] reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a going and the cold hearths a blazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin—in short, do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess. (232; vol. 2, ch. 10)

Pip’s fantasy incorporates the Sleeping Beauty details at Satis House which he has observed for so many years. As he enters the property again, the quarters of the new porter, Orlick, with their suggestions of sleep, seem to provide additional confirmation that Satis House is a sleeping palace:

I found his room to be one just within the side door, with a little window in it looking on the
court-yard. In its small proportions, it was not unlike the kind of place usually assigned to a gate-porter in Paris.... his patchwork-covered bed was in a little inner division or recess. The whole had a slovenly confined and sleepy look, like a cage for a human dormouse: while he, looming dark and heavy in the shadow of a corner by the window, looked like the human dormouse for whom it was fitted up—as indeed he was. (233; vol. 2, ch. 10)

In likening Orlick to the British dormouse (who will appear in a feature role in 1865 in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*), Dickens chooses a particularly resonant image of suspended animation. The tree-living rodent is not only nocturnal, but also hibernates in the winter (Gardner 94-95n).

Inside Satis House, Pip finds Estella seated in Miss Havisham’s dressing room near her adopted parent, this time holding Miss Havisham’s unworn bridal shoe in her hand (234; vol. 2, 10). As the visit continues, Pip takes Miss Havisham’s curse-like orders to love Estella as further confirmation of his storybook destiny. He lies in bed at the Blue Boar that night, repeating “I love her” to himself until he is awash with emotions of gratitude. Then, he begins a new subject of speculation— the timing of the conclusion of his story:

I thought if she [Estella] were, as I feared, by no means rapturously grateful for that destiny yet, when would she begin to be interested in me?
When should I awaken the heart within her, that was mute and sleeping now? (244; vol. 2, ch. 10)

One can see that in part Pip interprets the *Sleeping Beauty* story allegorically, reading the princess’s enchanted sleep as representing a girl not yet awakened romantically and sexually. On the other hand, much of Pip’s interpretation reflects his materialistic cultural values. He is equating the royal princess in the fairy tale with a member of a wealthy bourgeois household and seeing the fairy tale as teaching him to aspire for similar status through marriage. Pip is interpreting the fairy tale according to the capitalist myth of upward mobility.

However, Pip’s castles in the air come crashing down on his 23rd birthday. The convict Abel Magwitch reveals himself as Pip’s benefactor, forcing Pip to realize Miss Havisham has not been his patroness. A subsequent visit to Miss Havisham’s also clarifies for him Estella’s coldness of heart and her destined upbringing, not to provide him with domesticity and wealth, but to be an instrument of revenge on the male gender.

Harry Stone, in his seminal work on Dickens’s use of fairy tales, asserts that Pip has been selectively attentive to the fairy-tale signs at Satis House and has thereby misinterpreted the corresponding fairy-tale narrative. Pip has observed but ignored obvious signs of
Miss Havisham's witchlikeness, including her crutch-headed stick, her penchant for endless circling, and her incantatory speech. In actuality, Stone says, Miss Havisham is a witch offering Estella to Pip as a poisoned princess (317).³

Although Estella has been poisoned emotionally by Miss Havisham, I argue that Pip is correct in sensing his participation in a re-enactment of the Sleeping Beauty story. His mistake has been in detecting the fairy-tale roles of the re-enactors. Pip, himself, is the real Sleeping Beauty; Miss Havisham is the maleficent fairy who places him under a spell. From the day of Pip's first visit to Miss Havisham's, she casts a psychological spell on Pip so deep it clouds his consciousness of reality, just as sleep would. This interpretation is suggested in a narratorial comment during Pip's pre-apprenticeship days:

What could I become with these surroundings? How could my character fail to be influenced by them? Is it to be wondered at if my thoughts were dazed, as my eyes were, when I came out into the natural light from the misty yellow rooms? (96; vol. 1, ch. 12)

Pip's perceptual enchantment—the delusion that money, status and romance are of ultimate worth—freezes his spiritual, or psychological, development, just as the Sleeping Beauty princess is frozen in space and time.
Pip’s arrested development continues through his early days in London. Rather than undergoing what would be an expected process of maturation when he leaves his guardians and moves to the city, Pip repeatedly fails to learn from his experiences. His experiences deny that spending money gives satisfaction, yet he keeps on spending lavishly. He and Herbert are “always more or less miserable, and most of our acquaintance were in the same condition. There was a gay fiction among us that we were constantly enjoying ourselves, and a skeleton truth that we never did” (273; vol.2, ch. 15).

While Pip has considered Miss Havisham to be his fairy godmother, his true fairy godmother is Magwitch. Stone writes that Magwitch proves to be “a saving fairy godfather”--and thereby the reverse of his “witch” surname--by awarding Pip “fairy-tale favors” in the form of “education, status, wealth, expectations” (310). I would add that while the meaning of Magwitch’s surname disguises his benevolent character, its femininity associated with both “Mag” and “witch” is a foreshadowing of his playing the Sleeping Beauty role of fairy godmother. On the other hand, Magwitch also plays a masculine Sleeping Beauty role--that of the Prince. Like a true prince, the self-sacrificing Magwitch has traveled far and braved danger to
reach his object of affection, to whom he purposes lifelong devotion.

Pip begins a progressive journey to full consciousness of reality when Magwitch appears in person and reveals himself as Pip’s anonymous benefactor. The revelation that a convict is responsible for his gentlemanly life in London causes Pip starts to faint. At this point, despite the shock it undoubtedly provoked in the careful Victorian reader, Dickens uses iconographic allusion to emphasize that this revelation scene is a re-enactment of the Sleeping Beauty awakening scene. Magwitch catches the swooning Pip, moves him to the sofa, and then approaches the young man in a self-humbling, tender, loverlike fashion:

[Wagwitch] caught me, drew me to the sofa, put me up against the cushions, and bent on one knee before me: bringing the face that I now well remembered, and that I shuddered at, very near to mine. (316; vol. 2, ch. 2)

Magwitch’s approach to Pip evokes conventional depictions in Victorian art and literature of the awakening scene from Sleeping Beauty, depictions clearly derived from the two primary Sleeping Beauty source texts.

Perrault’s Sleeping Beauty version relates: “He [the Prince] approached with trembling and admiration, and fell down before her upon his knees” (88). In the Grimm
version, when the Prince discovers the sleeping princess, she "looked so beautiful he could not take his eyes off, and he stooped down and gave her a kiss" (38). Alfred Tennyson echoes both texts in his *Sleeping Beauty* poem "The Day-Dream," published in 1842: "He stoops--to kiss her--on his knee." ("The Arrival" line 30). An illustration by James Godwin to J.R. Planche's *Four and Twenty Fairy Tales* (1858), shows the prince bending over the sleeping princess as if in the process of kissing her. Sleeping Beauty is propped against massive pillows in her splendidly curtained bed, similar to Pip's half-reclining state against the sofa cushions.6

Unlike Sleeping Beauty, Pip does not welcome an embrace from Magwitch, but recoils with repugnance. However, this reaction is only temporary, and Pip comes to embrace Magwitch metaphorically over a period of time. Pip grows to love the convict, whose eventual capture and death-sentence stem from his devotion to Pip, as a human brother. As Pip "embraces" Magwitch, he also conceives an alternate, spiritual reality. This invisible reality is composed of human souls equal before God in light of their shared sinfulness and limitations. Material displays of money and status are simply disguises by which humans attempt to deny this reality and set themselves above their
fellows. As Pip accepts his human limitations and obligations to others, Pip becomes beautiful in a figurative sense.

Parallel with suggestions that Pip is a type of Sleeping Beauty who must awaken to consciousness of reality, are allusions to Pip as an embryonic plant, designed to grow and eventually bear fruit. These allusions subtly mingle with the novel's *Sleeping Beauty* and imprisonment motifs to illuminate Dickens's interpretation of the fairy tale, and provide a Romantic rationale for that interpretation. The comparison of Pip to a plant is embodied in Pip's name, meaning seed. Dickens subtly emphasizes this meaning when Pip stays with Mr. Pumblechook the seedsman before meeting Miss Havisham for the first time. Early in the morning Pip explores some of the drawers in Mr. Pumblechook's shop and speculates on what he finds:

I wondered when I peeped into one or two on the lower tiers, and saw the tied-up brown paper packets inside, whether the flower-seeds and bulbs ever wanted of a fine day to break out of those jails, and bloom. (54-55; vol. 1, ch. 8)

Pip's musing on the enwrapped embryonic plants repeats the motif of imprisonment that runs throughout the novel and invites comparisons between the seeds, whose potential is unreleased, and Pip's imminent psychological bondage to
Miss Havisham. Mr. Pumblechook's seed packets are denied the natural sunlight and other environmental factors that would prompt their growth and production of beauty, just as sunlight--and the light of truth and reality--is excluded from Satis House, and restricts Pip from the spiritual growth that produces moral beauty. One can infer that Dickens, influenced by Christ's parables using seed and fruit-bearing plants to represent spiritual states, sees the created design of organic growth as symbolic of a created design for human psychological or spiritual enlightenment or growth. This interpretation shows the influence of the English Romantics, who saw an imaginative perception of Nature as revealing human truth.

Yet there is a crucial difference between flora and humans, which Dickens also seeks to represent--the element of human free will. He finds the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale, which parallels both biological processes of growth and human psychological development, to be a more useful paradigm for representing the tension in humans between their created design and variable human will. Moreover, the princess's wounding in *Sleeping Beauty* offers Dickens the opportunity to incorporate into his paradigm of the human condition the fact of human suffering.
Dickens develops his paradigm in a passage showing Pip's sudden compassionate understanding of Miss Havisham after she becomes distraught over the consequences of her rearing of Estella:

I knew not how to answer, or how to comfort her. That she had done a grievous thing in taking an impressionable child to mould into the form that her wild resentment, spurned affection, and wounded pride, found vengeance in, I knew full well. But that, in shutting out the light of day, she had shut out infinitely more; that, in seclusion, she had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences; that, her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker; I knew equally well. And could I look upon her without compassion, seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed, in the vanity of sorrow which had become a master mania, like the vanity of penitence, the vanity of remorse, the vanity of unworthiness, and other monstrous vanities that have been curses in this world?

(396; vol. 3, ch. 10)

The above passage indicates that Miss Havisham has been under a curse, like Sleeping Beauty, only the curse has been of her own making. Her exclusion of sunlight, which is divinely ordered for the growth of plants, can be compared to the "thousand natural and healing influences" she has shut out of her life. Dickens suggests that these beneficial influences, including the love available in human fellowship, are also ordained by God and would have promoted her psychological healing. But Miss Havisham's
choice has caused her mind to become diseased. In dwelling on her own sorrow and refusing to embrace healing, Miss Havisham has refused consciousness of the mingling of pain and joy that is reality and of the truth of her own shared human imperfection, which would have enabled her to forgive her offender and also avoid damaging Estella. She is not a Sleeping Beauty. She has become, as Stone points out—borrowing a phrase from Dickens’s Christmas story Mrs. Lirriper’s Lodgings—a "Sleeping Ugly" (Stone 313).

Stone finds multiple Sleeping Uglies in Dickens’ oeuvre, characterizing Dickens’s view of these characters as follows:

He conceives such personages and presents them to us (in one aspect at least) as veritable denizens of fairyland, as tormented beings imprisoned by baleful spells. Room-bound, fixed, obsessed, they are characters who have been frozen into hate-filled immobility by the deadly enchantment of the intolerable past. (41)

Under this definition, the hate-filled Orlick may also be considered a Sleeping Ugly, while Estella at the end of the novel, having undergone considerable suffering—and softening—joins Pip as a Sleeping Beauty. By implication, Dickens’ dynamic Sleeping Beauty paradigm can account for the spiritual, or psychological, states of all humankind. It reflects the individual’s consciousness or unconsciousness of the truth of the human condition, and
their acceptance or rejection of divine grace to develop spiritually within their state of imperfection.

Allusions to visual art and Pip's artistic judgment enhance the metaphysical message in *Great Expectations*. They are also acts of iconoclasm designed to shatter readers' preconceived images of the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy story and reliance on visuality (or materiality) in general. This work of image-breaking begins with the parodic *Sleeping Beauty* scene in Miss Havisham's dressing room. The room exhibits an abundance of conventional material details from *Sleeping Beauty*, which are recognizable, yet on close inspection so marred as to be grotesque. Pip observes this fact—without taking it to heart—on his first visit:

I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. Once, I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could. (59; vol. 1, ch. 8)
Miss Havisham's appearance is as hideous as her soul. Though she breathes, she resembles a waxwork figure, and as with a waxwork figure, her essential lifelessness cannot be disguised. She could be the mechanized Sleeping Beauty figure at Madame Tussaud's. Moreover, unlike the fairytale heroine she mimics, Miss Havisham has been subjected to the ravages of time, as has Satis House itself, where Pip observes the blights of darkness, mold, mildew and decay.

The scathing satire involved in the description of Miss Havisham's dressing room would be even more obvious to those readers familiar with possibly the most spectacular Sleeping Beauty depiction of the Victorian era. Dickens appears to be parodying Daniel Maclise's The Sleeping Beauty (Figure 1), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1841. The painting, which won that year's highest Art Union prize, also appeared in an exhibition for Art Union prize holders at the Suffolk Street Gallery. There it undoubtedly attracted greater notice as the subject of severe criticism in the satirical journal Punch. It also was reviewed, in generally positive terms, in a September issue of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine as part of the Royal Academy exhibition.
As discussed in the introduction to this study, Maclise’s panoramic court scene of French Ancien Régime splendor closely follows Charles Perrault’s *Sleeping Beauty* version, and excerpts from the fairy tale are quoted in the Royal Academy catalog entry. Within a cavernous gilded hall with golden arches and massive golden pillars, the sleeping princess appears in a canopied gold-curtained bed surrounded by sleeping ladies-in-waiting and other courtiers. The prince stands on tiptoe at the foot of the bed gazing on the princess, while overhead radiant light from an aperture illuminates a stream of winged fairies. The detailed depiction of aristocratic French dress, opulent furnishings and lavishly ornamented architectural features render *The Sleeping Beauty* a Baroque materialistic fantasy. The stage is primed for the prince’s waking kiss.

Although the painting’s view is far more sweeping than Miss Havisham’s dressing room, some correspondences in the two scenes are striking. In the painting, one of the focal points is the princess’s dressing table, covered with a white lace cloth and topped by an ornate gilded mirror. Various splendid items are scattered on the table’s surface, including a small open chest from which jewelry is spilling. The table’s detailed representation drew ridicule in *Punch*, whose anonymous reviewer remarked that
it "takes precedence of the lady" ("Fine Arts" 108).
Similarly, on Pip’s first meeting with Miss Havisham, his eye is drawn to a "draped table with a gilded looking glass," which is "prominent" in the room, displaying Miss Havisham’s "sparkling" jewels and other personal items. Pip immediately discerns the furnishing is a "fine lady’s dressing table." (58; vol. 1, ch. 8). One can imagine Pip has "walked into" a segment of Maclise’s painting. In fact, when Pip fantasizes that he is the Sleeping Beauty prince, he "paints" himself into Satis House. He prefaces his visions of himself restoring light and life to the house with the remark that he was "thinking about my patroness and painting brilliant pictures of her plans for me" (232; vol. 2, ch. 10).

Another noteworthy similarity between Maclise’s literary painting and the scene at Miss Havisham’s is the presence of bridal attire. In the painting, the sleeping princess appears to wear a wedding gown. Her royal mantle lies open to display a white silken dress with white lace-trimmed neckline and high stand-out collar. She wears white gloves, and her hair is dressed with a floral ornament or ornament of floral design. Her garb corresponds to the perpetual bridal attire of Miss Havisham, who, Pip notes, "was dressed in rich materials--
satins, and lace, and silks—all of white” (58; vol. 1, ch. 8). Miss Havisham also has “bridal flowers” (58) in her hair, and white gloves, not yet donned, on her dressing table. The significance of the Sleeping Beauty as bride in both Maclise’s and Dickens’s depictions is that the bridal attire is an addition to Perrault’s text. When the princess wounds herself on the spindle, she has not been told of her curse, so it would be illogical to expect her to be dressed as a bride. Although her father, realizing that the fairies’ predictions are valid, has her placed in a bed, there is no mention of her being bedecked as a bride. Maclise’s presentation of a bride appears to have lodged in Dickens’ photographic memory and become useful two decades later.

Other correspondences between Maclise’s painting and the scene in Miss Havisham’s dressing room are shared qualities of artificiality, staging and spectacle. Maclise’s sleeping princess and other figures are extremely pale, so pale that Punch likened Maclise’s characters to figures of Dresden China rather than “human flesh and blood” (“Fine Arts” 108). Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine pointed out “but one thing that offends” in the painting: “The princess and all her attendants are not sufficiently ‘heirs of flesh and blood’—are too much of the texture of
all around them—and too strong of white lead” (Eagles 347). A similar pallor provokes Pip’s comparison of Miss Havisham to the “ghastly waxwork at the Fair” (59; vol.1, ch. 8). Even more than an inanimate exhibit, however, Maclise’s painting resembles a stage production. Punch sarcastically referred to the painting’s “puppet-show propensities,” calling it an almost “first-rate imitation of the last scene in a pantomime” (“Fine Arts” 108). The sense of staging stems in part from Maclise’s attempt to suggest all primary elements of the fairy tale via the awakening scene, rather than focusing exclusively on the awakening.

Maclise has conflated several “sleep” scenes from Perrault’s text in his painting, undoubtedly wanting to include as many sleeping figures as possible. The addition of fairies serves to remind the viewer of the magic spells and predictions at the princess’s christening. Conversely, Sleeping Beauty’s wedding attire points to the future, foreshadowing her imminent nuptials. Further adding to the painting’s sense of contrivance is the prince’s stance. On tiptoe, with an extended right arm and left leg, he stands to the side of the bed, pulling back the already parted curtains, more like an impresario than a lover. As noted previously, Maclise’s painting may have been inspired by an
actual stage production, J.R. Planché's popular "fairy extravaganza" The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, which premiered in London in 1840. That production likewise staged the fairy-tale awakening as a group scene, including courtiers and the princess's parents (Planché, The Extravaganzas 98).

Like Maclise's Sleeping Beauty painting, the spectacle at Satis House is carefully staged. Miss Havisham, whose very name suggests pretense or "sham" (Stone 310), has had the clocks stopped at twenty minutes to nine. She chooses to wear her bridal attire day after day, even though it is falling to pieces. She positions herself in front of her dressing table amid a prenuptial disarray of dressing and packing, which she takes pains to maintain in the same condition. After holding a jewel up to Estella, Miss Havisham places it "exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up" (61; vol. 1, ch. 8), Pip notices on his first visit. Toward the end of the novel, she reveals that the estate's ruin may be the result of other agents than time, cryptically remarking to Pip that her first meeting with Jaggers was "when I sent for him to lay this place waste for me" (397; vol. 3, ch. 10).

The contrast on close scrutiny between Miss Havisham's "staged" Sleeping Beauty spectacle and Maclise's painting—
between Miss Havisham's grotesque but "real-life" display and a representative Victorian "image" of Sleeping Beauty—enables Dickens to emphasize the disjunction between material appearance and reality at Satis House, and in the world at large. Miss Havisham creates an illusion at Satis House. This illusion manipulates others to perceive her as the piteous victim of tragedy, while masking her refusal to grow and her schemes to wreak revenge on men. The remnants of material splendor in her spectacle bedazzle Pip, suggesting to him that Miss Havisham has designated Estella the inheritor of her unfinished narrative as well as her material goods. Estella absorbs from the spectacle a false sense of aristocratic privilege as well as a message about the danger of loving. On Pip's last visit to her, Miss Havisham confesses her effect on Estella, "With my praises, and with my jewels, and with my teachings, and with this figure of myself always before her a warning to back and point my lessons, I stole her [Estella's] heart away and put ice in its place" (397; vol. 3, ch. 10).

Dickens's recorded responses to Maclise's The Sleeping Beauty support the likelihood that he alludes to the painting via Miss Havisham's constructed spectacle. Dickens, who was on intimate terms of friendship with Maclise at the time, knew of Maclise's projected fairy-tale
painting early in its inception and may even have seen the painting in some preliminary stage of completion. In a 25 Nov. 1840 letter to the painter, Dickens suggests to Maclise that he might use the painting to comment upon adult preoccupation with worldly matters:

'It seems like an impertinence to put such a question to such a man as you, but have you thought in the various sleeping faces, of *dreaming* expressions—guards dreaming of fighting & roystering—ladies of love—and chamber women of flirting? It occurred to me last night, thinking of you, that there was a great field in this for such an imagination as yours, especially as the idea could be impressed upon the most leaden-headed of visitors by the catalogue description. Such a thing as a sleeping child among 'em, in the happiest repose, would point the notion—shewing how even sleep in after life becomes "grown up" and of the world.—Beautiful! Very beautiful!

So charming indeed, that I blush to sully such poetry with the prose announcement that we dine at half past four on Saturday ..., but as we can't live on poetry alone (as the deaths of several spare authors have unhappily demonstrated) perhaps you'll forgive me. (House 2:157)

Dickens seems enthusiastic about Maclise's subject because of its potential for "poetry," apparently using this term to mean imaginative expression of elevated thought or feeling. Dickens's suggestions are specific and detailed: he thinks dreaming expressions on courtiers, the figure of a blissful sleeping child, and commentary in the exhibition catalog would impress upon viewers psychological distinctions between child and adult, even in the
unconsciousness of sleep. One can surmise that Dickens’s “sleeping child among ‘em,” would represent childhood contentment with the simple pleasure of rest in contrast to sleeping courtiers, whose desires for distinguishing themselves or making romantic conquests would even pervade their dreams. However, it is not clear whether Maclise attempted to incorporate Dickens’s suggestions. The painting includes two peacefully sleeping children resting against each other at the foot of the princess’s bed, but similarly placid expressions appear on some of the adult faces. The catalog description is limited to a synopsis of the fairy story. Regardless, though, of the outcome of Dickens’s advice, his hope of contribution probably ensured that he studied the completed painting with keen interest.

Contemplating Maclise’s challenge sparked Dickens’s own visual imagination, yielding images and prompting associations with spiritual and psychological meanings. In a letter to Maclise believed written sometime in early 1841, before the painting’s May exhibition at the Royal Academy, Dickens again plays with Sleeping Beauty imagery, teasing Maclise about workaholism:

Are you man enough to dine with us today at 5 or R.A. enough to sit poring after that hour over your beautiful dormouse? Reply. (House 7: 829)

Strikingly, Dickens here uses the same animal analogue for
Maclise's sleeping princess that he will use 20 years later in *Great Expectations* to describe Orlick, thereby linking Orlick to the grotesque *Sleeping Beauty* parody occurring at Satis House. This letter shows that Maclise's painting sparked Dickens's imagination to make connections between the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy tale and phenomena in the world of Nature. Moreover, the repeated "dormouse" analogy underscores the likelihood that the painting lodged in his memory.

Via Miss Havisham's dressing room and its grotesque parody of the visual spectacle his readers would associate with *Sleeping Beauty*, Dickens suggests that visual appearance can be misleading. Via the "true" *Sleeping Beauty* awakening scene in *Great Expectations*—Magwitch's revelation of himself to Pip—Dickens attempts not only to shatter conventional images of the fairy tale, but also sever the fairy-tale's association with all the material factors represented in those images.

As discussed previously, Dickens declares that Magwitch is the prince to Pip's Sleeping Beauty through the conventional romantic pose struck between the two after Magwitch reveals himself. Although the allusion to contemporary *Sleeping Beauty* iconography is indisputable, the romantic pose is the reader's only visual clue that the
Sleeping Beauty awakening is being re-enacted. Noticeably absent from the "true" Sleeping Beauty awakening scene are luxurious furnishings and decorations, sumptuous dress and beauteous and handsome royal protagonists. For this reason, the scene in which Magwitch reveals himself would be disturbing and aesthetically displeasing to the Victorian reader. The average Victorian reader would reject the image not only for its homoerotic overtones, but also the clearly unattractive Magwitch and the setting. The convict is about sixty; the top of his head is "furrowed and bald" while long iron-grey hair falls from the sides. He is "browned and hardened by exposure to weather" and has "large brown veinous hands" (312-13; vol. 2; ch. 20). The site is the dilapidated, musty Barnard's Inn, where Pip has crowded Herbert's "sparely-furnished chambers with incongruous upholstery work" (271; vol. 2, ch. 15). In light of readers' expectations for a Sleeping Beauty re-enactment, the scene is utterly grotesque. By virtue of gender, Pip, whose appearance is never described, implicitly falls short of feminine beauty. Magwitch is a ludicrous candidate for the young and handsome Sleeping Beauty prince, and the squalid Barnard's Inn is no Sleeping Beauty palace.

I argue that the revelation scene in Great
**Great Expectations** constitutes Dickens's deliberate attempt to dissociate the *Sleeping Beauty* narrative from all materiality in the minds of his readers. If this scene is a *Sleeping Beauty* awakening, it follows that heterosexual romance is not crucial to a replay of the fairy tale. The gender of the fairy-tale protagonist is not relevant, and neither is physical comeliness on the part of the protagonists. The social class of the characters is also irrelevant, since both Pip and Magwitch come from the bottom rungs of the social ladder. Pip's origins are working class, while Magwitch belongs to the criminal underclass. Wealth and splendid displays of that wealth are also not factors. The revelation scene is such a radical departure from the prevailing "image" of *Sleeping Beauty* that it is scarcely recognizable as such. In order for a reader to reconcile the scene with the fairy tale, he would have to reconceive the fairy tale as an abstraction representing intangible qualities, primarily the expanded consciousness resulting from new knowledge.

In addition to employing allusions to visual art in *Great Expectations* to suggest the deceptive and essentially irrelevant nature of the material world, Dickens uses Pip's evolving artistic responses to signal his transformed apprehension of reality. This change is partially explored
in Nancy K. Hill's book, *A Reformer's Art: Dickens' Picturesque and Grotesque Imagery*, in which she argues that Dickens used grotesque visual description in his writing to undermine the detached method of viewing the world in which his readers would have been indoctrinated through the fashion for "picturesque" art. This artistic mode, which predominated in the nineteenth-century, often resulted in aesthetically pleasing landscapes that glossed over the pitiable social conditions of the rural poor included in the compositions. Hill argues that Dickens was aware of the anaesthetizing effect of picturesque art on his readers' perception of reality and employed the grotesque to teach his readers "to probe for meaning below, or between the surfaces" (10).

In the case of *Great Expectations*, Hill points out that initially Pip holds "the inverted view that what he has experienced at Satis House is not grotesque, but picturesque" (126). This skewed perspective is sharply delineated when Pip attempts to tutor Joe at the old Battery on the marshes. While surveying the pleasant vista of white-sailed ships passing by on the river, Pip conflates his immediate sensory impressions with his memories of Satis House and its inhabitants:

> Whenever I watched the vessels standing out to sea with their white sails spread, I somehow
thought of Miss Havisham and Estella; and whenever the light struck aslant, afar off, upon a cloud or sail or green hill-side or water-line, it was just the same.—Miss Havisham and Estella and the strange house and the strange life appeared to have something to do with everything that was picturesque. (108; vol. 1, ch. 15)

The likeness Pip finds between the truly picturesque marsh landscape and Satis House overlooks significant differences between the natural and the artificial and in qualities of light and color. Pip says the ships' white sails remind him of Estella and Miss Havisham, yet the reader knows that the withered Miss Havisham and all her bridal paraphernalia are yellow from decay. The radiant sunlight highlighting various parts of the landscape also inexplicably reminds Pip of his Satis House experiences, despite the fact that natural light has been deliberately excluded in the candle-lit mansion. By showing Pip's faulty aesthetic or artistic sense, this passage suggests his corresponding inability to interpret his observations accurately. Pip is shown as insensitive to Nature, whose life and vitality are in direct contradiction to the stagnation and lifelessness at Satis House. His particular difficulties regarding light and color signify his lack of enlightenment.

Hill points to a change in Pip's aesthetic consciousness when he has learned that Miss Havisham's supposedly munificent plans for him were a fantasy. He no
longer denies the grotesqueness of Satis House when he returns there. He takes a seat in Miss Havisham’s dressing room, adding, “With all that ruin at my feet and about me, it seemed a natural place for me, that day” (357; vol. 3, ch. 5). Commenting on this passage, Hill remarks that “Pip’s changing perception of Satis House marks out stages in his own perception of himself, a self that he comes to see as partaking in, rather than contrasting with, the grotesque” (127).

I argue that Pip’s fully restored aesthetic perception is represented in a word painting with similarities to the landscape at the old Battery. At Magwitch’s trial near the conclusion of the novel, Pip once again encounters the slanting light frequently depicted in “picturesque” painting. However, this time, he is able to detect the invisible spiritual reality operating behind the material details of the scene:

The sun was striking in at the great windows of the court, through the glittering drops of rain upon the glass, and it made a broad shaft of light between the two-and-thirty [defendants] and the Judge, linking both together, and perhaps reminding some among the audience, how both were passing on, with absolute equality, to the greater Judgment that knoweth all things and cannot err. (454; vol. 3, ch. 17)

Pip’s speculation on the invisible truth of the scene before him shows his new ability to perceive spiritual
reality. He realizes that the material factors by which humans distinguish themselves dissolve in God's piercing vision. His aesthetic response is also more sound. The slanting light arrests his attention, but he does not respond to the scene with the surface appreciation of an admirer of the "picturesque." Pip finds the scene poignant and symbolic. He has acquired the ability to pierce the picturesque facade of life.

Dickens's Great Expectations is a metaphysical novel attempting to reaffirm a view of ultimate spiritual reality in considerable danger from the intellectual currents and economic conditions of the Mid-Victorian period. Dickens revises the Sleeping Beauty narrative to portray his alternate conception of reality, indicating that despite the variegated material factors that set humans apart in society—gender, class, wealth and appearance—human individuals are essentially spiritual beings alike in their imperfection before a holy God. By presenting Pip's illusionment, disillusionment and maturation as a reenactment of Sleeping Beauty, Dickens suggests that the fairy tale is a paradigm of a divinely ordained design for human spiritual growth, which may or may not be thwarted by human free will. Only when the individual consciousness expands to embrace the reality of his grotesque human
condition does he or she become a more developed human being capable of promoting the brotherhood of man, just as Pip develops love for Magwitch and compassion for Miss Havisham.

Integral to Dickens's achievement in *Great Expectations* is a visual rhetorical strategy. In choosing to allude to the popular fairy story, Dickens anticipates the probability that readers will have already interpreted *Sleeping Beauty* according to their society's prevailing materialistic orientation. He appears keenly aware of spectacular *Sleeping Beauty* depictions in Victorian art, literature and popular entertainment, in which the tale is associated with ostentatious displays of wealth and splendor—and the likelihood that these idealized depictions fuel aspirations for upward mobility. Dickens is also aware of other Victorian ideologies insidiously reinforced through the conventional material details of *Sleeping Beauty*, the belief that achieving romantic love and domestic union provides ultimate human fulfillment, and that physical appearance, class and wealth are valid means of making distinctions in human worth. He recognizes that one of his beloved fairy tales has been absorbed into industrial capitalist ideology, reinforcing a preoccupation with material gain. Knowing the conventional material
associations with *Sleeping Beauty*—imprinted on his readers’ minds as visual images—Dickens manipulates conventional iconographic representations of *Sleeping Beauty*, such as Maclise’s *The Sleeping Beauty*, so as to shatter these images and reveal the story’s abstract psychological and spiritual essence. This iconoclasm carried out for the reader’s benefit complements the shattering of Pip’s false expectations and visions of upward mobility and material fairy-tale reward. Only after his illusions of material reward are dispelled, can Pip recognize the intangible boon of human fellowship that is signified in *Sleeping Beauty* and offered to him by the devoted Magwitch.

Dickens also uses visual rhetoric to illuminate the expansion of consciousness undergone by Pip in his journey of development. Dickens shows an evolution in Pip’s aesthetic sensibility. Once unable to make even basic distinctions between the picturesque and grotesque, Pip not only comes to recognize the difference, but learns to look beyond material appearance for invisible spiritual truth. Dickens’s visual rhetoric in *Great Expectations* illuminates his awareness of the power of the visual image to shape perception and his recognition of the role of the visual image in shaping the materialistic collective consciousness.
of Victorian society. He attempts to make his reader similarly aware of these observations. To a readership accustomed to theatrical spectacle and art mimicking the superficiality of theatrical spectacle, some of it by then proliferating via the mechanical reproduction of illustrated books, he suggests that visual appearance may be at complete odds with invisible substance. He points to Sleeping Beauty spectacle, revealing its misleading representation of a profound fairy story. By analogy, he suggests that the visual spectacle of life is also misrepresentative of the sublime truth of the human condition.

Endnotes

1. Although the "revised" ending to Great Expectations suggests that Pip and Estella marry shortly after the last scene in the novel, I would argue that the novel’s ending remains significantly different from the happily-ever-after jubilation of couples in fairy tales and other Dickens novels, such as Martin Chuzzlewit and Our Mutual Friend. Primarily, this is due to Pip and Estella’s extremely delayed gratification. Pip’s chance encounter with Estella, and cognizance of her emotional softening, occurs after his eleven-year exile from England during which he has worked diligently for a "sufficient living" (479; vol. 3, ch. 20) and Estella has undergone extended suffering—presumably in the hands of the brutal Bentley Drummle. She tells Pip: “I have been bent and broken, but--I hope--into a better shape” (480; vol. 3, ch. 20). Pip and Estella’s reunion does promise happiness and fulfillment, but a tempered happiness—more tranquil than ecstatic—in which the individuals may never completely forget the pain in their pasts. Moreover, Jerome Meckler speculates that Estella may have died shortly before Pip the mature narrator pens his memoir, making public the secrets of her birth. Certainly, the possibility that the narrator is a
widower is more sobering than living “happily ever after.” See Meckier, “Dating the Action in Great Expectations: A New Chronology.”

2. In addition to Eigner’s book on the “metaphysical novel,” see Nancy Klenk Hill’s “Dombey and Son: Parable for the Age.”

3. Stone’s Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making is the seminal work on Dickens’s allegiance to the fairy tale and his incorporation of fairy-tale characters, motifs and techniques in his writing. The other book devoted to Dickens’s fairy-tale use is Kotkin’s Dickens and the Fairy Tale. In addition, a number of critics have commented on fairy-tale elements in individual works by Dickens. These include Barthold, who finds that Bleak House employs themes and structures from Little Red Riding Hood and Sleeping Beauty to convey various modes of operation within society. In regard to Great Expectations, Stone recognizes the presence of elements from many fairy tales, including Sleeping Beauty, but does not explore fully their relationship to the overall meaning of the novel. Meckier argues that the narrative structure of Great Expectations is patterned on the story of Misnar’s pavilion, part of the pseudo-Persian collection The Tales of the Genii. In consequence, the collapsing pavilion, alluded to in the novel, becomes an analogue for the fate of Pip’s fantasies (“Great Expectations—Symmetry” 42).

4. I am indebted to my dissertation director, Sharon Aronofsky Weltman, for the induction that Satis House is associated with the time of the French Ancien Régime, an idea whose validity is borne out by Meckier’s chronology.

5. Although Stone describes Miss Havisham as a witch offering a poisoned gift in the person of Estella, he sees this fairy-tale motif as just one of many present in Great Expectations. For example, he also finds that both Magwitch and Pip undergo a “Beauty and the Beast” transformation.

6. This particular illustration is reprinted in the Opies’ The Classic Fairy Tales, 89. Dickens may well have seen it, as he was an admirer of Planché and “delighted with” Planché’s 1855 collection of fairy tales, which Planché sent him (qtd. in Planché, Recollections 355).
7. Today, Maclise’s *The Sleeping Beauty* is in the collection of the Sir William Gray House in Hartlepool, England, although the painting’s location was temporarily lost to scholarship during this century. Its "disappearance" appears due to the relatively obscure museum and gallery where it is housed. According to the collections manager, Gray donated the painting in 1920, and it was restored in the early 1980s (Law). However, the editors of the Pilgrim edition of Dickens’s letters state that Maclise’s painting “has not been traced since” an 1897 sale at Christie’s (House 2.157n). The organizers of a 1972 exhibition of Maclise’s art apparently were also unaware of the painting’s location, as it was not included in the exhibit. (See the exhibition catalog, compiled by Ormond. The author of a 1984 article on the Dickens and Maclise friendship also does not mention the painting’s location (Turpin).

8. Dickens once compared his mind to a photographic plate. See Stone 40.
CHAPTER 4
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI’S RADICAL ORTHODOXY: “GOBLIN MARKET,” SLEEPING BEAUTY AND THE METAPHYSICS OF DESIRE

Jerome McGann has observed that throughout her long literary career Victorian poet Christina Rossetti, like her brother the famous Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, composed “imaginations of desire that found no social or worlded equivalents” (17-18). McGann is referring to the siblings’ common focus on mystical heavens and hells beyond human experience, despite the radical difference in their concepts of these alternative realities. In the case of Christina, who embraced an orthodox Christian concept of heaven, one might assume that her otherworldliness would render her culturally irrelevant. But McGann argues that her rejection of worldly interests allowed her to step outside the prevailing materialist ideology:

Rossetti negotiated the Age of Equipoise in a state of extreme antithesis.... The outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of this Age of Equipoise was the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851. Under this sign England launched herself into the second half of the nineteenth century armed with a faith in English virtue, a hope in unlimited material progress, and the charity of technology and capitalist enterprise. From her uncompromising religious perspective, Rossetti observed this complacency with indifference, contempt, or—sometimes—fear.... In the Age of Equipoise, Rossetti perceived the triumph of Vanity, a pattern of acquiescence not merely to [the flesh, the world and the devil] but to the illusory imagination

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that the Crystal Palace portrayed a great truth rather than a great deception. ("Introduction 1-2")

McGann’s eloquent expression of Rossetti’s unique perspective on mid-Victorianism appears in his introduction to a collection of essays devoted to her re-evaluation and appreciation.¹ However, while Rossetti’s scrutiny of Victorian society from a Christian metaphysical perspective is particularly well-developed in “Goblin Market,” scholars have failed to explore that metaphysical position fully when examining the poem.

Social and cultural analyses of this “richly multivalent poem” (Mermin 71) have highlighted various highly subversive features beneath its whimsical surface. Campbell, for example, argues that the poem, “asserts the vital socioeconomic function of women” in capitalist society, “privileging reproduction over the destructive self- and resource-consuming values of production” that govern the Victorian marketplace (394, 398). Garlick discerns Rossetti’s subversion of Victorian fantasy to denote the limitations of Victorian female experience.² “Goblin Market” has also been recognized as one of Rossetti’s two major attempts to challenge the taboo against women’s involvement in theological speculation and biblical interpretation (Peterson 210). These and other
critical discussions fill in important details of Rossetti's alternate world-picture and/or its relationship to her religious orientation. I argue, however, that appreciating the magnitude of Rossetti's cultural criticism requires examining the specific metaphysical premises, or assertions about the ultimate nature of reality, which resonate throughout the poem.

Rossetti's overarching message in "Goblin Market" is the ultimately unimaginable dynamism and vitality of infinite spiritual reality. Through her intimations regarding this superreality and contrasting depiction of material reality as insubstantial, she asserts that human desire is spiritual in nature. Moreover, Laura's obsession with the goblin fruit serves as an indictment of Victorian society for surrendering to an aberrant human psychological tendency to try to wrest spiritual satisfaction from other humans and material objects. Revising the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale is Rossetti's means of portraying an encounter with ultimate spiritual reality as ecstatic human fulfillment, while conversely showing the destructiveness of material fantasies. Her metaphysics of desire undercuts many cherished Victorian preoccupations, while also appropriating the concept of mental projection, an idea
circulating in the heightened religious controversy of her time, to support rather than refute the existence of God.

The fairy-tale aspect of "Goblin Market" is a critical commonplace, and correspondences have been observed between the poem's storyline and such Grimms' fairy tales as "Snow White" and "The Robber Bridegroom," along with folk elements from Thomas Keightley's 1850 The Fairy Mythology; Anna Eliza Bray's 1854 A Peep at the Pixies, or Legends of the West; Bray's husband's fairy-tale "The Rural Sisters"; and Archibald Mclaren's The Fairy Family: Ballads and Metrical Tales of the Fairy Faith of Europe, published in 1857. Rossetti even acknowledged that her original title for "Goblin Market"—"A Peep at the Goblins," was in imitation of the title of Mrs. Bray's book." Nonetheless, considerable evidence supports reading "Goblin Market" as a deliberate revision of Sleeping Beauty, which is enhanced by other folkloric material. Besides conforming to the structure of Sleeping Beauty (AT 410) as summarized in the Aarne-Thompson folktale type index—"The King's daughter falls into a magic sleep. A prince breaks through the hedge surrounding the castle and disenchants the maiden" (137)—"Goblin Market" can be viewed as a revision because it incorporates significant details from Charles Perrault's "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood."
“Goblin Market” casts Lizzie in the male role of the Sleeping Beauty prince. Rossetti irrefutably establishes this cross-gender portrayal through a detail from Perrault’s Sleeping Beauty version. In “The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood,” the prince’s courage is tested by an impenetrable forest of trees and intertwined bushes and brambles that has grown up around Sleeping Beauty’s castle. These woods part of their own accord when the prince attempts passage. Though Lizzie’s courage is associated with braving the goblin glen, on her way back to Laura, she too must pass through a gauntlet of trees, bushes and brambles: Lizzie “tore thro’ the furze,/ Threaded copse and dingle” (lines 450-51). To the modern reader, these landscape terms may be obscure, but the allusions are precise. A copse or coppice refers to “a thicket of small trees or underwood” (“Copse”); dingle is a deep dell or hollow that may be “closely wooded or shaded with trees” (“Dingle”); furze is an alternate name for gorse, a flowering shrub whose spines are only differentiated from thorns by botanists (“Furze”). Shakespeare includes furze in a litany of tormenting plants in The Tempest: “Tooth’d briars, sharp furzes, pricking goss, and thorns” (IV.i.180). Rossetti emphasizes Lizzie’s correspondence to the Sleeping Beauty prince in the lines following the
description of her thorny passage: Lizzie "ran and ran/As
if she feared some goblin man.../But not one goblin
skurried after,/Nor was she pricked by fear" (455-60;
emphasis added). Though the woods and thorny undergrowth do
not part for Lizzie as for the Sleeping Beauty prince, she
is psychologically and spiritually unscathed to the degree
that he is physically unharmed.

While Lizzie takes on the part of the Sleeping Beauty
hero, a variety of correspondences to Perrault's tale
designate Laura's role as the spell-bound heroine. Both
Laura and Sleeping Beauty are victims of pernicious
enchantment initiated by characters belonging to the fairy
world. Their curiosity leads to their downfalls. Their
enchantments are similar in nature. Having eaten the fruit,
Laura slips into a sleep-like state of semi-consciousness.
She "knew not was it night or day/As she turned home alone"
(139-40). The next morning, she goes about her domestic
tasks "in an absent dream" (211). Like a sleepwalker
focused on inward impulses, Laura gives an impression of
wakefulness by her movement but does not respond to her
surroundings. Rather, she is "longing for the night" (214),
the period of sleep. After finding that she can no longer
hear or see the goblins in the glen, Laura develops a
complete lack of interest in life. She "sat down listless
in the chimney-nook/And would not eat” (297-98). Like
Sleeping Beauty, Laura is not only detached from reality,
but immobile.

Though “Goblin Market” places its Sleeping Beauty
protagonists in a setting of rural simplicity, the maidens
Laura and Lizzie are metaphorically designated as royalty
through natural imagery. When the goblins tempt Laura to
buy their fruit, she reveals that the sisters possess great
wealth in the natural beauty that surrounds them—“all my
gold is on the furze/That shakes in windy weather” (120-
21). This message is reiterated and amplified in the richly
colored Pre-Raphaelite landscape scene, where “Lizzie
plucked purple and rich golden flags,/Then turning
homewards said: ‘The sunset flushes/Those furthest loftiest
crags...’” (220-22). Besides suggesting the gold of kings,
the flags flash the purple associated with royalty. The
sisters themselves are crowned with golden hair, whose
correspondence to precious metal is reinforced through
Laura’s use of her hair to purchase the goblin fruit.
Rossetti also stresses the correspondence between the hair
and gold through similes likening the sisters to splendid
objects. Locked together in sleep, the sisters are “Like
two wands of ivory/Tipped with gold for awful kings.” While
resisting the temptations of the goblins, Lizzie stands
firm, "Like a royal virgin town/Topped with gilded dome and spire" (418-19). By likening the sisters to splendid examples of human artifice, Rossetti also presents the sisters as aesthetically beautiful—a characteristic of the traditional *Sleeping Beauty* hero and heroine.

In Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*, the princess awakes under the prince's adoring gaze, though generally Victorian retellings of the fairy tale made a kiss the spell-breaker. Quoting from the kiss scene in J.R. Planché's 1840 London stage spectacle, *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*, Iona and Peter Opie wittily note that "pantomime producers have always known, what apparently Perrault did not know, that the way to wake Sleeping Beauty was with a kiss" (qtd. in 83). "Goblin Market" supplies the kiss and other signs of erotic passion in abundance, though it is Laura/Sleeping Beauty who embraces Lizzie/the prince: "She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth" (492). The kisses figuratively set Laura on fire, suggesting a sexual awakening: "Her lips began to scorch (493) and "Swift fire spread thro' her veins, knocked at her heart/Met the fire smouldering there/And overbore its less flame" (507-09). Though she collapses following her embraces, the following day Lizzie awakes, like Sleeping Beauty, "as from a dream" (537). Her complete restoration enables her to appear as
wife and mother at the conclusion of the poem. This assumption of duty parallels Sleeping Beauty’s restoration to consciousness and the ability to serve as wife and queen.

Reading “Goblin Market” as a revision of Sleeping Beauty does not conflict with, but rather enhances interpretations of the poem as a feminized allegorical reenactment of humanity’s “Fall” and redemption by Christ. Such interpretations rest on viewing Laura as representative of humanity and Lizzie as representative of Christ. I argue that Christian allegory is Rossetti’s highest (and most fundamental) level of meaning in the poem. Laura’s experiences chronicle the human fall from grace but also the human conversion experience and the subsequent spiritual comfort to the believer as earthly life continues. Yet Rossetti’s allegory is distinctive not only for its feminine Christ; it is also distinctive for emotional appeal and sensory vividness. These qualities derive from conflating the Christian narrative with the Sleeping Beauty narrative.

The supernaturalism of the fairy story proves valuable to Rossetti in fusing the Sleeping Beauty and Christian narratives. In Sleeping Beauty, although the prince responds to the sleeping princess with human
passion, he also serves as a channel of supernatural energy. His arrival (or kiss), breaks a supernatural spell of profound sleep transmuted from an original death sentence. In modifying the fairy tale to accommodate the orthodox Christian view of Christ as the means of a future physical resurrection, Rossetti only has to amend Sleeping Beauty's death-like sleep into literal death. Eating the goblin fruit sends Laura into a Victorian decline (Mermin 71), and by the time Lizzie sets out to save her, Laura "[s]eemed knocking at Death’s door" (321). She briefly succumbs to death after embracing Lizzie, so that her awakening the following morning is a resurrection. "Is it death or is it life?" the narrator asks upon Lizzie's collapse. The answer is "Life out of death" (523-24).

One of Rossetti's prime rhetorical advantages in adapting Sleeping Beauty to the Christ story is the fairy tale's ability to revive a religious narrative whose emotional impact undoubtedly suffered from familiarity. By the 1860s, Sleeping Beauty undoubtedly served as a powerful cultural paradigm of romantic fulfillment. Rossetti appropriates this emotional resonance for the Christ story. The emotional intensity that Sleeping Beauty would signify to many Victorians is exemplified in Pre-Raphaelite painter
Arthur Hughes's *The Eve of St. Agnes*, as well as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

Hughes's painting (Figure 2), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1856, is based on a poem of the same title by Romantic poet John Keats, a favorite of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. As discussed in Chapter 2, Keats's poem could be considered a *Sleeping Beauty* revision. The fairy-tale pattern in "The Eve of St. Agnes" may indeed help account for its imaginative impact on the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates. One bibliography of Victorian art lists depictions of scenes from Keats's poem by no fewer than five painters—Hughes, Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Daniel Maclise and James Smetham (Garrigan 556)—all associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Rossetti herself was deeply influenced by the poem, according to Barbara Fass, who thinks Rossetti saw it as reflecting the predicament of the Victorian woman:

Her poems reveal that she recognized only too well that it was given to a passive Madeline, and indeed to all who observe the rites of St. Agnes's Eve, only to pray and dream, only to wait for a bridegroom who may never arrive. (33)

Rossetti may have seen Keats's poem—and the *Sleeping Beauty* pattern—as ironically underscoring the plight of the Victorian woman, but Hughes's artwork stresses the more
Figure 2: The Eve of St. Agnes by Arthur Hughes
conventional interpretation. His series of three individual paintings focuses on the narrative climax of the poem.

The first of these medieval scenes shows Porphyro approaching the castle; in the second, he kneels on his right knee, cradling a lute under his left arm, beside the bed of the reclining Madeline, whose head is lifted as if just awakened. In the third scene, Porphyro and Madeline, in traveling garb, are greeted by a hound as they approach a sleeping porter. Literary painting was a popular genre in the Victorian period, allowing viewers to relive faithfully depicted scenes from familiar literature. The surprising feature of Hughes's literary artwork is that despite the ample opportunity afforded him in three scenes to render the uniqueness of Keats's poem, his painting appears to retell Sleeping Beauty. Hughes does not show Porphyro awakening Madeline by singing and playing a lute. Rather, his kneeling position beside Madeline's bed indicates she has been awakened, just like the traditional Sleeping Beauty, by his rapt gaze. Without the inscription on the triptych, Hughes's series would undoubtedly be recognized as Sleeping Beauty, rather than Keats's poem.

The lack of specificity in his painting series appears to have troubled Hughes, for he produced a reduced version of it about 1858 (Roberts 138). The latter begins with a
scene of Porphyro being greeted at the castle by an older woman in black. In the second scene, Madeline is awakening as Porphyro stands by her bed playing the lute; the third scene has undergone little or no alteration. This revised painting series could not be mistaken for a depiction of Sleeping Beauty.

While Hughes may have failed somewhat in his first attempt to portray “The Eve of St. Agnes,” he is entirely successful in another—pulling on his viewers’ heartstrings and furthering the association of Sleeping Beauty with romantic fulfillment. Hughes’s series is framed as a triptych, traditionally associated with religious content. This religious format and the serious expressions on the faces of Madeline and Porphyro suggest that their narrative is an exemplum of the weighty importance of love and matrimony. Hughes is presenting Sleeping Beauty as a religious emblem, comparable to a biblical incident. His painting demonstrates the strong emotional resonance of the fairy tale.

In Jane Eyre (1847), Brontë reworks a number of fairy-tale patterns into a female Bildungsroman, but clearly relies on Sleeping Beauty imagery to convey the sense of triumphant romantic fulfillment reached in the novel’s conclusion. Jane Eyre illustrates the common secular
interpretation of Sleeping Beauty's physical revival as representative of the ecstatic personal fulfillment, or quality of life, that a male lover may bestow on his beloved.

Long after her exile from Thornfield, Jane "hears" Rochester calling her as she is praying, and she interprets the voice as divine direction to return to him. When her quest brings her to Thornfield's blackened ruins, she dramatizes her horror by casting herself in the role of a Sleeping Beauty prince who arrives to find his beloved not sleeping, but dead:

Hear an illustration, reader. A lover finds his mistress asleep on a mossy bank; he wishes to catch a glimpse of her fair face without waking her. He steals softly over the grass, careful to make no sound; he pauses—fancying she has stirred: He withdraws: not for the worlds would he be seen. All is still: he again advances: he bends above her; a light veil rests on her features: He lifts it, bends lower; now his eyes anticipate the vision of beauty—warm, and blooming, and lovely, in rest.... How he suddenly and vehemently clasps in both arms the form he dared not, a moment since, touch with his finger! How he calls aloud a name, and drops his burden, and gazes on it wildly! He thus grasps, and cries, and gazes, because he no longer fears to waken by any sound he can utter—by any movement he can make. He thought his love slept sweetly: he finds she is stone dead. (405-406; ch. 36)

Jane conveys her distress over the ruins of Thornfield by appealing to her reader to re-imagine Sleeping Beauty with an ending other than romantic ecstasy, to imagine a
grotesque reverse of the story. However, as her pursuit of Rochester leads her on to Ferndean manor, Jane experiences renewed anticipation, signified by correspondences to the *Sleeping Beauty* story. The manor is "deep buried in a wood" with "close ranked trees," where she follows an overgrown path "descending the forest aisle between hoar and knotty shafts and under branched arches" (411; ch. 37). Jane the narrator is again casting herself in the role of the *Sleeping Beauty* prince penetrating the tangled forest that envelops his true love. The house appears desolate, "as still as a church on a week-day." Jane is forced to wonder, "Can there be life here?" (412; ch. 37). The narrator of "Goblin Market" makes a similar speculation following Laura's collapse upon tasting the antidote brought by Lizzie: "Is it death or is it life?" (523).

The intertextual reference of these speculations in *Jane Eyre* and "Goblin Market" is the perplexity of the arriving prince in Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*:

He came into an outward court, where ... there reigned all over a most frightful silence; the image of death every where shewed it self, and there was nothing to be seen but stretch'd out bodies of men and animals, that appear'd as if they were dead. (88)

Jane's question has multiple significations. Overtly, she wonders if Rochester is indeed residing at the manor. She likely also has anxiety as to whether the wounded man
remains alive. In a deeper sense, Jane, the child orphan, is wondering about her own "life"—whether she will find a reciprocated love which will give her the psychic and emotional sustenance she has never had. Jane's hunger for "life," manifested as virtual starvation when she flees to the moors after her aborted marriage, is a theme throughout the novel. On her quest for Rochester, she asks herself, "Who would be hurt by my once more tasting the life his glance can give me?" (405; ch. 36). By equating Rochester with life, Jane is not only the Sleeping Beauty prince seeking a beloved, but she is also the Sleeping Beauty whose chance at meaningful life is dependent on the prince.

The well-known denouement of Jane Eyre is the reunion and marriage of the two separated lovers. In the concluding paragraphs of the novel, Jane again employs the Sleeping Beauty theme of life in attempting to convey her state of bliss:

I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. (431; ch. 38)

The above characterization of Jane and Rochester's marriage alters the traditional romantic pattern in Sleeping Beauty and indicates that Jane and Rochester mutually provide each other with fulfillment—the love of each provides the other.
with energy, significance and a purpose for living. Through giving dual fairy-tale roles to her protagonists, Brontë subverts the Victorian patriarchal view of marriage, in which the male has superior power and, despite sentimental disguises, is the primary object of adoration. However, despite the significant modifications to Sleeping Beauty's depiction of gender roles, Jane Eyre leaves unchallenged the popular interpretation of Sleeping Beauty's restored life as representing the fulfilling nature of romantic love.7

The author of "Goblin Market" would question such an interpretation. The Christina Rossetti of 1857, who composed "A Birthday," shows herself thoroughly familiar with the association of the Sleeping Beauty physical revival with human fulfillment. The concluding lines of the poem—"Because the birthday of my life/Is come, my love is come to me" (15-16)—describe a lover in ideal terms as both "love" and "life" personified. But in composing "Goblin Market" two years later, Rossetti transfers the source of Sleeping Beauty "life" to the spiritual realm—the prince becomes the resurrected or spiritual Christ. In consequence, "Goblin Market" casts a harsh light on Victorian domestic ideology. If Christ is the Sleeping Beauty prince, then assigning this role to a mortal male...
spouse constitutes idolatry. Indeed, conventional Victorian representations of marriage could be quite blatant in asserting a husband's god-like status. Charles Kingsley's poem "Andromeda," a retelling of classical myth to represent ideal domestic relations, shows Andromeda responding to the heroic Perseus with "[w]orship and trust, fair parents of love" (qtd. in Munich 64). Because Perseus is the half-divine son of Zeus, Kingsley's poem ultimately likens the model wife's attitude to her husband to mortal awe in the presence of divinity.

While the Sleeping Beauty fairy story is useful to Rossetti in undercutting Victorian domestic ideology, it is also central to her overarching purpose of creating a vivid impression of spiritual reality. The powerful image of Sleeping Beauty's awakening to renewed life enables her to create a vivid impression of Christ as the source of deep human psychological and emotional fulfillment. Moreover, she connects this symbolic fairy-tale scene with the poem's Old Testament imagery to produce a reciprocal effect by which all the spiritual metaphors derive heightened emotional intensity.

The full suggestiveness of Rossetti's Old Testament imagery is not immediately accessible to the modern reader because it requires an understanding of biblical
typological symbolism, a method of scriptural interpretation commonly used and understood in Victorian society but relatively rare in twentieth-century exegesis and literature. Typological symbolism was central to the visual art and literature produced by the Pre-Raphaelite circle, who found typology’s emphasis on a dual reality useful in developing what George Landow calls their technique of “symbolic realism” (4). In broad terms, Pre-Raphaelite symbolic realism involved the use of realistic material details to suggest a higher reality—either spiritual or ideal. “Goblin Market” repeatedly alludes to a single biblical “type” well-known to Victorian readers, which Landow calls “the smitten rock.” This event appears in Exodus 17, where Jehovah tells Moses to strike a rock in the desert to assuage the thirst of a host of wandering Israelites. The passage is as follows:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smostest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17.5-6; King James Version)

As with any Old Testament type, the interpretation of the smitten rock type would recognize it as a material or physical detail in a historical event, but also a divinely
instituted symbol foreshadowing an aspect of Christ's future historical appearance and spiritual legacy. Standard typological interpretations of the smitten rock in the Victorian period read the incident as prefiguring the outpouring of spiritual salvation to mankind resulting from Christ's being crucified or smitten; as prefiguring participation in the sacrament of communion; and possibly prefiguring Christ's miracle of changing water into wine, "itself a type of communion" (Landow 67, 73-74). Rossetti invokes the smitten rock type in various ways throughout "Goblin Market" to suggest the incapacity of the material to supply true satisfaction and present the spiritual Christ as the exclusive source of satisfaction.

The first allusion to the smitten rock in "Goblin Market" appears in the description of Laura's fruit tasting, where it illuminates her sensation of experiencing incredible satisfaction:

She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock.
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice; (126-32)

"Honey from the rock" is a phrase used by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:13. In the passage, he reminds the Israelites, who are now on the verge of the Promised Land,
of God’s past provision for them:

He made him [Israel collectively] ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock.

This description of Israelites imbibing liquid honey from a rock fissure closely parallels and appears to be a variation of the “smitten rock” type.

Used in conjunction with the phrases “Stronger than man—rejoicing wine” and “Clearer than water,” Rossetti is unmistakably employing “honey from the rock” to invoke the well-known type of the smitten rock while at the same time highlighting a particular quality of the juice. As a source of both liquid and nourishment, honey promises satisfaction of the most basic human physical needs for food and water, along with sensory pleasure. So too does the goblin fruit, whose juiciness—for example, “unpecked” cherries (7) and grapes “fresh from the vine” (20)—is cried by the goblin merchants. However, in their scriptural context, the sustaining and satisfying qualities of honey are metonymic for Christ’s spiritual sustenance and satisfaction of humanity. Laura’s seemingly innocuous comparative, “Sweeter than honey from the rock,” is a shocking revelation that she attributes a level of satisfaction to the fruit that it
does not possess—the spiritual satisfaction of communion with Christ, "the Rock of Salvation."

While Laura thinks she is experiencing ultimate satisfaction, the absolute reverse is true—the goblin fruit not only fails to satisfy; it destroys her. When Laura "drops one tear more rare than pearl" following her purchase of the fruit, Rossetti introduces a series of images inverting the type of the smitten rock. These suggest that rather than serving as a source of hydration for Laura, the goblin fruit dehydrates her. The tiny tear that Laura loses symbolizes her dehydration. When Laura can no longer hear or see the goblins on a return trip to the glen, she "turned cold as stone" (253), then returns home to weep copiously, "As if her heart would break" (267). Laura now mirrors a smitten rock, but one without life-renewing qualities. She pines and dwindles away, apparently burning up with dehydrating fever, as this change is compared to the moon's seeming to burn itself out in the daytime (277-280). One day, Laura attempts to water with tears the kernel-stone she has saved from her fruit repast. The seed does not grow, because what water Laura still retains has no efficacy to sustain her, let alone other life. Concurrent with Laura's dehydration is her growing psychological dissatisfaction. Gorging on the fruit, "She
sucked until her lips were sore" (136), indicating that the fruit has not satisfied her. Shortly after gorging, she tells Lizzie "my mouth waters still" (166). The fruit has left her yearning for more. When she returns to the glen and cannot get more fruit, her frustration is intense: She "gnashed her teeth for baulked desire" (267).

In contrast to the effects of eating the goblin fruit, her interaction with Lizzie not only rehydrates her, but comforts and satisfies her. Bruised Lizzie is the smitten rock, a source of life for parched Laura. After sucking the juices from her sister, Laura cries again, but these tears are compared with rain after drought and indicate her sense of relief after an experience of satisfaction. "Tears, once again/Refreshed her sunken eyes,/Dropping like rain/After long sultry drouth" (487-90). Metaphorically, after her death and rebirth, Laura also becomes a true type of smitten rock. Her concern for her children, with whom she shares her warning story, suggests her new potential for watering, or sustaining, the lives of others through the sustenance she has received from Lizzie/Christ.

Rossetti's employment of the Sleeping Beauty awakening, in conjunction with biblical typological symbolism, creates a sharp dichotomy in "Goblin Market" between objects of desire that destroy spiritually and one
object of desire—Lizzie/Christ—who provides spiritual life and satisfaction. The dichotomy suggests dual levels of existence—the material and spiritual, but suggests that the spiritual is not only absolute reality, but also the only reality capable of sustaining the human spirit. This metaphysical framework provides the context for Rossetti’s structural explanation of the functioning of human desire.

Rossetti uses Laura’s experiences to suggest how easily human perception is distorted by desire. “Goblin Market” tracks Laura’s loss of rationality once she is tempted by the fruit. Not only does she fail to suspect the lack of sustenance in fruit offered by goblins, but she also attributes capabilities of incredible psychological (or spiritual) fulfillment to the fruit, which even real fruit does not possess. By sucking the fruit until her lips are sore, Laura illogically tries to retrieve juice even after the edible portions of the fruit are consumed; in other words, she tries to suck water from (kernel) stones. Later, though the fruit she ate did not satisfy her, Laura dreams of finding more fruit. Laura “dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees/ False waves in desert drouth/ With shade of leaf-crowned trees,/ And burns the thirstier in the breeze” (289-292). Rossetti compares this dream to a
mirage, the hallucinations of a desert traveler, whose rationality is subverted by thirst.

If Laura represents humanity, then her experience in "Goblin Market" becomes a metaphysical explanation of the nature of all human desire. In this process, the individual seeks fulfillment of his or her spiritual needs in material sources, all of which lack divine vitality or absolute reality. To do this the individual, like a desert traveler, creates a mental image of his or her object of desire as a source of satisfaction that does not conform to reality.

Evidence of Rossetti's interest in delineating the structure of desire is not only substantiated by the "Goblin Market" text itself but her earlier poem "In an Artist’s Studio," composed in 1856 though not published until after her death. Describing the face and figure that appears in numerous paintings by a male artist of different females, Christina notes the quality of sameness:

One face looks out from all his canvasses,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans;

(1-2)

The personage in the paintings clearly is the object of the artist's desire: "He feeds upon her face by day and night" (9). With the choice of "feeds," Christina shows that the artist is seeking a basic psychological or spiritual sustenance from his subject, but without achieving
satisfaction. The artist’s desire for the subject is a constant of his existence. The irony of the poem is the revelation that the artist worships an imaginary woman, not the actual woman model who sits for his canvases:

And she with true kind eyes looks back on him
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.
(10-14)

The paintings do not reflect the model’s current look or expression, but rather her appearance in the past. At the historical point in time when the paintings mirrored the actual model, she welcomed his gazing on her beauty and in turn fixed her eyes on the artist. Such boldness suggests she joyfully interpreted his gaze as love and responded in kind, her “true” eyes speaking his permanence and satisfactoriness as her object of desire. In contrast, the actual model, seen through the critical gaze of the narrator, is unhealthy. A sorrowful expression detracts from her features and suggests dissatisfaction with the artist or at least his inability to satisfy all her desire. By clinging to the historic image of the model, the artist makes a similar statement: The model as she is, no longer satisfies the lover with reciprocal idealization. The artist must cling to a false image for satisfaction. As this image does not conform to material reality, his
obsession places him in a state of fantasy akin to Laura's dream-state in "Goblin Market." As with Laura his "sleep" is round-the-clock. The artist fantasizes "by day and night," whether awake or asleep.

"In an Artist's Studio" can be attributed, at least in part, to the obsessiveness of Christina's brother, Dante Gabriel, who by 1856 had already replicated the face of his model and lover, Elizabeth Siddall, numerous times. Yet the poem raises questions in general about the satisfaction capability of romantic love and the fantasizing that may be involved. In the poem, the concluding state of the two one-time lovers suggests that both the artist and the model originally worshipped an idealized version of the other and not the actual person. The artist's model seems to have recognized her state of illusion; the artist doesn't even perceive his lack of satisfaction. This theme of lovers who construct false mental images of their beloved, anticipates Rossetti's metaphysical explanation of desire in "Goblin Market," where romantic desire is incorporated into the context of all human desire.

By showing the human tendency to fantasize about the material world, and the incapacity of the material world to offer satisfaction of human desire, Rossetti critiques Victorian society in numerous ways. "Goblin Market"
suggests that the economic "market" involves the production and selling of goods that are temporal and unsatisfying, and that material acquisition is an illusory endeavor to find fulfillment. "Goblin Market" likewise suggests that the Victorian faith in romance and/or domesticity as ultimate fulfillment is fantasy, as is an exclusively female expectation of a husband playing the role of Christ. Furthermore, Rossetti suggests that humanity's generation of false "images" of material things represents a misuse of the imagination. "Goblin Market" is her demonstration of an alternate use of the imagination. In the poem, Rossetti uses her imagination to construct "images," but with what she considers to be a crucial difference: recognizing that her desires will not be fulfilled by the material, she uses her imagination as an avenue to perceive spiritual reality.

Endnotes

1. See Kent's 1987 *The Achievement of Christina Rossetti*. Though Rossetti has received considerable critical attention since this book's publication, Kent writes in the Preface that "[t]he essays gathered here attempt a genuine reevaluation of a writer who the contributors believe has been unjustly neglected" (ix).

2. See Garlick's discussion of "Goblin Market" within "Christina Rossetti and the Gender Politics of Fantasy," 142-45. Among other points, Garlick argues that "Goblin Market" indicates the unrealizability of Lizzie's adventurous engagement with life, and questions the blissfulness of domesticity, through the relative blandness of the poem's conclusion.
3. Other scholarship recognizing the cultural dimensions of "Goblin Market" includes Helsinger's "Consumer Power and the Utopia of Desire: Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market"; Bentley's "The Meretricious and the Meritorious in Goblin Market: A Conjecture and an Analysis"; and McGann's "Christina Rossetti's Poems: A New Edition and a Revaluation," 247-54. It should also be noted that the criticism cited in my study does not convey the full spectrum of interpretations of "Goblin Market." Weltman indicates this diversity in a 1997 essay on the poem's adaptation as a Broadway musical:

A children's poem, a Christian allegory, a metaphor for sexual desire (either heterosexual, or lesbian, or both), a story of addiction, an enactment of incest, a depiction of the brutal market economy of prostitution and the Victorian alternative of charitable workhouses for wayward women, a psychological exploration of the divided self, a feminist statement of sisterhood, a human and particular story of sisterly affection--such varied interpretations ... have made this rich and powerful poem a controversial one. ("Performing Goblin Market" 121-22)

4. For the comparison of "Goblin Market" to "Snow White," see Barr's "Sensuality Survived: Christina Rossetti's Goblin Market"; for comparison to "The Robber Bridegroom," see McGillis's "Simple Surfaces: Christina Rossetti's Work for Children." A discussion of the apparent influence of works by Keightley, the Brays and McLaren appears in Marsh's biography of Rossetti.


6. Marian Shalkhouser, for example, states that "Lizzie, the pure sister, is the symbol of Christ; Laura represents Adam-Eve and consequently all of sinful mankind" (19). Though critics generally recognize Christ imagery in "Goblin Market," they do not agree that Lizzie is a figure of Christ. For example, in his previously cited essay on "Christina Rossetti's Poems," McGann argues against reading Lizzie as Laura's redeemer: "[B]ecause Lizzie is primarily a 'friend' and a 'sister' rather than a 'savior,' the poem finally takes its stand on more secular grounds." McGann thinks that Rossetti uses the Christian
material "to mediate for the audience the poem's primary arguments about love, marriage, sisterhood, and friendship" (251).

7. In a discussion of Victorian female poets and the male quest narrative, Mermin notes the "full success" of Bronte's gender reversal of the Sleeping Beauty story at the end of Jane Eyre. She comments: "Magically summoned by Rochester's voice, Jane makes her way through a mysterious overgrown wood, as in the fairy tale, finds him helpless—blind and without a candle, doubly in the dark—and awakens him to life, love, and light" (63). I argue that this awakening must be considered alongside earlier suggestions that Rochester has also awakened Jane to life, love and light.

8. In 1855, after visiting the residence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Lizzie Siddall, Pre-Raphaelite painter Ford Madox Brown wrote: "Rossetti showed me a drawer full of 'Guggums' [Lizzie]; God knows how many ... it is like a monomania with him..." (qtd. in Wood 28).
Like his Victorian contemporaries Charles Dickens and Christina Rossetti, Victorian minister-turned-author George MacDonald published a revision of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale in the 1860s, relying on the story’s familiarity to lend accessibility to his countercultural critique of Victorian material philosophy. MacDonald’s Sleeping Beauty revision, the prose fairy-tale “The Light Princess,” first appeared as one of several metaphysical stories interpolated in his 1864 novel Adela Cathcart, which is itself—like many of MacDonald’s fictional works—a Sleeping Beauty revision. Though delightfully humorous and worthy of recognition for its sheer entertainment value, “The Light Princess” is also a masterpiece of unraveling symbolism with a strong visual component—in fact, a prose counterpart to the early Pre-Raphaelite painting style—using natural images to signify a material world attesting to Christ’s invisible presence. For the title character of the frame novel, as well as the reading audience, “The Light Princess” becomes an imaginative lesson presenting the gospel message in terms of love. MacDonald suggests that the “light” or enlightenment of understanding the selfless love of the historical Christ
will awaken the individual to reciprocal love and an awareness of Christ’s imminent spiritual presence on earth.

As with Dickens’s and Rossetti’s Sleeping Beauty revisions, “The Light Princess” employs the Sleeping Beauty narratives to suggest the superior vitality of the spiritual over the material. However, more than the other two other authors, MacDonald stresses narcissism, rather than idolatry of the material, as humankind’s—and Victorian society’s—essential problem. The narcissism, or self-absorption, displayed by the title character of “The Light Princess” is a lack of love for others and a corresponding preoccupation with the shallow and trivial due to an inability to see beyond life’s surfaces. A reader may easily infer that the prevailing Victorian spirit of self-interest as expressed in laissez-faire capitalism, or cultivated in middle- and upper-class isolation from grim social realities, conflicts utterly with such a metaphysical perspective. MacDonald’s most pointed critique, however, involves the status of Victorian women. Their frequent intellectual and cultural deprivation, MacDonald suggests, keeps them perpetual Sleeping Beauties, unable to enter the full humanity that is the divine plan.
Within the limited body of literary criticism on George MacDonald and his work, "The Light Princess"—and particularly Adela Cathcart—have received relatively short shrift, much less the relationship between the two. Critics acknowledge "The Light Princess" as one of MacDonald's pre-eminent fairy tales, but have neglected to give it the close scrutiny afforded the fairy-tale "The Golden Key," instead focusing on the humorous or erotic elements of "The Light Princess." Robert Lee Wolff has noted "MacDonald's simple sustained good humor and his agreeable imagery," but characterizes "The Light Princess" as "just a nice little sermon. Based essentially on a pun: ... this gave MacDonald the opportunity to consider what would happen if a girl without spiritual gravity also lacked physical gravity" (119). At the same time, in keeping with his Freudian analysis of MacDonald, Wolff cites phallic and other sexual images from the fairy tale, asserting, "Some psychoanalysts would no doubt have a field day with this story" (118).

Richard Reis determines that the "The Light Princess" is "a parable of puberty," which is "designed to convince children that sooner or later childhood's frivolity must be abandoned for the sake of mature seriousness, which has its own rewards..." (77). Like Wolff, Reis also finds
MacDonald’s fairy tale rife with sexual symbolism, and goes further to argue that MacDonald obviously was aware of his story’s sexual implications. However, he determines the “sexual substrata are incidental” and “MacDonald is not concerned with sex for its own sake but rather with its acceptance for the sake of mature adulthood” (75-76). Only Michael Mendelson addresses "The Light Princess" as a text manifesting an overarching concern with human philosophical issues. Crediting MacDonald with innovation in the development of the literary fairy-tale genre, Mendelson suggests that MacDonald incorporates fairy-tale motifs and, structures "in the service of a 'new mythus,' so that the fairy tale becomes a means of symbolic discourse in which MacDonald attempts to expound his own unique vision" (31). Mendelson recognizes—quite accurately, I would argue—that "The Light Princess" is not a parable specifically related to adolescence, but "a commentary on growth and on arrested growth" in human beings in general (38).

Unlike the more subtle evocations of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale in Great Expectations or "Goblin Market," "The Light Princess" is an obvious revision— at times a parody— of Sleeping Beauty. Since "The Light Princess" may be unfamiliar to many readers, the following summary of

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MacDonald’s tale appears necessary to its scholarly discussion.

Parallel to the events in Charles Perrault’s “The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood,” a normal daughter is born to a childless king and queen, but cursed on the day of her christening by a magically empowered aunt who is uninvited. The curse, which can be viewed as a figurative “sleep,” is that the child will be “[l]ight of spirit” and “[l]ight of body” (60). The princess loses her “gravity”—a pun in the sense that she literally floats on air because she is weightless; and she also lacks emotional gravity or depth, laughing constantly and, as she grows up, failing to take danger or others’ distress seriously. A vivid scene counterpointing the infant princess with the traditional Sleeping Beauty—and underscoring that she needs far more help than being roused from physical dormancy—occurs when the baby is blown out of a palace window and discovered under a rosebush:

They had found the princess fast asleep under a rose-bush, to which the elvish little wind-puff had carried her, finishing its mischief by shaking a shower of red rose-leaves all over the little white sleeper. Startled by the noise the servants made she woke; and furious with glee, scattered the rose-leaves in all directions, like a shower of spray in the sunset. (63-64)

Although she remains weightless at all other times, at some point in her youth the princess is accidentally thrown into
the lake and experiences a temporary physical gravity. Soon, she develops a passion for swimming.

Unfortunately, her princess’s malevolent aunt causes the lake to begin to dry up, and shuts down all the springs in the kingdom. The only way to restore the lake, it is revealed, is if an individual will voluntarily plug up the hole with his own body. The offer is made by a prince who has fallen in love with the princess but failed to touch her in any significant way emotionally. As the prince slowly drowns in the filling lake, the princess begins to feel sympathy and concern for him. She pulls his lifeless body from the lake and rows them back to the palace. Just as the sun rises, after repeated attempts to resuscitate the prince, he revives. The princess bursts into tears, breaking both the spell on herself and her country.

In “The Light Princess” the elements of the Christ narrative are clearly present: the prince, or Christ, who sacrifices his life to deliver the enchanted princess, or collective mankind, from a curse limiting her human potential, dies and returns to life. The major features of the plot, therefore, can be read allegorically, as with Lizzie’s suffering on behalf of Laura in Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market.” However, as with Rossetti’s allegorical characters, MacDonald describes the princess so
thoroughly that she becomes a believable and sympathetic character as well as a demonstration of the author's concept of human psychological functioning. MacDonald's Light Princess is irrational and displays a broad range of what today would be termed psychological dysfunctions. However, the resolution of the story suggests that all her eccentricities are various manifestation of a narcissistic self-absorption—an inability to love.

Both the physical as well as psychological components of the light princess's enchantment illuminate her character problems. In keeping with the scientific principle that a weightless object has no force, the princess cannot control her direction and is vulnerable to being blown about by the wind. This suggests the susceptibility of the princess's will to changing circumstances or the influence of others.

The psychological aspect of the princess's curse—her inappropriate silliness—reveals her lack of insight into herself and others as well as her severely limited perception of reality. Most interestingly, the cluster of exaggerated character traits that MacDonald gives to the princess fits current criteria established by the American Psychiatric Association for a diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder. These are "a grandiose sense of
self-importance”; “a sense of entitlement” or “unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his or her expectations”; exploitative behavior in interpersonal relations; a lack of empathy or unwillingness “to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of others”; and display of “arrogant, haughty behaviors or attitudes” (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 661).3

The princess assumes herself to be the standard for human behavior and therefore interprets differences in others as evidence of her own superiority. She does not realize that her constant mirth is inappropriate, nor that her limited ability to control her direction of movement is a handicap. For example, she tells her parents: "I have a curious feeling sometimes, as if I were the only person that had any sense in the whole world" (71). Also, when her father asks her whether she desires to walk like others rather than float, she vehemently rejects the idea: "No indeed, I should think not. You only crawl. You are such slow coaches!" (71).

Even more basic to self-understanding, however, the princess cannot recognize the experience of suffering:

[T]he king ... put himself in a rage one day, and, rushing up to her room, gave her an awful whipping. But not a tear would flow. She looked grave, and her laughing sounded uncommonly like
screaming—that was all. The good old tyrant ... could not discover the smallest cloud in the serene blue of her eyes. (78)

Though the princess seems to experience unpleasant sensations, she does not cry, apparently because she cannot interpret this physical discomfort as a source of psychological or emotional distress. Through this and other aspects of the princess's enchantment, MacDonald suggests the existence of a human psychological tendency to suppress or avoid psychological pain in general.

The individual who is unaware of her own psychological distress has no basis for imaginative sympathy with the emotional or physical pain of others. Neither can she imagine potentially harmful events to herself or others. The princess not only insensitively mocks her parents' distress over her condition, but, even more alarmingly, is unmoved by tragic news that her parents fabricate in an attempt to restore her to seriousness. The disastrous reports include impending danger to herself and the rest of the royal family:

When she heard that General Clanrunfort was cut to pieces with all his forces, she laughed; when she heard that the enemy was on his way to besiege her papa's capital, she laughed hugely; but when she heard that the city would most likely be abandoned to the mercy of the enemy's soldiery—why, then, she laughed immoderately. (68)

To the degree that she is unconscious of the presence or
possibility of psychological pain, the princess is also unaware of possessing any intense desires. As previously discussed, since the princess smugly assumes herself to be the norm, she does not wish to be free of her curse. The only desire she does display is shallow—for the gratification of whims. When her parents ask her if she wishes for anything, she produces an idea that struck her the night before: to be flown by a string like a kite. The request indicates that her wants are neither longstanding nor intense, but rather manifestations of an interest in being entertained.

In fact, the princess perceives other humans and herself exclusively as sources of entertainment. In so doing, she becomes both exploiter and the exploited, both one who treats others as objects and an object. Her reductive view of other persons is manifested in the reference to her parents as "slow coaches." Indeed, her parents' motion would be slow compared to herself or to a horse-drawn coach, yet she overlooks the distinction that unlike a vehicle or a domesticated animal they have the capacity to determine their own direction. Here again, the princess shows her limitation in only being able to notice material surfaces, rather than perceiving the significance or essence of what she views.
The princess shows her own similar apprehension of herself as a type of object by wanting to be treated as a plaything—both as a child delighted when the servants play catch with her and as a teenager, when she expresses the wish to be flown as a kite. Perhaps the most telling comment on the laughing princess by the narrator is a simile comparing her to a "musical box" (69)—not only a toy, but a mechanical toy. In this aspect, MacDonald's humorous princess shares much with the enchanted Laura in "Goblin Market." As discussed in my previous chapter, Laura, during her fixation on the enchanted fruit, is compared to a literal stone, having been reduced from full humanity as a loving sister interacting dynamically with her environment to an object-like state of passivity in which she is unresponsive to external stimuli. In comparing the Light Princess to a mechanical toy, MacDonald suggests that she too has lost the vitality that distinguishes a human being from the inanimate—in this case, a mechanism.

While MacDonald uses the Light Princess's character to depict humans as inherently egocentric and focused on the superficial, he uses the natural landscape to suggest that a loving spiritual presence lurks just beyond the limits of ordinary human consciousness, ever striving to impress
itself on the conscious mind. The lake adjacent to the Light Princess's palace becomes a metaphor for the subliminal messages about spiritual reality expressed through Nature. When the princess is accidentally thrown into the lake, she not only discovers a temporary but limited physical gravity (even if she receives all of her gravity back, the water's buoyancy would still produce the effect of a reduced gravitational force), but the experience of immersion apparently gives her a sense of the metaphorical depth of reality.

Once she is in the water, the princess gains some sobriety:

[S]he seemed more sedate than usual. Perhaps that was because a great pleasure spoils laughing. After this, the passion of her life was to get into the water, and she was always the better behaved and the more beautiful the more she had of it. (76)

Moreover, because she cannot get into the water unassisted, the princess's newly discovered liking for swimming also creates her first yearning to be free of her curse: "This was the only consideration that made her wish to be like other people" (76). After the foreign prince arrives and begins to join her on nightly swims, the princess is exposed to refractions of moonlight that are suggestive of a greater spiritual realm:

When the moon was nearly full, one of their great
delights was, to dive deep into the water, and then, turning round, look up through it at the great blot of light close above them, shimmering and trembling and wavering, spreading and contracting, seeming to melt away, and again grow solid. Then they would shoot up through it; and lo! there was a moon, far off, clear and steady and cold, and very lovely, at the bottom of a deeper and bluer lake than theirs, as the princess said. (86-87)

When the prince and princess are under the water, they see a light above them that appears to be the moon. Yet this proves to be a permeable image reflecting the more substantial reality of the moon in the sky. Through this scene, MacDonald suggests that there is a corresponding shadow-to-substance relationship between material reality and an ideal spiritual reality to which it points.

Not only is Nature speaking to the princess of a spiritual realm, but the prince tries personally to penetrate the princess's narcissism with expressions of love. To these protestations, the princess laughs at first, but then seems to find them vaguely stirring:

After a while she began to look puzzled, as if she were trying to understand what he meant, but could not—revealing a notion that he meant something. But as soon as ever she left the lake, she was so altered, that the prince said to himself: "If I marry her, I see no help for it; we must turn merman and mermaid, and go out to sea at once." (87)

When swimming with the prince, the princess appears close to experiencing an intimate connection with someone outside
herself, yet she cannot make the imaginative leap required to understand the prince’s love for her.

The prince’s breakthrough to the princess’s consciousness, which produces a reciprocal love in her—in other words, her awakening—occurs as she witnesses his uncomplaining suffering while slowly drowning to restore her beloved lake. This textual event suggests that MacDonald believed “natural revelation” had to be supplemented by the historical Christ’s voluntary martyrdom in order to make it possible for humankind to comprehend God’s unselfish love. After she has pulled the prince’s lifeless body from the lake and he revives in the castle, emotion wells up from the depth of the princess’s being, restores her physical gravity, and is echoed in a spectacular display of light phenomena in the sky.

MacDonald’s word painting of the princess’s renewed kingdom is one of a number of attempts in his novels to create Pre-Raphaelite landscape in prose:

The princess burst into a passion of tears, and fell on the floor. ... And a rain came on, such as had never been seen in that country. The sun shone all the time, and the great drops, which fell straight to the earth, shone likewise. The palace was in the heart of a rainbow. It was a rain of rubies, and sapphires, and emeralds, and topazes. The torrents poured from the mountains like molten gold; and if it had not been for its subterraneous outlet, the lake would have overflowed and inundated the country. It was full from shore to shore. (101)
MacDonald had formed friendships with several individuals in the Pre-Raphaelite circle by the 1860s. Several of the most resplendent Pre-Raphaelite paintings, including John Everett Millais's "The Blind Girl" (1856), Arthur Hughes's "The Knight of the Sun" (c. 1859-60), and a preliminary version of Holman Hunt's "The Scapegoat" (c. 1854), employed detailed solar and light phenomena, including the prismatic rainbow, as natural symbols of invisible spiritual truth. In the landscape of "The Light Princess," one sees MacDonald also creating a scientifically plausible landscape that is also pregnant with spiritual meaning. The shining sun and the falling rain transform the wasted desert that the princess's kingdom has become into a restored Paradise, suffused with light, with renewed streams and a deep lake.

The depiction of renewed nature in "The Light Princess" shares many features with the conclusion of John Ruskin's fairy tale "The King of the Golden River," first published in 1850. In that tale, permeated with word paintings of a spiritually expressive Nature alternately responding to human behavior with moral indignation or approval, the self-less behavior of the central character, Gluck, is responsible for delivering the drought-stricken Treasure Valley from an imposed
curse. At the top of the mountains above the Treasure Valley, a dwarf robed in "a prismatic mist of dewy light" (70) rewards Gluck by giving him a flask containing drops of dew. Gluck is instructed to cast these drops into the river.

Gluck’s act of obedience does not immediately appear to produce positive results, but as he descends the mountain the landscape begins to undergo a remarkable transformation:

As he went, he thought he heard the noise of water working its way under the ground. And, when when he came in sight of the Treasure Valley, behold, a river, like the Golden River, was springing from a new cleft of the rocks above it, and was flowing in innumerable streams among the dry heaps of red sand.

And as Gluck gazed, fresh grass sprang beside the new streams, and creeping plants grew, and climbed among the moistening soil. Young flowers opened suddenly along the river sides, as stars leap out when twilight is deepening, and thickets of myrtle, and tendrils of vine, cast lengthening shadows over the valley as they grew. And thus the Treasure Valley became a garden again, and the inheritance, which had been lost by cruelty, was regained by love. (70)

The correspondences between Ruskin’s fairy-tale landscape and MacDonald’s are not surprising considering that the renowned Ruskin’s art criticism influenced the Pre-Raphaelites, who influenced MacDonald. MacDonald met Ruskin in 1863, and they began a close friendship,
although "The Light Princess" may already have been composed by this time (Greville MacDonald 328-30).

However, while Ruskin and MacDonald both employ spiritually significant landscapes, their metaphysical conceptions are different. "The King of the Golden River" suggests that earthly paradise will be restored when humanity, acting in accordance with the universal moral law reflected in Nature, adopts the principle of cherishing all forms of life. MacDonald shares Ruskin’s concept of the human purpose to love, but sees the ability to love unselfishly as linked to an understanding of the selflessness Christ displayed during his historical appearance.

Moreover, the transformed landscape at the end of "The Light Princess" suggests that Christ’s historical appearance established an enhanced spiritual reality on earth, a mystical paradise of which glimpses can be caught by the awakened soul. Ruskin’s tale does not hinge on a new era ushered in by Christ, though both Ruskin’s and MacDonald’s landscapes can be seen as Victorian adaptations of the Romantic theme of a renewed earthly paradise.

Similar to early Pre-Raphaelite paintings, both MacDonald’s and Ruskin’s symbolic prose landscapes allude
to or suggest Old Testament typological symbols—"the stricken rock," an image of water gushing from a cleft in a stone when struck by Moses, as well as the rainbow—whose orthodox Christian interpretation as foreshadowings of the gospel message would be familiar to Victorian readers. However, Ruskin's allusions promote a general sense of spiritual mystery at the heart of Nature, while MacDonald's more specifically suggest the spiritual presence of Christ. The shining sun at the conclusion of "The Light Princess" is a pun on the "Son," who repeatedly is described in the gospel of John as "the true Light" (1.9), "the light of the world" (8.12, 9.5) or similar expressions. The torrents of life-sustaining water would thereby suggest an outpouring of the Holy Spirit into the world. The jeweled colors of the rainbow, the result of sunlight refracted by water droplets, suggest humankind's new spiritual wealth—Christ's presence refracted variously through the media of all creation.

MacDonald's prose landscape not only signifies a spiritually infused material reality on earth, but the transformation of the Light Princess herself. With her new knowledge of selfless love, the princess is now a "light" princess in yet another sense of the word—she is enlightened. Moreover, she reflects the enlightenment
which has been bestowed on her in her reciprocal love for
the prince. The outpouring of water from the sky visually
mirrors the tears of released emotion falling from the
princess’s eyes. Metaphorically, the rain suggests a
pouring of love and spiritual life into her heart, as well
as an outpouring of love from her heart.

Though MacDonald suggests that Christ has ushered in
a new Paradise, paradoxically it is not always experienced
as such, even by an awakened princess. Although the prince
and princess are betrothed, their wedding must await the
princess’s learning to walk, which as for a child involves
repeatedly “falling down and hurting herself” (102), and
she complains of the discomfort she experiences:

“Is this the gravity you used to make so much
of?” said she, one day, to the prince, as he
raised her from the floor. “For my part, I was a
great deal more comfortable without it.”

“No, no; that’s not it. This is it,” replied
the prince, as he took her up, and carried her
about like a baby, kissing her all the time.
“This is gravity.” (102)

MacDonald suggests that though it is experienced as
suffering or frustration, the princess’s difficulty in
learning to walk is ultimate good in disguise. The
princess concurrently is experiencing psychological, or
character, growth, as well as a growing intimacy with the
prince:

It was a long time before she got reconciled to
walking. But the pain of learning it, was quite counterbalanced by two things, either of which would have been sufficient consolation. The first was, that the prince himself was her teacher; and the second, that she could tumble into the lake as often as she pleased. Still, she preferred to have the prince jump in with her; and the splash they made before, was nothing to the splash they made now. (103)

The transformed princess again finds enjoyment in Nature—that is, the lake—with its intimations of spiritual reality, but most particularly she desires to swim with the prince. In other words, she continues to experience Christ's presence. These factors more than outweigh her difficult experiences.

MacDonald's Sleeping Beauty re-enactment does not reverse the gender roles of one or more principal fairy-tale characters—as do Great Expectations and "Goblin Market"—in order to suggest an essential spiritual equality for men and women. Yet "The Light Princess," particularly when read in the context of its frame narrative, Adela Cathcart, is also a radical assertion of women's full humanity. As previously noted, the title character Adela is herself a Sleeping Beauty figure. She is an unmarried Englishwoman, about twenty-two years old, who lives with her widowed father, and is suffering, like Laura in "Goblin Market" and other Victorian females, from a "decline."
The listless Adela seeks refuge in sleeping, and has lost appetite and energy to the point that her health is deteriorating. The likelihood that her modern diagnosis would be depression is supported by her description of the onset of her malady:

I woke suddenly one morning, very early ... with an overwhelming sense of blackness and misery. Everything I thought of seemed to have a core of wretchedness in it.... I began to see the bad in everything. (25)

Adela’s gloominess of vision has persisted: “Nothing seems worth anything. I don’t care for anything” (25). After being invited to her father’s home and observing her at dinner, a perceptive young doctor, Henry Armstrong, states that her condition is not an unusual one among young women. Moreover, he does not characterizes the state as a physical illness: “It is as if, without any disease, life were gradually withdrawn itself--ebbing back as it were to its source” (50).

Armstrong indignantly tells narrator John Smith that the ailing young women he has observed suffer from spiritual and intellectual deprivation:

[Adela] has evidently a strong mental constitution; and this strong frame, so to speak, has been fed upon slops; and an atrophy is the consequence.... It was not the conversation only--I watched everything about her; and interpreted it by what I know about women. I believe that many of them go into a consumption just from discontent--the righteous
discontent of a soul which is meant to sit at
the Father's table, and so cannot content itself
with the husks which the swine eat. The
theological nourishment which is offered them is
generally no better than husks. They cannot live
upon it, and so die and go home to their Father.
And without good spiritual food to keep the
spiritual senses healthy and true, they cannot
see the thing's [sic] about them as they really
are. They cannot find interest in them, because
they cannot find their own place amongst them.
(52-53)

Armstrong asserts that Adela and other, similarly
afflicted women lack "spiritual food," while implying that
such nourishment requires the exercise of the mind. In
describing Adela as possessing a "strong mental
constitution" that has atrophied, he suggests her mind has
grown dull from disuse, as a muscle would cease to
function from disuse. Proper theological nourishment, he
implies, would provide Adela with a more accurate view of
reality and sustain her desire for living.

The missing element of women's education in
Armstrong's mind--and apparently MacDonald's as well--is
exposure to, and inquiry into, metaphysical and other
philosophical ideas. Armstrong does not detail the
education of "husks which the swine eat," but he
apparently observes such fare in the piano music
belonging to Adela:

I looked over her music on purpose, and I did
not find one song that rose above the level of
the drawing-room, or one piece of music that had
any deep feeling or thought in it. Of course I judged by the composers. (53)

Armstrong clearly thinks moving or thought-provoking art could be a component of theological and intellectual nourishment. To cure Adela, he suggests finding something to interest her. Smith responds by proposing a round of story-telling, which might initiate her cure "from the inside, would it not?" (51).

"The Light Princess" is the first of these stories, composed and read by Smith himself. Smith introduces it with a quote from Milton's "Il Penseroso" (lines 117-20):

Great bards beside
In sage and solemn times have sung
Of turneys and of trophies hung;
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear. (57)

Commenting on the quote, Smith implies his tale itself may be taken as thought-provoking art:

Milton here refers to Spencer [sic] in particular, most likely. But what distinguishes the true bard in such work is, that more is meant than meets the ear; and although I am no bard, I should scorn to write anything that only spoke to the ear, which signifies the surface understanding. (57)

In other words, Smith is contending that "The Light Princess" is symbolic, clueing his audience and the reader that his fairy tale may itself provide some of the philosophical nurture that Adela needs.
Reading "The Light Princess" in its context not only supports a metaphysical interpretation of the fairy tale, but also illuminates the feminist slant already present in the text. For example, when her beloved lake begins to drain, the princess herself undergoes a Victorian decline. She stops swimming in the lake and begins to pine away:

> It was awful to her, to see the lake which she loved more than any living thing, lie dying before her eyes. It sank away, slowly vanishing.... It was fearful to think of the mud that would lie baking and festering, full of lovely creatures dying, and ugly creatures coming to life, like the unmaking of a world. And how hot the sun would be without any lake!... Her life seemed bound up with it; and ever as the lake sank, she pined. People said she would not live an hour after the lake was gone. (88)

As the lake continues to dry up, the princess shuts herself up in her room in the palace, "with the curtains drawn to shut out the dying lake" (91), yet she continues to think obsessively of its disappearance:

> She could not shut it out of her mind for a moment. It haunted her imagination so that she felt as if the lake were her soul, drying up within her, first to become mud, then madness and death. She brooded over the change, with all its dreadful accompaniments, till she was nearly out of her mind. As for the prince, she had forgotten him. However much she had enjoyed his company in the water, she did not care for him without it. But she seemed to have forgotten her father and mother too. (91-92)

The details of the Light Princess’s depressed state, though sparked by a magically induced circumstance, give
Adela much material for identification with the protagonist, including a lack of interest in her surroundings, and visions of a world turned nightmarishly ugly. At the same time, the Light Princess’s female malady also enables the reader to interpret her, at least on one level, as a Sleeping Beauty figure representing collective Victorian womankind.

The common Victorian interpretation of Sleeping Beauty was that it demonstrated what a woman needed for fulfillment—a romantic relationship with a man. MacDonald’s Sleeping Beauty revision contains the familiar plot of a prince bringing new physical life to a princess, only this prince represents the divine Christ, rather than a human spouse, and the awakening he brings is not sexual but rather an expanded consciousness and full humanity. This feminist slant obviously parallels themes in Rossetti’s “Goblin Market.”

When Smith finishes reading “The Light Princess,” in which the princess’s source of “life”—the lake—is restored, and she realizes an even greater source of joy in the company of the prince, Adela comments: “It is a very funny, and a very pretty story” (103). The next day, however, her father doubts her enjoyment, observing, “I think she looked very grave.” Yet Smith recognizes in
Adela's gravity a hint of the beneficial "gravity"
reacquired by the Light Princess, and he interprets this
as a positive sign. He expresses his contentment with the
result of his story to Colonel Cathcart:

Now that is just what I should have wished
to see.... We don't want her merry all at once.
What we want is, that she should take an
interest in something. A grave face is a sign of
interest. It is all the world better than a
listless face. (109)

Adela's gradual cure begins with "The Light Princess," but
continues throughout MacDonald's original triple-decker
novel. The series of metaphysical story-telling sessions,
which evoke her imaginative sympathy for real or fictional
characters, expand to the singing of translated ballads
(primarily those of the mystical, Jewish-born German
Romantic poet Heinrich Heine), and the reading of poetry,
including that of Johann Goethe.

One evening Adela invites children from the town to a
story-telling session and enjoys mingling with them. She
also gradually falls in love with the doctor, admiring his
selfless devotion to the sick while overlooking his
inferior social status, and eventually marrying him.
Though this happy romantic ending might seem to undercut
MacDonald's contention that every woman's real prince is
Christ, it rather illustrates his non-ascetic philosophy.
To him, earthly pleasures do not replace Christ, but are
blessings from God which may signify God's greater qualities. Early in the narrative, before the doctor has fallen in love with Adela, he observes with what will be revealed as dramatic irony: "Anything hearty will do her good. Isn't there any young man to fall in love with her?" (53-54). When the reply is negative, he asserts significantly: "Only the best thing will make her well; but all true things tend to healing" (54). In MacDonald's view, human love is one of the "true things," though not the "best," which is coming to grips with the reality of Christ.

Adela does come to grips with this reality. Her dark perception is lightened to perceive God's benevolent presence in the world. She also loses some of her passivity toward the circumstances of life. When her father suddenly loses his fortune, she accepts the situation as a challenge:

"Papa," said Adela, solemnly, "if you knew how awful things looked to me a little while ago--but it's all gone now!--the whole earth black and frozen to the heart, with no God in it, and nothing worth living for--you would not wonder that I take the prospect of poverty with absolute indifference--yes, if you will believe me, with something of a strange excitement. There will be something to battle with and beat."

And she stretched out a strong, beautiful white arm--from which the loose open sleeve fell back, as if with that weapon of might she would strike poverty to the earth; but it was only to
adjust the pillow, which had slipped sideways from the loved head [of her father]. (456-57)

Like the Light Princess, who pulls the drowned prince from the water and rows them back to shore, Adela the awakened Sleeping Beauty now has the capacity and strength--for active love. Adela has gained intellectual and moral dignity after suffering the crisis of faith more commonly credited to men in Victorian literature. She has had to resolve persistent human questions about the nature of reality, the human condition, and God's benevolent purpose behind her own psychological suffering.

The depth of philosophical education that Adela--and the reader--has undergone includes a refutation of alternate Victorian philosophies within "The Light Princess." In addition to asserting MacDonald's conception of metaphysical truth, the fairy tale situates this view within the Victorian public debate on spirituality, dismissing efforts to cure the princess on materialist and spiritualist grounds. Before her disenchantment, the princess's case is put with hilarious effect before the two heads of the "college of Metaphysicians," the "very wise Chinese philosophers" (72) Hum-Drum and Kopy-Keck, who are of a materialist and spiritualist persuasion, respectively.
Hum-Drum reductively pronounces the causes of the princess's dual-natured affliction to be exclusively physical, the result of her blood pumping the wrong way through her veins and arteries. His recommended treatment is fantastical and pathological:

Phlebotomize until she is reduced to the last point of safety. Let it be effected, if necessary, in a warm bath. When she is reduced to a state of perfect asphyxy, apply a ligature to the left ankle [sic], drawing it as tight as the bone will bear. Apply, at the same moment, another of equal tension around the right wrist. By means of plates constructed for the purpose, place the other foot and hand under the receivers of two air-pumps. Exhaust the receivers. Exhibit a pint of French brandy, and await the result. (56)

Hum-Drum's treatment, which fortunately is not acted upon, is purportedly based on scientific principle, but appears no better than superstition or hocus-pocus. The flourishing of the French brandy is the coup de grace to his pretensions. Simply flourished in the air, the brandy could have no more "force" to effect change than an object without gravity.

Similarly, Kopy-Keck's recommended cure is presented as patently ridiculous. He hypothesizes a science-fiction scenario for the princess's lack of gravity involving her disembodied pre-birth soul accidentally arriving at the wrong planet. Though he might be said to conceive the problem as spiritual, his recommended treatment does not
reflect an elevated concept of the human soul:

She must therefore be taught, by the sternest compulsion, to take an interest in the earth as the earth. She must study every department of its history—its animal history; its vegetable history; its mineral history; its moral history; its political history; its scientific history; its literary history; its musical history; its artistic history; above all, its metaphysical history. She must begin with the Chinese dynasty, and end with Japan. But first of all she must study Geology, and especially the history of the extinct races of animals—their natures, their habits, their loves, their hates, their revenges. (73-74)

Kopy-Keck’s cure is not one of gentle suggestion—as the effective cure for Adela will be—but one to be forced upon her, regardless of her will. Moreover, he does not recommend that the princess study to forge her own understanding, but rather to ingest encyclopedic amounts of knowledge amassed by others.

Kopy-Keck’s emphasis on empirically gathered knowledge subtly hints that the “spiritualist” movement, despite its claims to offer religious certainty through seances, is simply another form of empiricism. The reference to studying “extinct races of animals,” I argue, should be understand in this context—as another instance of a strictly material interpretation of scientific fact—since MacDonald did not find evolutionary theory incompatible with an imaginative Christian faith.
MacDonald's "The Light Princess," the last chronologically of three metaphysical revisions of the Sleeping Beauty story published in England in the 1860s, shares several themes and elements with its predecessors, Dickens's Great Expectations and Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market." All three revisions assert the primacy of spiritual reality in an age when societal materialism and contemporary science seemed to deny the very existence of the spiritual. All three revisions assert that humans are essentially equal spiritual beings, equally intended to receive God's grace, and that material factors of difference, including gender, do not alter this basic truth. All three depict an awakening to the existence of spiritual reality as manifesting itself in love for fellow humankind.

"The Light Princess" most closely parallels Rossetti's "Goblin Market," since both rework Sleeping Beauty into an allegory of the Christian narrative of humankind's fall and redemption. Nonetheless, MacDonald's optimism about earthly reality differs significantly from the darker views of both Rossetti and Dickens. Rossetti's vision of life on earth is one of delayed gratification. Though Laura is resurrected to resume an active and fruitful domestic life, her conversion gives her a taste
of ecstasy that apparently will not recur until she arrives in heaven. Similarly, Dickens presents the necessity of humans clinging to spiritual grace—and each other—amid their own imperfection and the bleak social conditions they have helped to create. They will confront God in the afterlife.

MacDonald conversely perceives that Christ has established a spiritual Paradise in the material world. That material world includes suffering, though MacDonald considers it as part of God’s benevolent purposes for the spiritual development of his creatures. Moreover, MacDonald suggests, comprehending the unselfishness of the historical Christ will open the individual’s eyes to the radiance of Christ’s presence amid earthly reality. MacDonald’s conception of earthly reality is very much like the fictional realm of Fairyland, where supernaturalism is part of a seemingly ordinary world.

Endnotes

1. MacDonald repeatedly incorporates the Sleeping Beauty motif of a female fallen prey to a sleep-like enchantment or state of alternate consciousness in his fictional works, including his adult fantasy Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women (1858); the long tale “The Portent,” which first appeared as a serial in the Cornhill Magazine in 1860; and his first “realistic” novel, David Elginbrod (1863). In the latter, the domination of a young woman, Euphrasia Cameron, by the mesmerist Herr von Funkelstein, produces in her a type of dream state—a foreshadowing of George Du Maurier’s Trilby (1894).
2. Page numbers refer to the first publication of "The Light Princess" as an interpolated tale in MacDonald's 1864 novel Adela Cathcart. All subsequent references to the fairy tale refer to this edition.

3. The Light Princess actually does meet the criteria for a diagnosis of narcissistic personality disorder, as she displays at least five of the nine diagnostic criteria of the American Psychiatric Association. However, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders cautions: "Narcissistic traits may be particularly common in adolescents and do not necessarily indicate that the individual will go on to have Narcissistic Personality Disorder" (660). In the princess's case, clearly only disenchantment could deliver her from her dysfunction.

4. Although "The Light Princess" is not a theological treatise, it does suggest MacDonald's position in the debate over evidence for religious faith, ongoing in England since at least the eighteenth century. In general, some thinkers argued that evidence of God and all necessary information for conducting life could be deduced by any man from the operations of the natural universe, while others thought this information needed to be supplemented by direct revelation from God in the Scriptures (including the life and words of Christ). In one of the articles in the 1860 Essays and Reviews, the author quotes a statement from eighteenth-century philosopher John Locke regarding this discussion:

> Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties; revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of.... (qtd. in Pattison 269)

In the nineteenth-century, Romantic poets, and the "Victorian Romantics" influenced by them, generally saw Nature as intimating deep spiritual truths. However, their views on direct revelation differed widely and sometimes remain unclear.

5. Ruskin expresses a similar view of humankind reaching a utopian state by responding to the moral order of the universe in the ecstatic conclusion to his essay "Traffic":

> But if you can fix some conception of a true
human state of life to be striven for—life, good for all men, as for yourselves; if you can determine some honest and simple order of existence; following those trodden ways of wisdom, which are pleasantness, and seeking her quiet and withdrawn paths, which are peace;—then, and so sanctifying wealth into "commonwealth," all your art, your literature, your daily labours, your domestic affection, and citizen's duty, will join and increase into one magnificent harmony. You will know then how to build, well enough; you will build with stone well, but with flesh better; temples not made with hands, but riveted of hearts; and that kind of marble, crimson-veined, is indeed eternal. (249)
The fairy-tale revisions in this study provide a unique opportunity to observe the role that a popular fairy tale played in the Victorian religious debate shortly after the 1859 publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. Charles Dickens, Christina Rossetti and George MacDonald each employ the *Sleeping Beauty* story to address the intensified "spiritual crisis" of the early 1860s during which orthodox Christianity began to lose intellectual credibility for many of the educated. However, rather than adopting the defensive posture of leaders of the religious establishment, whose responses led to the polarization of religion and science, the three authors in this study chose to appeal to the imagination in order to affirm the supernatural metaphysical premises of Christianity, including its claim to efficacy in transforming society.

In *Great Expectations*, "Goblin Market" and "The Light Princess," Dickens, Rossetti and MacDonald appropriate the *Sleeping Beauty* narrative to create a vivid and emotionally compelling model of a divine design for human spiritual growth. Each features a narcissistic individual who acquires the unselfish ability to love others only after "awakening to" and "embracing" ultimate spiritual reality. Because the *Sleeping Beauty* revisions substitute the
discovery of spiritual reality, and/or Christ, for the prince figure, they are able to transfer the sense of significance and fulfillment, or even emotional ecstasy, associated with fairy tale romance to the spiritual realm.

This study reveals the artistry with which the authors portray the superior substantiality and perfection of a spiritual dimension, while concurrently showing the insubstantiality of the material and its incapacity to fulfill human need. Within this metaphysical framework, Victorian society is variously depicted as smug, superficial, obsessed and deluded through its preoccupation with the material. The "spiritual crisis" is linked not to contemporary theory in science and other intellectual disciplines, but rather to a failure of imagination and the uncritical adoption by an overtly evangelical society of inherently contradictory material values.

The significance of these revisions also rests in their allusion to, and alterations of conventional literary and artistic Sleeping Beauty representations. The revisionists attempt to dissociate wealth, class status, physical beauty and romance from the essential meaning of the fairy tale, shattering distorted mental conceptions of Sleeping Beauty as a story of material advancement or the achievement of marital satisfaction.
Dickens, Rossetti and MacDonald interpret *Sleeping Beauty* similarly to twentieth-century psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim. Bettelheim considers the fairy tale to portray human psychological maturation, offering children a hopeful view of their future, as well as a warning of the need to mature. In *On the Nature of Enchantment*, Bettelheim argues that the enchanted sleep of the teenage princess signifies a period of self-withdrawal or narcissism—in both males and females—in reaction to the stress of adolescence. The princess’s awakening offers hope that this passivity will eventually be followed by maturity and sexual awakening. Bettelheim describes adult psychological maturity as the “birth of a higher ego” and “the achievement of “relating positively with the other.” He sees *Sleeping Beauty* as conveying the additional message that perpetual narcissism “leads to a dangerous deathlike existence when it is embraced as an escape from the vagaries of life” (234).

What Bettelheim terms psychological growth is similar to what the revisionists characterize as spiritual growth. However, the revisionists do not see such growth as a natural part of human development, but rather unnatural to the fallen human condition and exclusively dependent on becoming conscious of a divine reality where unselfishness and perfection exist. Consequently, the definition of
spiritual maturity becomes an ability to love one's fellow human beings and not simply a romantic partner. Moreover, the divine design for spiritual growth is suggested to be an option regardless of age. Those who resist this means of fulfilling their human purpose become, in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, a "Sleeping Ugly" like Miss Havisham.

The study underscores the importance of Victorian fairy tales for providing insight into Victorian culture. Moreover, because the metaphysical *Sleeping Beauty* revisions of the early 1860s, and other earlier *Sleeping Beauty* representations, contrast sharply with representations toward the end of the nineteenth century, they suggest the value of a chronological study of this popular tale. Existing scholarly discussions of late-Victorian *Sleeping Beauty* representations largely concern the obsessive *Sleeping Beauty* art of Edward Burne-Jones, a Pre-Raphaelite follower who helped launch the Aesthetic Movement.1 Burne-Jones painted subjects from *Sleeping Beauty* for nearly four decades, resulting in "tile designs, embroideries, book illustrations, and three separate series of Briar Rose paintings, as well as other individual paintings and almost a hundred preparatory drawings based on tale" (Powell 15).
Burne-Jones's masterwork was a series of four paintings, installed in 1891 in the drawing room of a house at Buscot Park, for which he later painted ten smaller panels "to create a frieze on three sides of the room" (16). One of the most striking features of this narrative series, and the subject of critical comment, is the impression it conveys that the sleeping princess will never awaken from her dream. The thick stems and prominent thorns of the roses invading the princess's bedchamber give them the appearance of unbreakable bonds.

The predicament of the prince, who appears in a different scene, is even more ominous. Arriving in a wood of giant briars, the prince surveys the bodies of several knights who have been pierced by thorns. The back of one of the fallen knights arches in agony. This Sleeping Beauty prince seems quite unlikely to reach his goal.

Burne-Jones's Briar Rose series is a particularly striking example of a common feature in late-Victorian Sleeping Beauty representations of presenting the princess as perpetually enchanted or even dead. Sleeping Beauty appears to have become allied in the artistic and literary imagination with fantasies of aesthetic beauty and/or feminine nature² rather than spiritual or intellectual enlightenment. This change in Sleeping Beauty...
representations suggests a darkening Victorian vision of reality. As Derek Jarrett observes in *The Sleep of Reason*, "one of history's great turning points" took place largely within the nineteenth century: "For the first time in human history the invisible was no longer the necessary framework within which truths about the visible world could be discerned" (3). In other words, Victorian lost a conception of a realm of ideal truth. Because the *Sleeping Beauty* fairy story features an altered state of consciousness, it appears to have been exceptionally well-suited to reflecting the Victorian consciousness.

Endnotes

1. Insightful discussions of Burne-Jones's *Sleeping Beauty* art appear in Powell's "Edward Burne-Jones and the Legend of the Briar Rose" and Tintner's "The Sleeping Woman: A Victorian Fantasy." Auerbach's *Woman and the Demon* mentions a number of Sleeping Beauty figures in Victorian culture. In "Henry James and the Sleeping Beauty: A Victorian Fantasy on a Fairy-Tale Theme," Tintner discusses James's retelling of *Sleeping Beauty* in three literary works, as well as the likelihood that he was influenced by Burne-Jones.

2. The title character and Sleeping Beauty figure in George Du Maurier's *Trilby*, for example, is a woman of mythological attributes, whose beauty and femininity exert an extraordinary influence over men.
WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED


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