"It's All About the Dress!": An Examination of 150 Years of Cinderella Picture-Book Covers

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This project was born as we sat in the first author's home, surrounded by her collection of 300-plus Cinderella picture books. As the second author looked through the books, she starting singing, "A dream is a wish your heart makes." Sitting nearby were the second author's two daughters. The four-year-old was dressed in a Disney's Cinderella princess costume, and both girls were wearing crowns. We were three groups of women, from three different eras, all connected by a shared fascination with a simple fairy tale. And we are not alone in our enchantment with this story. As Linda T. Parsons states, Cinderella is consistently reported as the best-known and most-loved of all fairy tales, with over 700 documented versions dating as far back as 850-60 China.

Karlyn Crowley and John Pennington claim that Cinderella's popularity comes from her elasticity; her rags-to-riches story can be tweaked to fit any cultural norms or values, and as a result, her story has become one of the most enduring of all cultural narratives. In fact, Marcia K. Lieberman asserts that Cinderella has achieved mythic or god-like status. The impact such a pervasive cultural narrative may have on the people who consume it is likely to be quite significant. As Lieberman notes, children and adults are culturally conditioned by the stories they read and hear. For example, Thomas Crisp and Brittany Hiller establish that children aged three to five internalize gender stereotypes and can differentiate between "masculine" and "feminine" roles by the time they enter kindergarten. Crisp and Hiller argue that because story-telling is "a

primary means of transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next," children's literature plays a key role in this gender-role socialization (197-98).   Gender role socialization, then, is just one reason it is essential to examine the influence cultural narratives such as Cinderella may have on their audience.

The goal of the current study is to provide a comprehensive descriptive analysis of the illustrations in Cinderella picture books and to examine how or if those illustrations have changed over time.   By documenting the differences and commonalities in Cinderella images over time, we can draw conclusions about how portrayals of Cinderella may have been shaped by the social forces of a given era and how they, in turn, may have shaped the norms and values of audiences in that era.

To accomplish this goal, we first provide a brief history of the Cinderella story.   Then we argue that picture-book illustrations are especially important to examine and that such research to date has been limited. Next, we argue a case for our research questions and summarize the methodology we used to collect and analyze our data.   Finally, we provide a descriptive analysis of the images in our data set, identifying trends over time and their possible implications.

History

The Cinderella story has existed in world-wide folklore for at least 1000 years. When Charles Perrault wrote his story in the 1690s, he was probably aware of earlier versions, in which Cinderella, often aided by her dead mother, struggles not to find a husband but to regain her lost status, and does so by actively using her wits and seeking out the help she needs. The fairy godmother who arrives unexpectedly and transforms a pumpkin into a coach – and who bestows on Cinderella her ballroom finery – was Perrault's creation. Thus, in Perrault's telling, Cinderella's agency is significantly diminished.   Perrault's Cinderella is sweet, gentle, self-

effacing, and physically lovely, reflecting the "ideal '*femme civilisée*' of upper-class society": a "composite female [who is] beautiful, polite, graceful, industrious, and properly groomed and knows how to control herself at all times" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 40-41).

In the mid-1800s, Perrault's Cinderella was adopted by British publishers to the effective exclusion of all others.   Bonnie Cullen posits that Perrault's Cinderella "won out" over other versions because "the market for fairy tales in England was increasingly urban and middleclass[,]" and such "'polite' readers were concerned about 'improving' young minds to function effectively in society" (73).   In short, Perrault's demure and passive Cinderella fit best with the Victorian feminine ideal.   As a result of this publishing choice, Perrault's version has dominated English-language Cinderella books ever since and is the version told in nearly all the books examined here.

Value of Illustrations

Researchers who examine the Cinderella story tend to focus on the text and explore the possible effects of the narrative on its audience.   For example, Lieberman and Parsons conduct a feminist analysis of the gender roles demonstrated in the text. Similarly, Jane Yolen criticizes four American versions of the tale, published between 1879 and 1950, for their ever-more-passive heroine. Lori Baker-Sperry and Kay F. Stone examine children's reactions to the Cinderella story as evidence of its effect on gender roles. Bruno Bettelheim performs a psychoanalytical analysis of the text, and Elisabeth Panttaja analyzes the text in terms of class. Max Luthi interprets the Grimm brothers' Cinderella tale, perceiving it as an expression of universal human experience.

In contrast, the current research focuses on illustrations, arguing that they are as important to understand as the text.   Emilie Sitzia contends that because of their prominent place alongside the text and because of

their instant effect on a reader, illustrations are often powerful additions to the narrative.   Indeed, Nodelman argues that pictures illicit emotions, spark imagination, and communicate how things look in ways words alone cannot ("How Picture Books Work").

   This is especially true of fairy tale illustrations. Luthi argues that the universal appeal of the fairy tale's text is attributable in part to its lacking detail; the fairy tale's principal actors are not individuals but simply figures. While Luthi contends this stylized quality gives fairy tales a strong symbolic appeal, it also creates the space for the interpretation and particularization that illustrations provide.   Indeed, illustrations are often what distinguish one published version of a fairy tale from another.

   Further, Françoise Forster-Hahn, as quoted by Sitzia, has recognized that all illustrators apply contemporary pictorial conventions to their work, thus manifesting "'links to the political and cultural fabric of [the illustration's] own period'" (Sitzia 160).   Relying on Tony Gheeraert's contention that illustrations not only comment on and refer to the time of their production but are also "'interpretations of the text as it was [then] read and understood,'" Sitzia argues that "the illustrator's aim is to translate the text into his/her contemporary cultural, social and political environment to adapt it for his/her readership" (160).   Illustrations, then, provide insight into how the text was received and interpreted in a particular sociocultural environment.

   Despite the potential importance of illustrations in understanding the impact of iconic stories such as Cinderella, very few scholars have examined Cinderella illustrations. While a considerable amount of excellent criticism has addressed the Cinderella tale in general, Ségolène Le Men charges that its illustrations have been shockingly neglected. Exceptions are the work of Sitzia, Le Men, Nodelman, Joseph H. Schwarcz, and Irene Whalley; however, none of these studies was comprehensive.   Sitzia analyzed only Gustave Doré's 1862 Cinderella illustrations, while Le Men briefly traced the changes in illustrations of

Perrault's fairy tales (including Cinderella) from their original publication in 1697 to Doré's version two centuries later.   Nodelman has compared the illustrations of three versions of Cinderella in a critical assessment of the illustrations' artistic influences and effect (*Words About Pictures*). Schwarcz focused on two key scenes in Cinderella, examining how 50 picture-book illustrators after 1945 presented those two scenes.   Finally, Whalley's study examined a sample of Cinderella books published between 1794 and 1919, and traced the changes the books made to the original story during that time.   In sum, previous examinations of illustrations in Cinderella have been based a small sample size, have looked a narrow slice of the illustrations, and have examined the illustrations from an art history background.   Further, none have examined Cinderella illustrations produced after 1980.

In contrast, we look at Cinderella illustrations for both breadth and depth. We examine cover illustrations for changes across decades and explore how trends in those covers both reflect and affect cultural norms and values of particular eras. To do so, we propose four research questions.

Research Questions

The first two research questions focus on identifying the iconic images present in Cinderella cover illustrations over time. While one might expect great variety in Cinderella illustrations, given the dramatic, poignant, and even humorous moments in the basic Cinderella plot, illustrations of the tale tend to depict a standard set of narrative moments. As George Bodmer has established, once illustration choices are made and published, some images become canonized, and image evolution slows down significantly. The art of illustration is "extremely conservative and almost always alludes to earlier illustrated versions" (Le Men 19).   New

artists often inherit a repertoire of scenes from earlier illustrators that they are not willing or not permitted by publishers to abandon.

Yolen has identified the common elements of the Cinderella story as (1) an ill-treated but worthy heroine in a Cinders-disguise; (2) the aid of a magic gift by a bird/mother substitute; (3) a dance/festival where the heroine comes in radiant display; and (4) recognition through a token. Similarly, Cullen notes that over its history of publication, the Cinderella story has acquired a fixed set of signature images: Cinderella sitting in the ashes; Cinderella working as servant; the fairy godmother appearing to Cinderella; Cinderella arriving at the ball; Cinderella running from the ball; Cinderella trying on the slipper; and Cinderella and the prince getting married. The first research question seeks to confirm that our sample of Cinderella covers includes the standard iconic images.

RQ1: What are the iconic images portrayed on Cinderella covers?

Illustrations often reflect the political and social fabric of the time period in which they were created. Thus, fairy tales and their associated illustrations are usually culturally specific and evolve according to the values and norms of the societies that produce them (Parsons). This indicates that the iconic images might change over time. Our second research question explores this possibility.

RQ2: Have/How have the iconic images on Cinderella covers changed over time?

Another factor important to explore is how Cinderella herself is depicted via such illustrative choices as her hair color, skin color, gown color, and degree of attractiveness. Trends in Cinderella's hair and skin color may reflect trends in ideals of female beauty. Further, Cinderella is repeatedly described in the text as beautiful, both inside and out. Thus, Cinderella illustrations are likely to portray her in ways that meet the standards of

beauty established by the culture of her reading audience.   Additionally, beauty is often seen as correlated with virtue, while ugliness is correlated with evil or bad temper (Zipes, "A Second Gaze").   Thus, we can predict that Cinderella will be portrayed to fit cultural expectations of beauty so as to convey that she is good (Parsons).

Cinderella's portrayed age also promises to be significant. Bodmer notes that in the texts of traditional fairy tales, few details of the heroine's age are provided because she must start out as a girl and be married by the end of the story.   However, illustrations, by their very nature, must depict Cinderella at a particular age.   Previous work has indicated that there is great variety in those depictions.   For example, Schwarcz found few books where Cinderella is a child, but 25 versions where she is depicted as a girl between the ages of 7 to 12 years and 21 books where she appears to be in her upper teens to early 20s.   These potential variables lead us to our third research question.

RQ3: How is Cinderella depicted on the covers (hair color, level of beauty, age, etc.)?

A follow-up issue is how (or if) depictions of Cinderella have changed over time.   If Cinderella illustrations portray her as a reflection of the cultural ideal of female beauty, then, as beauty ideals change, depictions of Cinderella should also change.   Additionally, Baker-Sperry's work suggests we may see significant changes in depictions of Cinderella after 1950, the year in which Disney's *Cinderella* was released.   Zipes argues, in fact, that our modern understanding of the Cinderella fairy tale is so closely linked with the Disney film that the two are inseparable (*Happily Ever After*).   Cullen also contends that the Cinderella depiction that has eclipsed all others is Disney's blond, blue-eyed, slender young adult. This leads to our fourth research question:

RQ4: How do (or do) depictions of Cinderella on covers change over time?

Methods

The covers of 315 Cinderella picture books, published in the United States and Great Britain between 1800 and 2014, are the subject of this analysis. While these books constitute a representative sample of Cinderella books published during these years, they are a private collection, and thus caveats must be noted. Because of the diminished availability of older books, the quantity of books examined here that were published between 1800 and 1900 is smaller than the quantity published after 1900. For the same reason, the collection contains more books published in recent decades than in the early decades of the twentieth century (see Appendix D).

Moreover, the books examined here consist entirely of traditional versions of the (primarily Perrault) Cinderella story and do not include any "new" retellings of the story now available to children. Thus, "alternative" English-language Cinderella picture books such as *Cinderella Skeleton* (2004), *Seriously Cinderella Is SO Annoying!* (2011), or *Cinders: A Chicken Cinderella* (2013) are not included; neither are recent picture books telling versions of the Cinderella tale from non-Western European ethnic and indigenous cultures. Finally, the data set includes only three Disney books.

Second, the current study examines only cover illustrations from the dataset. Because individuals usually glance at a book before reading it, the cover is the most significant source of their expectations for the story, and it influences their response to the book before they even open it (Nodelman & Reimer 278). Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott observe that a picture book's cover image is often what the author or publisher

considers the story's most dramatic moment.   The importance of the cover, then, has led us to focus solely on cover illustrations in this study.

A number of steps were involved in creating the dataset for this analysis. First, all covers were scanned to create digital copies of each image. Second, researchers examined each cover for manifest content variables (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein), including elements of Cinderella's appearance (hair color, skin color, gown color, and dress (ball gown or rags)) and the story events pictured (e.g., Cinderella running away from the palace, Cinderella dancing with the prince). Cover images were coded for each of these manifest content variables. As the content was non-subjective, intercoder reliability on these variables was 100%. Third, researchers examined each cover for two latent content variables (Potter & Levine- Donnerstein). Latent content variables are variables requiring coders to engage in somewhat subjective interpretation to categorize content.   The two latent content variables of the study were Cinderella's age in the image (child, early teen, young lady) and Cinderella's attractiveness (unattractive/attractive).   The three coders each coded a subset of approximately 10 % of the covers. Intercoder reliability was alpha =.91 for Cinderella's age and alpha =.92 for Cinderella's attractiveness.   Once all the images were coded, a database was created that allowed the researchers to sort images by multiple variables. For example, the researchers could pull up all images published in the 1930s that showed a blond Cinderella running down the stairs. This allowed the researchers to explore relationships between illustrations across time.

Results

RQ1 asked, "What are the iconic images portrayed on Cinderella covers?" The coding scheme for this question included the iconic images already identified in previous research. Additional categories were also evident in the images. The final coding scheme included ten categories (see

Appendix A).   Twenty percent of the cover images showed Cinderella running away from the ball and losing her glass slipper. Fifteen percent captured the moment of transformation when Cinderella's rags are magically replaced by a beautiful ball gown. Another 14% percent of the cover images showed Cinderella sitting in the ashes, and 10% showed Cinderella doing housework or helping her stepsisters dress.   Another 10% of cover images were of Cinderella first encountering or helping her fairy godmother, while 9% of the images showed Cinderella riding in her coach to the ball, and 8% percent showed Cinderella dancing with the prince.   Five percent of the cover images showed Cinderella trying on the shoe. Three percent of the cover images depicted Cinderella and the prince getting married, and a final three percent were simple portraits of Cinderella. In sum, Cinderella in the ashes, Cinderella having her gown transformed, and Cinderella running away from the ball were the three most used cover images at 14%, 15% and 20% of all images, respectively.

RQ2 asked if the images depicted on Cinderella covers changed over time.   By examining which images appeared most often in which decades, the researchers were able to answer this question (see Appendix A). An initial finding is that covers showing Cinderella sitting in the ashes or working at chores exist in every decade.   This indicates that Cinderella in her "Cinders" role is an iconic image. However, while initially (1800-1880), images of a downtrodden Cinderella made up a significant portion of covers, by the 1950s, fewer and fewer covers show her working or sitting by the fireplace. From 2010 to 2014, a downtrodden Cinderella appears on only 11% of covers.

Perhaps in relation to the above findings, cover images showing Cinderella's gown transformation did not exist in the early years of this study. The early covers showed Cinderella only in rags.   However, by the 1900s, images of Cinderella during the magical moment her gown is transformed started to emerge, and, over time, that moment appeared more

and more frequently, such that, by the years 2010-2014, 27% of cover images depict the gown transformation.

Another trend indicated by the data was that Cinderella running away from the ball was the most popular image overall. This image did not appear until the 1890s and was used only sporadically until the 1970s, but it began appearing consistently each decade thereafter, and in the years 2010-14, Cinderella running down the stairs was depicted on 41% of all covers published.

RQ3 examined how Cinderella looked on covers, specifically: her age, her hair color, her skin color, her dress (rags or ball gown), the color of any ball gown, and her physical attractiveness.

Age. Portrayals of Cinderella's apparent age varied. In 11.5% of the data set, Cinderella appeared as a pre-adolescent child, in some cases as young as five or six years old. In 12%, she was depicted in her early teens, approximately thirteen or fourteen years old. In over three-fourths of covers (76.5%), however, Cinderella appeared as a young lady in her late teens or early twenties.

Hair Color. The most dominant hair color for Cinderella was blond, appearing on 71% of the covers. Second most prevalent was brown (16%), followed by red (9%) and black (4%).

Skin Color. Across the data set, only two Cinderellas were non-Caucasian (.06%).

Dress Color. When Cinderella was shown in a ball gown, 25% of the gowns were pink and another 25% white, 14% were blue, 14% yellow, 5.5% purple, 5% gold, 3% red, and 2.5% green.

Rags/Splendor. In 44% of covers Cinderella wore rags, while in 56%, she wore a ball gown.

Attractiveness. The cover illustrations could be divided into two broad categories in terms of Cinderella's attractiveness, a distinction that arose primarily from illustration style. The dominant illustration style in the dataset was representational, depicting human characters with

"realistic" proportions, that is, with bodily and facial proportions approximating those of actual human beings. On these covers, regardless of skin color, hair color, or age, Cinderella was portrayed in a manner consistent with Western conceptions of facial beauty, which studies have established consist of mathematically symmetrical faces including a high forehead, small chin, small nose, short and narrow jaw, and high cheekbones (Buss; Fink and Penton-Voak; Perrett et. al.). In contrast, on other covers, illustrators employed more experimental and deliberately "unrealistic" illustration styles in which characters, including Cinderella, were roughly drawn, physically disproportionate, or cartoonish almost to the point of abstraction. On these covers, "ugly" Cinderellas were shown, for example, with disproportionately large heads containing tiny or asymmetrical facial features or with stick-like arms and legs. These "ugly" Cinderellas often resembled drawings that very young children would produce. Across all the 315 covers, 17% were coded as unattractive and 83% as attractive.

RQ4 asked if the look of Cinderella changed over time.

Age. Cinderella's apparent age changed across time (see Appendix B). From 1800 to 1889, all images were of a young-lady Cinderella. It was not until 1890-99 that images of a younger Cinderella, approximately thirteen or fourteen years old, first appeared. This early-teen Cinderella enjoyed a strong degree of popularity from the turn of the twentieth century through 1939, making up 37% of the cover images in those four decades. The first child Cinderella appeared in the 1900s, and during the first four decades of the twentieth century, child Cinderellas appeared on 16% of covers. However, across all decades, Cinderella was pictured most often as a young lady in her late teens or early twenties. In every decade of the data set, Cinderella appeared as a young lady on at least two thirds (and, in some decades, 100%) of covers – with two exceptions. First, the 1920s was the only decade in which young-lady Cinderellas were in a minority, appearing on only 33% of covers, and in the 1930s,

she appeared on just over half (54%) of covers. In these two decades, the teen Cinderella reached her peak, appearing on 53% of 1920s covers and 31% of 1930s covers, thus surpassing her early popularity in the 1890s (28%). Second, in the 2010s, the frequency of young-lady Cinderellas fell below two-thirds, to 61.5%, for the first time since 1939; this was a drop from an average of 85.6% per decade from 1940 through 2009. This time, however, it was the child Cinderella whose appearance increased in comparison. The percentage of child Cinderellas began to rise in the 2000s; she constituted 15% of covers during that decade, compared to an average of 8.5% of covers in the immediately prior three decades. In the 2010s, at 25.5%, she appeared on a greater percentage of covers than in any other decade. Thus, although the young-lady Cinderella dominates over time, the 1920s/30s and the 2000s/10s demonstrate two turns toward younger Cinderellas.

Hair Color.   While blond Cinderellas dominated the cover illustrations across all decades, there were interesting trends in Cinderella's hair coloring over time. Before 1860, Cinderella was portrayed only as blond.   However, beginning in the 1860s, other hair colors began to emerge, and in the decade between 1860 and 1870, 66% of the covers had brunette Cinderellas, while only 33% of the covers had blondes. From 1870 to 1890, 50% of the covers showed Cinderella as blond, while the other 50% showed her as brunette. From 1890 to 1940, blond Cinderellas dominated, but brunette, red, and black-haired Cinderellas still appeared in each decade.   In the 1950s, however, alternative hair colors disappeared, and for almost 20 years, all covers in the data set were of blond Cinderellas. Alternative hair colors started to slowly re-emerge in the late 1970s, and in the decades from 1980 to 2014, the average number of covers with blond Cinderellas per decade was 71%, with the other 29% being made up of a mix of brunettes, red-heads, and black-haired Cinderellas.

Skin Color. The two covers where Cinderella is not Caucasian did not appear until the 2000s, indicating only a recent and minimal breach of the traditional tale by non-white Cinderellas.

Dress Color. Cinderella's ball gown appears to reflect the colors in fashion at particular time periods. Pink was popular across many decades but is especially prominent post-1990, making up 31% of all ball gowns on covers published between 1990 and 2014. Likewise, while purple was not a popular color overall (only 5.5% of all ball gowns were purple), purple has appeared more often in recent years, making up 8.5% of the covers in the 1990s and 12% of the covers from 2000 to 2014. Blue and yellow have remained constant at approximately 14% of the ball grown colors across the decades. However, red, gold, and green have decreased in popularity, such that from 1990 to 2014, they each accounted for 1% or less of the colors chosen for Cinderella's gown. White has experienced a few periods of great popularity. While making up only 15% of the ball gowns since 1990, white was the dominant ball gown color in the 1920s, at 57% of the gowns in that decade.

Rags/Splendor. While there was a fairly balanced distribution between Cinderella in her rags and Cinderella in her finery, choices about how Cinderella was dressed varied across time (see Appendix C). From 1800 to 1889, 100% of the covers portrayed Cinderella in rags. Starting in the 1890s, images of Cinderella in splendor then began to emerge, although Cinderella in rags still dominated through the 1920s. In the 1930s and '40s, Cinderella in rags and Cinderella in finery were almost equally represented. In the 1950s, Cinderella in splendor jumped to 83% of covers, but from the 1960s to the 1980s, the distribution was again more balanced, with slightly more images of Cinderella in rags in these decades than of Cinderella in splendor. Starting in the late 1980s, however, splendor steadily began to gain ground each decade, until, in the covers from 2010 to today, Cinderella in splendor appears on 81% of covers and Cinderella in rags on only 19%.

Attractiveness.   How attractively Cinderella was portrayed also changed over time. From 1800 to 1960, there were no covers with unattractive Cinderellas, as the illustration style used was consistently representational. From 1960-1989, there were only four "ugly" Cinderella covers. Starting in 1990, however, covers employing abstract, cartoonish, or child-like illustration styles became more common. Seventeen percent of the covers from 1990-1999 showed "ugly" Cinderellas, 47% of the covers from 2000-2009 were "ugly," and 46% of the covers from 2010-2014 featured "ugly" Cinderellas. In sum, since 1990, 50 out of 133 covers (or 38%) portrayed Cinderella as unattractive. Thus, while "ugly" Cinderellas are not common, those that do exist appear almost exclusively on books published in the last 25 years.

Discussion

So what do these results mean? What might explain why we found what we found? And what might our findings say about the messages these books are sending?

As a preliminary matter, the cover images examined here confirm the existence of, and conform to, the core iconic images from the Cinderella story previously identified by scholars. However, one of our major findings is a marked shift over time in the story event presented most frequently.   As noted, these covers exhibit a transition from an early dominance of Cinderella sitting in the ashes to a later dominance, especially in recent years, of Cinderella running away from the palace. This trend indicates that Cinderella is recently depicted more often as an active character than a passive one; a character in motion rather than a static one.   This is a change which at first blush may suggest her construction as a more empowered character than in decades past. However, while Cinderella is running in these later images, she is only *reacting* to the midnight hour and not *acting* on her own behalf.   As

Cinderella's flight from the ball is an exciting moment of drama, it is more likely that its regular appearance on later covers reflects the increasing presence of visual media (such as movies, television shows, and video games) in modern culture – and the increasing competition that such media poses for print in the lives of modern-day children.   These covers depict *movement* rather than empowered *action* on Cinderella's part; the former, however, is equally cinematic as the latter, and this is, in fact, the only event in the tale that offers the dynamism publishers today may believe is most likely to "sell" a story to children and their parents.

The more comprehensive conclusion to be drawn from our findings is that Cinderella picture-book covers, over time, have shifted from showing Cinderella downtrodden and in rags (see Figures 1 and 2) to Cinderella dressed in splendor (see Figures 3 and 4).   This transition seems to both reflect and contribute to the "princess culture" being marketed to girls today.   As Peggy Orenstein has established, much of this "princess culture" may be laid at Disney's feet with the launch of the Disney princess merchandising line in 2000. As of 2011, this princess line (featuring predominantly Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Ariel, and Belle), had *26,000* items on the market, and by 2009, sales had reached $4 billion. Disney's line was followed almost immediately by Mattel's 2001 launch of its Barbie princess line and by other similar ventures, such as Viacom's 2004 release of Magic Hair Fairytale Dora the Explorer (15). Consistent with such "princess culture" marketing, the trend toward images of Cinderella in her ball gown on picture-book covers demonstrates a turn to spectacle and, in particular, to a construction of Cinderella herself as a dazzling visual display.

The majority of covers picture Cinderella as conventionally pretty or beautiful, albeit "pretty" or "beautiful" as those terms were understood and depicted at the time of publication (for examples, see Figures 5 and 6). Reflecting consistency in cultural stereotypes of female beauty, Cinderella is overwhelmingly represented as Caucasian and blond.   Moreover, when

Cinderella is pictured in her ball gown, the trend in recent years has been toward pink and purple gowns.   This turn toward pink and purple is consistent with what Orenstein has termed twenty-first century "girlie-girl" culture marketed toward little girls, whereby girls' toys – even such items as baseball bats – appear to be almost uniformly produced in pink and/or purple. (In like manner, while a growing number of pop-up and moving-parts Cinderella books since the turn of the millennium suggests an effort on publishers' parts to create products that can compete in visual (and interactive) appeal to the entertainment offered by DVDs and video games, the increasing use of such eye-catching features as glitter, gilt, and padding on Cinderella covers, albeit reflecting the same concern, attracts attention in particularly "pretty" and "girlie" ways).   The result is a narrowing of the pleasurable visual experience offered by these covers and by Cinderella's "prettiness," both of which conform to and reinforce the girlie-girl "princess" ideal girls are invited to consume.

    In only one subset of these covers is this iconic prettiness undermined: those in which Cinderella is unconventionally portrayed in an abstract, crude, or cartoonish style (for examples, see Figures 7 and 8).   These "ugly" Cinderellas began to appear in the 1990s, simultaneously with picture books recounting alternative Cinderella stories – in which Cinderella is an animal, a boy, or the "villain" of the story or ones in which Cinderella chooses an occupation or a working-class boy instead of the prince – and picture books providing children versions of the Cinderella tale as told in cultures around the world, with corresponding illustrations, instead of Perrault's version. Thus, "ugly" Cinderella covers appear to be part of a general cultural impulse, presumably the result of the women's movement of the late twentieth century, to counteract or subvert the conventional Cinderella tale that had dominated English-language picture books for the previous century.

    In particular, this subset of "ugly" Cinderella picture books undermines the beauty imperative at the heart of Perrault's tale by

portraying Cinderellas who are drawn as crude cartoons or as abstract, even distorted, versions of the human form.   Although these covers depict the same iconic moments in the story as appear on more traditionally "pretty" covers, they invite a reading of the story that is more humorous than romantic or magical, which again works to downplay the beauty-is-paramount message of Perrault's tale.   These "ugly" covers also reflect broader artistic trends toward increasing abstraction, simplification, stylization, and caricature.

This child-like pictorial style intersects with another trend in Cinderella's cover depictions that may suggest an important move in the construction and marketing of Cinderella to little girls: a small but growing shift toward representing Cinderella as a child (for examples, see Figures 9 and 10).   Throughout the twentieth century, Cinderella was occasionally depicted as a pre-adolescent child, but, until 1990, these child Cinderellas appeared on two or fewer books per decade.   The number of child Cinderellas began to rise in the 1990s and 2000s, however, and in the 2010s, the child Cinderella was depicted on more than a quarter of covers. This upswing in the frequency of child Cinderellas may be one approach to "selling" Cinderella to younger and younger children.

On one hand, the child Cinderellas since 1990 often take the form of "ugly" Cinderellas produced in a cartoonish or child-like drawing style. Indeed, half the child-like Cinderellas in the 1990s, all in the 2000s, and over slightly over half in the 2010s fall into this category.   These "ugly" child Cinderellas may be perceived by children as characters they themselves could have drawn, so that the pleasure they offer may be a sense of "ownership" of the Cinderella tale and of Cinderella herself, suggesting experiences of Cinderella as a form of coloring play. Moreover, many of the books with "ugly" Cinderella covers are board books, targeted toward very young children, or early readers that sometimes include instructions for parents to follow in sharing the books with their children.   While the crudeness and simplicity of the cover

illustrations on the board books arguably reflects the common belief that very small children relate best to pictures made up of basic shapes and containing little detail, the use of "ugly" Cinderellas in books specifically designed for parents helping their children learn to read suggests a belief in the desirability of downplaying Cinderella's physical beauty (even when it remains an element in the text) for five- and six-year-old girls.

On the other hand, when these child Cinderellas are portrayed as attractive and appealing (as they often are) in the same manner as more mature Cinderellas published during the same time period, they offer young children the same pleasures of "prettiness" and identification with an idealized image. Making these idealized images appear closer in age to the young readers themselves offers the possibility that this sense of identification may be more immediate and intense. Thus, the most significant aspect of both the "ugly" and the pretty child Cinderellas of recent decades is that they are, in fact, *children* and not adolescents. In this small but growing percentage of Cinderella books, Cinderella is her readers' peer – someone they could *be.* And with only a handful of exceptions, this is a phenomenon that began in the late twentieth century and is occurring more often as the twenty-first century progresses.

Thus, our results reveal a continuous and arguably intensifying emphasis on female beauty and display in books that, in recent decades, have increasingly invited younger and younger readers to delight in visual pleasure and to identify with Cinderella. The growth in this trend in recent years reflects shifts in the market to which children picture books are pitched. In children's publishing, the primary markets for trade house picture books – those that, often in hardback with dust jackets, sell for $15.00 to $20.00 in today's bookstores – were originally libraries and schools, venues which favored books that offered children pleasure of an "elevated" or educational nature; a second type of children's book publishing, occurring simultaneously, was the inexpensive parental-impulse buy, introduced in the 1940s with Western Publishing's Little

Golden Book at a price of $.25.   In the 1980s, following severe cutbacks in funding for schools and libraries, the primary market for all children's publishing became parents, a shift which coincided with the baby boom generation's becoming parents and with an increasing cultural emphasis, particularly among the American middle class, on the value of early childhood learning (Marcus).   Thus, on one hand, the continuing dominance of "prettiness" in Cinderella covers since the 1980s suggests that this is the manner of presentation of greatest appeal to parents and grandparents who buy books for children.   At the same time, of course, such buying practices are likely to be self-perpetuating; if these are the books little girls are given, they may well become the books little girls desire.   Indeed, the fit of these books within the "princess culture" being marketed to little girls in recent years suggests that, even if adults buy these Cinderella books, the books' primary market today, and hence the market to which their visual appeal is directed, are the girl readers themselves.

Moreover, these books, particularly in the trend toward representing Cinderella as a child, also promote the sense of identification at the heart of today's "princess culture," especially as conceptualized by Disney.   As the company's first foray into selling merchandise separately from a movie release, Disney's princess line sells little girls the *experience* of being a Disney princess; its originator, Disney executive Andy Mooney explains that "all we did was envision a little girl's room and think about how she could live out the princess fantasy" (16).   Moreover, this line consists of both products (e.g., costumes and accessories, dolls and figurines, books and DVDs, backpacks and school supplies) and experiences for girls lucky enough to actually travel into Disney territory. For example, one Disney World attraction is the Bibbidi Bobbidi Boutique, where, for fees ranging from $55 to $195, little girls are treated to princess "makeovers," being dressed up – and made up – as their favorite Disney princess.   Casual observation indicates that most girls

choose to become Cinderella, but whichever princess a young girl selects to be "turned into," the Boutique *experience* is one that, in her fairy tale, no princess but Cinderella has: that of being transformed from an "ordinary" girl to a princess. Moreover, that transformation is accomplished solely through appearance – through the donning of shiny, glittery *splendor* that automatically and instantaneously makes the little girl someone not only beautiful above all others but *special.*

This growing "princess" culture marketed to little girls, in fact, is reflected most strongly in – and is simultaneously promoted by – the cumulative shift in recent decades in Cinderella book covers from depicting Cinderella in story moments where she is dressed in rags – sitting in the ashes, performing housework, first encountering her fairy godmother, trying on the glass slipper – to those where she is clad in her ball gown splendor – experiencing the transformation of her rags into the ball gown, dancing with the prince, running away from the ball. This transition suggests a fundamental change in Cinderella's intended role in her readers' lives. The very first books published for children date to the late seventeenth century and were primers, intended for both scholastic and moral instruction. As Joyce Irene Whalley and Tessa Rose Chester demonstrate, children's books throughout the eighteenth century retained a strongly didactic character. Even when London publisher John Newbery and Boston publisher Isaiah Thomas introduced children's books designed to amuse in the 1740s and the 1780s, respectively, the belief that reading should be fun was accompanied with the intent that it should also instruct (Marcus). As we have seen, Perrault intended Cinderella to serve as an exemplar for the ladies of the French nobility, and the Victorian choice of Perrault's Cinderella over all others stemmed from her value as a role model for middle-class children. Thus, it is likely that Cinderella's frequent appearance in humble rags on the covers of books published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflects, at least in part, a general cultural belief in the virtues she exhibited: patience and

forbearance in the face of injustice, hard work and diligence in contrast to sloth, and uncomplaining endurance of undeserved hardship.

Another appeal of this imagery, which may explain its continuing use on Cinderella covers to the present day, is cultural attachment to the underdog tale; this is the appeal of being unfairly persecuted, albeit with the implicit, certain promise of ultimately being vindicated, rewarded, and acclaimed. But while put-upon characters in other popular culture vanquish their oppressors through their own ingenuity, talent, and effort, Cinderella's triumph is simply bestowed upon her, a reward for her having put up with mistreatment without protesting or taking any action on her own behalf.

With the late-twentieth-century shift to an average of nearly three-quarters of picture-book covers depicting Cinderella in her ball gown, something different is being celebrated, and a new message is being communicated to the books' readers. The growing emphasis in these covers is no longer on the behavior for which Cinderella is rewarded; rather, the focus is now on the reward she receives. Interestingly, despite the oft-expressed critique of Cinderella as a character who passively waits for the prince to save her, the covers in this data set do not present the prince as that reward; he is, in fact, a minimal presence overall. The prince does not appear on any covers until the 1920s, and he appears in 10% or fewer of covers in each decade thereafter. Thus, Cinderella covers increasingly suggest that, rather than the prince, Cinderella's reward is the splendor itself: a beautiful dress, by which the heroine is made the object of attention and admiration.

This recent dominance of Cinderella in her ball gown splendor, even on covers in which Cinderella herself is depicted as "ugly" or funny-looking, is a continuation of the long-standing ideal of the feminine as an object on display, what Laura Mulvey has defined as the quality of to-be-looked-at-ness. At the same time, however, existing within and contributing to broader "princess" marketing to young girls, it invites

identification with that feminine object, offering not only the pleasurable viewing of splendor but the pleasurable desire to *experience* it.

Hence the particular significance of the growing popularity of one subset of the "splendor" images on Cinderella picture-book covers: that of the "gown transformation," a story event that was not one of the core iconic illustration images previously identified by scholars.   This is a moment that did not appear on book covers until 1910, and it was featured only on an average of 15% of covers from the 1910s through the 1960s and on no covers at all during the 1970s and '80s.   However, it has averaged a *full quarter* of books published since 1990.   It is second only to Cinderella running away from the ball in its frequency during this time period.   What these particular covers sell to little girls is Cinderella's *transformation* – from the downtrodden to the elevated, from the shabby and plain to the glorious and extraordinary. This emphasis reflects the popularity of the transformation or makeover narrative, as seen in such popular reality TV shows as "What Not to Wear" or "How Do I Look?" which promise to transform a woman's life with the new hairstyle, make-up, and wardrobe that turn her from an ugly duckling into a swan. Moreover, the magical transformation of Cinderella's appearance – which is, of course, the magical transformation of her fate as well – represents the current popularity of "lottery" thinking: the desire for immediate riches and gratification without having to work for them. This emphasis on Cinderella's magical splendor is consistent as well with other manifestations of a narcissistic turn in popular culture, as demonstrated, for example, in reality TV shows such as "Toddlers and Tiaras," where girls as young as two or three are "glitzed up" with make-up, false eyelashes, hair pieces, and elaborate, flouncy dresses to become "little princesses," and "Say Yes to the Dress," where, surely not coincidentally, brides shopping for wedding dresses often express a desire to "be a princess" on their wedding day or self-identify as "princesses" in their everyday life.

The transformations of the Cinderella book covers examined here, particularly in the years since 1990, both demonstrate and contribute to this siren's call to become a princess. The call of Cinderella picture books in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to emulate Cinderella in her virtuous qualities. Today, the call is to *be* Cinderella – to be a beautiful blond Cinderella in a gorgeous pink ball gown. Moreover, it is a call being made to younger and younger girls, and one Orenstein suggests they are taking up to the exclusion of all others (22). And despite alternative and cultural diverse retellings of the Cinderella story available to girls in books other than those examined here – even despite artistic efforts within this data set to make Cinderella appear ordinary or funny-looking – the continuing and repeated appearance on "traditional" Cinderella covers of her splendiferous transformation and the visual dominance of her dazzling, "sparkilicious" finery indicate a solid entrenchment of this fairy-tale dream, one cemented in place by the potent combination of cultural appeal and marketing savvy.

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Figure 1: Rags Cinderella Cover, 1888

Figure 2: Rags Cinderella Cover, 1915
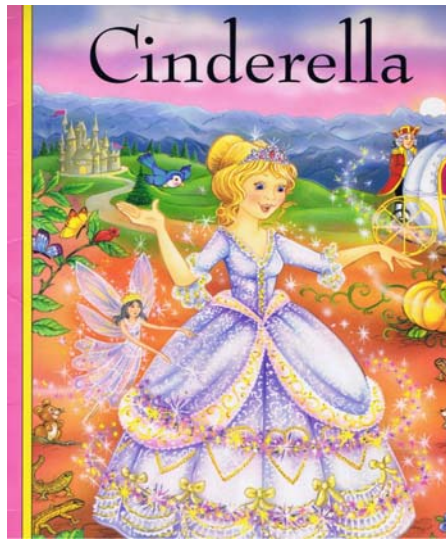
Figure 3: Splendor Cinderella Cover, 2004
© The Book Company Publishing Pty Ltd.

Figure 4: Splendor Cinderella Cover, 2013

Figure 5: Pretty Cinderella Cover, 1954
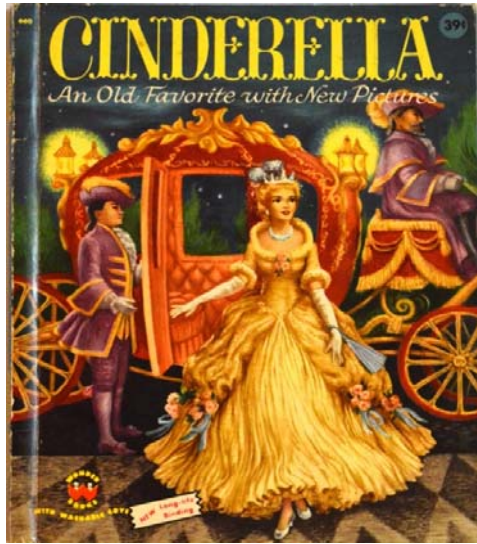*Cinderella: An Old Favorite with New Pictures* by Evelyn Andreas and
Ruth Ives. Used by permission of Penguin Group (USA) LLC. All rights
reserved.

Figure 6: Pretty Cinderella Cover, 2000

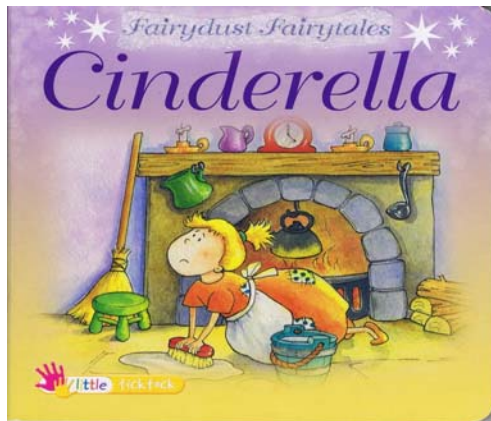**Figure 7:** "Ugly" Cinderella Cover, 2007

Figure 8: "Ugly" Cinderella Cover, 2009
© ticktock Media Ltd

Figure 9: Child Cinderella, 2012

Figure 10: Child Cinderella, 2012

Appendix A: Percentage of Iconic Images Used on Covers per Decade

	Ashes	Work	Gown	Carriage	Ball	Stairs	Shoe	Happy After	Pumpkin	Portrait
1800-1860		100%								
1860s	50%								50%	
1870s	50%						50%			
1880s	40%	20%					20%		20%	
1890s	12%	6%		29%		18%	24%		6%	
1900s	33%	33%		17%					17%	
1910s	38%	12%	12%	12%					25%	
1920s	6%		12%	12%	6%	6%	13%	6%	37%	
1930s	50%		17%		8%	8%			8%	8%
1940s	18%	18%	14%	5%	9%	23%			5%	9%
1950s	8%	15%	15%	31%	15%	15%				
1960s	33%	13%	20%	7%	7%			13%		
1970s	28%	5%			5%	14%	19%	5%	5%	
1980s	13%	17%		7%	3%	23%	7%	7%	10%	7%
1990s	5%	10%	29%	3%	5%	24%	3%	8%	8%	5%
2000s	2%	12%	19%	12%	12%	27%	2%	2%	10%	2%
2010s	8%	3%	27%	5%	5%	41%		3%	5%	3%
Total	**14%**	**10%**	**15%**	**9%**	**8%**	**20%**	**5%**	**3%**	**10%**	**3%**

Appendix B: Percentage of Cinderella's Ages on Covers by Decade.

Decade	Child	Teen	Young Lady
1800-1889			100%
1890s		28%	72%
1900s	17%	17%	66%
1910s	22%	11%	67%
1920s	13%	53%	33%
1930s	15%	31%	54%
1940s	4%	8%	87.5%
1950s			100%
1960s	12.5%	6%	81%
1970s	9%	4%	87%
1980s	7%	10%	83%
1990s	10%	7%	83%
2000s	15%	7%	78%
2010s	25.5%	13%	61.5%
TOTAL	**11.5%**	**12%**	**76.5%**

Appendix C: Rags and Splendor Cinderellas by Decade

	Total percentage of decade in rags	Total percentage of decade in splendor
1800-1889	100%	
1890s	57%	43%
1900s	100%	
1910s	71%	29%
1920s	56%	44%
1930s	50%	50%
1940s	48%	52%
1950s	17%	83%
1960s	60%	40%
1970s	59%	41%
1980s	59%	41%
1990s	34%	66%
2000s	25%	75%
2010s	19%	81%
Total	**44%**	**56%**

Appendix D: Number of Books by Decade

Decade	#of Books
1800s	1
1810s	1
1820s	2
1860s	1
1870s	3
1880s	6
1890s	18
1900s	6
1910s	9
1920s	15
1930s	13
1940s	24
1950s	12
1960s	16
1970s	23
1980s	30
1990s	41
2000s	54
2010s	39
Total	**315**