Poetics of the Fairy Tale Princess: Products, Problems, & Possibilities

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Abstract: In the following paper, the authors analyze the prevalence of princess culture in the literature, film, and visual culture of young people. The authors, an art educator, art historian, and professor of English literature, propose creative interventions through alternative resources and readings. Focusing on foundations of media studies and literature of Fairy-Tale Studies and girlhood studies, this interdisciplinary collaboration investigates complex creative predicaments of girlhood and princess media. Utilizing Princess Aurora and *Sleeping Beauty* as a case study and focal point, the authors discuss their collaborative arts research intended to explore problems and possibilities of princess culture.

Keywords: Art Education; Arts Research; Fairy Tales; Media Studies; Princesses.

Introduction: Secret Project Princess

As we were growing up, my younger sister was fixated on the Disney princess Ariel, from *The Little Mermaid*. Though my older sister and I did not enjoy the many repeated viewings of the 1989 film, we observed and came to share her particular fascination with Ariel's shimmering "trove [of] treasures untold." More interesting than the trappings of her eventual ascension to princess in the human world via marriage to a prince, this cache of collections was a dazzling installation of antiques and mundane objects curated according to an adolescent girl's vision and experiences. I now see this secret cavern as having potential as a crucial monument to creative play (such as Ariel's imaginings about the collected objects and their uses). At the same time, many of these treasured objects remain untold, leaving questions about collecting, consumption, and creativity for the shrewd viewer.

My own favorite princess was Princess Aurora or Sleeping Beauty. She too had many precious objects from film (2003) and fairy tale (2013) alike. Her dresses play a central role in marking her status outside of the castle disguised as a commoner, and within it as a royal bride. Aurora also is almost inseparable from the evil fairy's menacing spindle, which draws Aurora into slumber. Further, she is associated with the deep red rose, and the thorns that overtake her castle while she dreams.

What are the true treasures and lurking lessons of princesses that linger in the background? If princesses as wives are especially levied as a form of prize or treasure in central narratives of fairy tales, as we (the authors) have observed in this research, how might the treasured collections

of princesses in their royal rooms, beautiful satchels/purses or secret gardens, represent potential for resistance and subversion of those princesses' objectification? As an art educator, I have collaborated with an art historian colleague, Dr. Carlee Bradbury, and with Dr. Jaime Weida, a professor of English literature (and my sister) as co-authors, in order to explore some of the troubles and treasures of princess media in the interdisciplinary context of images and narratives from world myth, fables, and film/television.

More recently, with our daughters and nieces approaching preschool and kindergarten, my colleagues and I found that the prevalence of princess material culture was unavoidable at birthday parties and playgrounds. At times, the preoccupation surrounding us seems to call out for attention not only as parents, but also as researchers. As Forman-Brunell and Hains (2015) have noted "princesses are *everywhere* there are girls" (p. xi). As educators, we observe the pervasiveness of princess culture from various media in classrooms: from the persistent Disney Princess trio of *Snow White* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950)*,* and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), to the more recent slender version of *Shrek*'s (2001) princess Fiona (as opposed to the impossible-to-purchase ogre Fiona). Furthermore, the princess products for *Frozen's* Elsa and Ana are even blonder and more impossibly thin than in the 2013 film. Meanwhile, Asian American actress, Diana Huey has even recently faced backlash for accepting a starring role in the Disney musical version of *The Little Mermaid* (Khoo, 2017). Similarly, the African-American actor Halle Bailey, one of the stars of *Grownish* (the spin-off show from *Blackish*) has just been announced as playing Ariel in the live-action version of *The Little Mermaid.* Much of the popular response has been sadly predictable, with some fans refusing to accept a woman of color in the starring role (Wilkinson, 2019). Everywhere, Disney princesses introduce particular versions of fairy tales that are stylistically recognizable and often contain tropes of specific narratives about race and culture, women's bodies, and romantic relationships, which we investigate further in this paper.

While many young people are drawn (or directed) to princesses and their power, scholars (Harries, 2004; Orenstein, 2001; Solino, 2002) are repulsed by the privilege, oppressive pinkness, and furthering of sexist ideals of girlhood often accompanying princess narratives and media. Thinkers like Einstein apparently recommended the reading of fairy tales to cultivate children's intelligence (Zipes, 1979), and writer Alice Hoffman extols the emotional depth of fairy tales (Siciliano, 2011). However, many contemporary versions of princesses stemming from folklore can be problematic, in our reading. For example, my collaborators and I worried about sexism and racism in the visual culture of princesses for both our young relatives and for our students at the college level.

Research Methodology: Arts Research, Media Analysis, and Fairy-Tale Studies

As we researched princesses, our intent was to explore and promote feminist approaches and themes to reading, viewing, and contributing to princess culture across time periods and cultures. Specifically, we were guided by the work of Forman-Brunell and Eaton (2009), which contextualizes the contemporary princess as "a figure of discourse that has played an important role in the production of knowledge and the construction of truths about girls" (p. 340). We pursued this arts collaboration for us to investigate princess depictions and theorize, where possible, their potential for reconceptualization and redemption in art education contexts. We set out to examine problems and possibilities of princesses as a media icon for young people, from representations in fairy tales and legends to contemporary animated films and television shows.

As an interdisciplinary group from art education, art history, and English Literature with a shared interest in gender studies and media studies, we aim to look critically at popular media

originating from Andersen, the Grimms, and others. As children's literature theorist Trites (1997) writes, we hope to help "revise gender stereotypes in fairy tales [and other princess media] and to replace them with more complex versions" (p. 141). Within our collaboration, we specifically aim to locate, (re)create and transform other tales, histories, and images of princesses that offer sought-after elements of fantasy, freedom, strength, and beauty without those subtle messages about body image restrictions, heteronormativity, race misrepresentation, and "good" female behavior. Thus, this paper documents our examination of visual culture, media analysis, and the (re)creation of princess symbols and stories. Our goal is for educators, families, and students to acknowledge, reclaim, and revise princess figures from several time periods and cultures as feminist icons. This endeavor builds upon the premise that fairy tales and fables about princesses were once meant to educate and entertain youth, and they can continue to do so in myriad emerging formats (for better or for worse).

      As part of our inquiry, we created a Pinterest board (a socially-networked visual collection of images, much like a digital bulletin board) as a form of pilot research to address female illustrators' representations of the princess of *Sleeping Beauty,* that can be accessed here: https://www.pinterest.com/c0urtneylee/sleeping-beauty-illustrations/).
We also analyzed teaching and learning resources, ranging from alternative fairy tales and princess narratives to craft projects and artworks representing histories and legacies of princesses around the world. Such efforts have been characterized by scholars, such as Donald Haase (2004), as recovery work to "resurrect women's fairy tales . . . in other cultural contexts and with the work of disregarded women writers" (p. 30). As many valuable, educative projects illuminating princesses have gotten lost in the tangle of social media (like Rapunzel's abundant hair, or perhaps a needle in a digital haystack not unlike Rumpelstiltskin's proverbial one), we hope to highlight these resources and to help them find a wider audience. As Harvard folklorist Maria Tatar (2014) asserts:

> With their witches and woods, roses and thorns, golden balls and slimy suitors, fairy tales create shimmering visuals, verbal icons—sleeping beauties, skulls decorated with flowers, homicidal birds with jewel-encrusted plumage—that oblige us to 'think more' and 'think harder.' (p. 149)

      It is not simple work to reframe and refocus a genre that is so pervasively encroaching on children through princess-laden consumer products, commercials, and popular movie franchises. We encountered a great deal of unexpected questions and imagery to analyze, detailed in the following sections.

Princess Themes: Picturing Princesses
      Tracing threads of princesses through books and into earlier histories, we might examine historic themes from former princesses such as Catherine the Great (1729-1796), who became authors of fairy tales meant to educate young children. Female authorship and representation of female characters in folklore are often linked (Ragan, 2009), making princess stories particularly meaningful for young women as future writers and artists. Meanwhile, a Shakespearean princess depiction like Imogen (from the play, *Cymbeline),* stands out as a defiant, strong, and calm woman who dons men's clothes to escape problems of sexism and assume more power and autonomy within a male identity. Imogen is also re-written into George Bernard Shaw's short play, *Cymbeline Refinished* (1937), as an even more assertive and feminist figure. Context like this can serve to engage educators, parents, and children in the power of princess stories and histories in creating rare possibilities for representation, re-telling, and reflection. Specifically, women spread

their knowledge over the course of geographies and generations through the lore of princesses, revising other narratives.

Some fairy tales may be seen as equally educative and problematic, as they often convey female passivity to young female readers through illustrations (Kukkonen, 2013). Meanwhile, new possibilities can arise from more contemporary female illustrators we researched and collected in a digital format through our aforementioned Pinterest board available here: https://www.pinterest.com/c0urtneylee/sleeping-beauty-illustrations/. These artists figured complexly as author-illustrator, adapting tales of "evil stepmothers, enabling fathers, and even more murderous parental stand-ins such as witches, ogres, goblins, and giants" (Handy, 2017, p. 28). Such artistic and literary roles subversively can even restore the maternal figure as a creative and generative force to a space of stories that notoriously have removed women's parental influence.

In our ongoing research project, we also compared and contrasted physical volumes of fairy tales and newer digital formats for fairy tales such as fairy tale comics and fractured fairy tales viewed on tablets. We considered the artist book a useful icon, both a recurring visual element and enduring feminist symbol associated with fairy tales. As medieval princesses were constantly depicted physically with their books, tween and teen girls are now consistently engaged with their own reading devices (smartphones, tablets, and the like). Both the print and digital text technologies facilitate communication through the conveying and receiving of information that determines social norms and ideals. We also explored the role of male authority and patriarchal power over this information that ultimately shapes the idea of princess as role model. If the icon of the fairy tale book or text is often inseparable from the often-male narrator and frequently silent princess, newer versions can reconfigure this arrangement with more varied voices and visions. In examining a continuum of fairy tales, we wanted to reclaim the agency of girls, through education based on critical thinking: in reading time-honored books and interpreting newer narratives and images through other media according to their own understanding of what they have encountered.

Along these lines, questioning contemporary popular culture is not always the same as condemning it. We recognized that our own penchant for pretty and popular, yet often independent and strong television princesses, like those of the animated series: *She-Ra, Princess of Power* (1985-1987) as children led to a sustained interest in women warriors of other media.[1] Along such lines of inquiry, artists and educators might work through issues of cultural transmission, consumption, and critical literacy with a playful sense of interconnections. As literary historian Elizabeth Wanning Harries (2004) notes, "fairy tales provide scripts for living, but they also can inspire resistance to those scripts" (p. 103). Specifically, we might creatively address popular culture as part of art and humanities education, as but one of several source materials available in the reading, making, and resisting of all kinds of images and narratives. In this way, a single flawed film fairy tale representation need not be a dominant nor a definitive source in art education.

Related Research: Preceding Princess Projects

Our project draws on a wide variety of similar projects as resources (outlined in this section) and builds upon the vast and varied legacy of Fairy-Tale Studies and princess scholarship in order to help inform the lives and choices of parents, educators, and young women themselves. While sponsored content promoting products around princesses is widely available online and other works serve to critique princess culture and folk tales alike in favor of fine art and literature,

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[1] Remixes and remakes are increasingly prevalent, with new contemporary retellings of princess-related media like She-Ra or Wonder Woman emerging in recent years.

our project serves to alternatively acknowledge, critique, and revise princess figures in myriad sources for the purpose of feminist art and humanities education. We reviewed and categorized artistic projects, books, artworks, articles, websites, and other resources that reclaim and revise princesses. Initial examples that inspired us include such works as:

- Queen Latifah's (2006) *Queen of the Scene* children's book that details the accomplishments of a proud and multitalented young girl;
- Linnea Johansson's (2015) *Super Strong Princesses*, a guerrilla art coloring book that re-envisions princesses as composite "witch" figures to inspire young readers;
- Journalist Peggy Orenstein's (2011) research on the pervasiveness of princess culture in girlhood culture, and in her own daughter's life.

Scholarship and primary sources from Latin American, Spanish, African, and other world fairy tales and fables featuring princesses were also highly influential, such as Anna Maria Moix's (1997) *Dangerous Virtues*, which describes a fairy tale world in which princesses are aware of and resent being read, and are able to reform and revise themselves from their fairy tale origins (such that Aurora relishes coffee in lieu of slumber and spins beautifully without pricking herself).

In the digital realm, a website and active Facebook group, both called *Rejected Princesses*, chronicles illustration work highlighting alternative princesses, often real people and people of color. A YouTube search of the word "Disney" yields countless unexpected juxtapositions of licensed princess characters in alternative relationships and with altered plots and language that reconfigure the existing narratives. One educative example is found in Eric Faden's 2007 review of copyright definitions, *A Fair(y) Use Tale*, which uses selected clips from Disney films to demonstrate and explain ways in which artistic work and ideas can be used and shared by educators and artists without violating copyright law. These projects speak to the importance of narrative and artistry that is part and parcel of the fairy tale tradition, engaging artists, writers, and young people in artistic, literary, and social contexts beyond the caricatures of pretty princesses.

Our research sources included new media and traditional library-based resources from art history, literature, film studies, and gender theory to contextualize princess narratives. With the enduring persistence of princess culture and emerging films and other media that signal both patriarchal problems and new possibilities, we felt that our project was necessary beyond our own personal interests. We believe that fellow parents and educators sometimes need assistance, inspiration, and support in dealing with the dangers of princess culture. We aimed to collect, curate, and concretize theorizing of the princess through our collaboration. Others whose work takes up a similar charge are included among our resources. For example, documentary films from the Media Education Foundation such as   critically examine, among other issues, children's concerns about the problematic romantic relationships of Disney films like *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), in which the treatment of Belle by the Beast is nearly abusive and her eventual love for him recalls Stockholm Syndrome response demonstrated by hostages. So too, the sacrifice of Ariel's voice and body in my sister's beloved *The Little Mermaid* film for the pursuit of a romantic relationship is troubling. Gender studies readers can observe threads of voice throughout several fairy tales, as young women sacrifice a great deal to become princesses, with the focus on restrictions of feet and movement (from Cinderella's mislaid shoe to Ariel's lost mermaid tail, and the loss of mermaid royal status suggested in the Disney adaptation). Silencing someone's voice can mean silencing that person's agency. It is no coincidence that, especially in the early Disney princess films like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Cinderella,* the most prevalent use of the heroine's voice is to beautifully sing about their desire for love and a prince to "rescue" them.

Compounding these questions of corporeality and social status are new issues brought to bear by gender studies, intersectional feminism, and our contemporary remix culture that we hope to illuminate. For example, a rich educational discussion of Cinderella could include not only the 1950 animated film and multiple live-action remake works, but also fairy tales and folk tale versions from Germany, Asia, and other cultures around the world, increasingly available through physical and digital archives. So too, we can consider the Snow Queen with some reference to the princesses of the film *Frozen*, and we can discuss the LGBTQ+++ social media movement on Twitter, #GiveElsaaGirlfriend[2]. Meanwhile, *Sleeping Beauty* might be examined not only in terms of the painstaking artistry of Eyvind Earle for the 1959 Disney film, but also the splendor of Tchaikovsky's classic ballet, which revealed both French and Russian influences and includes an unusual number of parts for female dancers. Our project aims to give specialized voice and space to these and related social and gender issues of princesses for discussion in classrooms and other educational settings, cataloguing artistic themes and creative possibilities.

Peering at the Princess: Problems and Possibilities

Certainly, fairy tale princesses span nearly all cultures and time periods, engaging many art forms in myriad representations. However, as noted by Maria Elena Solino (2002), a researcher of Spanish Fairy tales, "Because of their huge international audiences, the Walt Disney Studio . . . can be considered the most influential disseminators of all times, and in this role they have continued to maintain a status quo that remains essentially sexist and racist" (p. 28). To address this enduring predicament in the princess paradigm of mainstream media, our research explored several creative approaches to engage alternative visions and dialogues. Scholarship pertinent to our interdisciplinary work includes overlapping and intersecting areas of gender studies and girlhood studies in terms of princess products, art history and visual culture studies pertaining to children's books and illustrations, and fairy-tale studies that contextualized the various narratives and retellings of princess tales.

In terms of princess problems in popular culture, we observed that many young people viewed princesses as the only path to real magical powers in story and film. This trend is present in fairy tales and extends to Princess Ozma in the fictional *Land of Oz* (1907), who eventually crowns series protagonist Dorothy Gale a princess, to Burnett's (1905) *A Little Princess*. Even with recent works set in spaces of fantasy like the *Harry Potter* book series (1997-2007), the magical female characters are often secondary to the powerful and central male heroes and villains. For example, Hermione is bright and capable, but arguably mostly involved with magic and power by her association and usefulness to (the nearly royal) celebrity of Harry in the witching world. In examining princesses from such popular media, we were inspired by the scholarship of girlhood theorists like Rebecca Hains (2004) in her handbook and analysis of princess problems in popular media, and Miriam Forman-Brunell and Julie Eaton (2009) who contextualize possibilities of princesses imagined in children's lives and play as "graceful" yet "gritty." We hoped to further investigate what the princess has been and could be(come).

Some princess figures generally show some combination of girlish beauty and femininity paired with a particular sense of power and a catalogue of accomplishments not always present in non-princess stories about girls. Recognizing this balance is important to us, to reveal the complexities of identity and achievement in the face of shallow princess representations. Lamb and Brown's (2007) analysis of the pervasive sexualization and commodification of princess

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[2] Along the same lines, a recent retelling of *Little Red Riding Hood* presents a same sex couple in Hulu's first animated kids' short: *Rosaline* (2016).

culture and products marketed to girls inspired this princess-related project. Concerns against commodifying and fetishizing girlhood, gender, and culture provided inspiration and context for this work as well, by focusing on countering the problems of princesses, and trying to tap into the feminist potential of critiquing and revising popular media topics.

Case Study: Sleeping Beauty as Passive Princess vs. the Subversive Spindle

   With a view for feminist fairy tales and creative revisions, we hope to encourage richer dialogues and recreations, through the promotion of alternative resources and nuanced readings of the more pervasive major films and fairy tales within homes and schools. We chose to focus on one princess-related fairy tale: *Sleeping Beauty*, with an analysis of various children's book versions and related resources, shown in *Figure 1*. Our focus was also guided by the notion that *Sleeping Beauty* may be viewed as emblematic of elements of many other (indeed, almost every other) fairy tales: an enchanted frog like *The Princess and the Frog*, the rescue from peril by a prince as in *Cinderella*, the ever-present witch/evil sorceress akin to the evil queen of *Snow White*, and even a monstrous and devouring stand-in mother/witch whose appetite mirrors the antagonist to Hansel and Gretel.
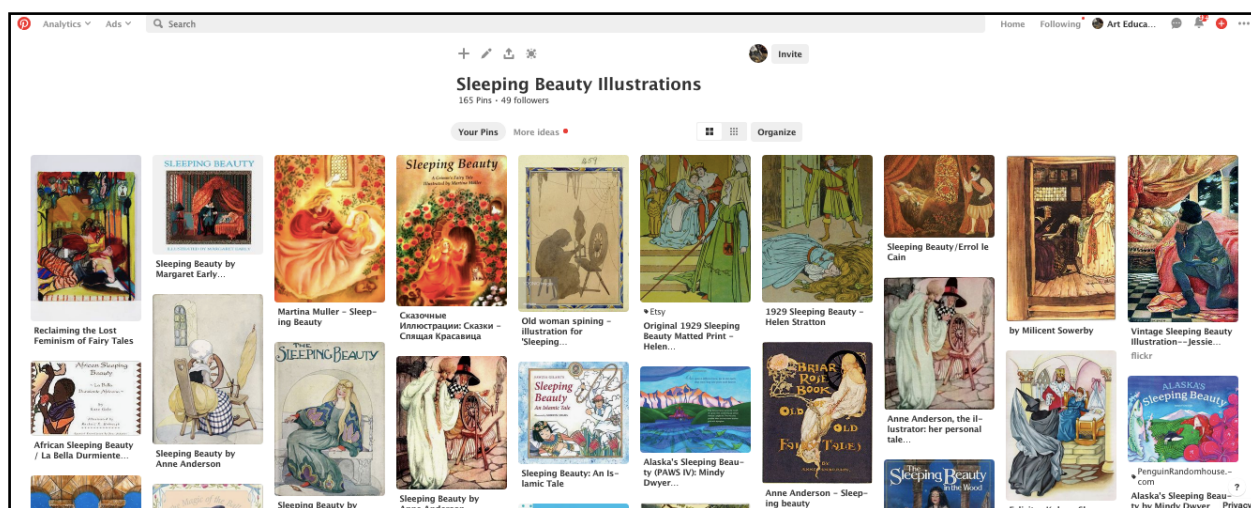

Figure 1. Screenshot of Pinterest board created by the authors focusing on *Sleeping Beauty* illustrations by women.

Women at the Wheel – Spinning Tales and Tapestries

   As Bruce Handy (2017) observes, there exists "a whole world of fairy tales from other continents" (p. 46). Disney films might be examined more closely alongside these other representations of women. Upon close inspection of the Disney version of *Sleeping Beauty*, it becomes apparent that the spindle itself has been transformed and/or misunderstood, as the part of the spindle Aurora seems to touch would not have even been sharp (https://followingthebreadcrumbtrails.wordpress.com/2015/01/06/spindles-arent-sharp/). Perhaps this oversight during an earlier point in history underscores the lost matriarchal influences not only on the craft of spinning itself, but also of powerful females who figure alongside weaving practices

throughout fairy tales and folklore.[3] From Rumpelstiltskin and the girl who became a princess for spinning straw into gold, to Arachne and goddess Minerva's spinning and weaving contest, to the female fates spinning threads of life, spinning was important and metaphorical practice. Given these thread-like references, the dark fairy Malificent's prowess in spinning not only thread, but spells is of great interest. Further, Aurora is drawn to the spindle as well, with its metaphorical threads of plot that threaten the entire structure of the kingdoms (namely her impending marriage and consolidation of power) both symbolically and literally.

It becomes particularly illuminating to remember that Aurora was gifted in all the arts by the good fairies, along with the curse of the evil fairy that is inseparable from the spinning wheel and its craft. This mixed blessing, among other implications, reminds us of the innate dangers of the arts themselves. Those tools of the arts have the abilities to bring both incredible beauty (Aurora's singing and dancing) as well as harm (the sharpness of the irresistible spinning wheel and other technologies that result in human injury). But the spinning wheel could also be seen to represent the perils of forgetting those wilder and essential arts of women in the past. Somewhat like the goddess Persephone, Aurora is secreted away from the kingdom at birth, and separated from family, birthplace, and tradition. The spinning wheel becomes her only real connection to her origins, to the history of her people, and perhaps to the symbolic garments and tapestries of women throughout history. The spinning wheel is paradoxically the precursor to Aurora's immersion in the life of her prince husband, but perhaps it can also be the key to agency for Aurora, connecting her with her own particular past and with possibilities of women throughout time.

We must consider the spinning wheel not only as a symbol of tradition, but also as a real technological tool for its time. In addition, as readers recall that the king banishes all spinning wheels, this plot detail reveals that he also denied his people an important tool in making thread. What then are the connections of Aurora's spinning wheel with symbols, technologies, and toys today? The LEGO company produces a girl-themed *Sleeping Beauty* play set that interestingly includes the iconic bed and the spinning wheel. Perusal of parent ratings of the toy online include reminiscences of their daughters acting out the moment of being pricked by the spindle and the resulting period of slumber. Educators and parents might critique the pinkness and implied passivity of these products, yet it is also possible to reclaim the centrality of women's objects of craft, for they also reposition the female player as narrator and director of *Sleeping Beauty*. This important distinction leads to those hundreds of Sleeping Beauty-themed phone and tablet applications (apps) that take the place of traditions of fairy tale books and fables told orally. Certainly, these apps reflect themes of consumption (purchasing products, buying objects within games, etc.), but they also can reconcile the medium with myriad messages about making that the female reader/user might interpret and revise.

The slumber of Aurora also can be related to menstruation, with her symbolic bleeding caused by the spindle and the periods of repose and turning inward, or to the strange feminine power of birth and death (Tatar, 2014). In this vein, works like Angela Carter and Michael Foreman's 1992 vampiric *Sleeping Beauty* or related macabre yet feminist narratives like Tim Burton's, *The Corpse Bride* (2012), might be considered. Within such broadened scopes of varied Aurora representations and revisions, one can theorize that along with her gifts of the arts, Aurora's long years of dreaming could constitute a creative, imaginative, and powerfully womanly exercise. Seifert (2015) even offers a queer analysis of Charles Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty* text, in which the

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[3] A website called the Ph.D. Princess additionally investigates Aurora's slumber scientifically, exploring the botanical origins of the spindle as a belladonna laced arrow or her slumber as caused by other plot possibilities that imperiled Aurora's health: https://phdprincess.com/2018/02/20/sleeping-death/

sweet dreams of Aurora's slumber and her extraordinary ability to live out her youth in separate centuries offers incredible opportunities. The princess' slumber, rather than rendering her the most passive damsel in distress, instead postpones the convention of marriage and allows her to be reborn into the future and a potential new role as partner, parent, and ruler/queen. Aurora is lovingly tended to by fairies and roams about (even in her pre-slumber days) in a somewhat dreamlike state (Condis, 2015). The incident with the spindle represents her entrée into work in some regards, if not the labors of spinning thread, at least those of becoming a wife and mother. Importantly, as particularly highlighted by the Indian folktale of Sleeping Beauty, entitled *The Petrified Mansion* (1920), Aurora's family and power are also preserved almost as if her kingdom becomes a community of time travelers. Such possibilities and the balancing of tradition and innovation, original text and feminist reading, and media image and artist reclamation are central to the work we hope to aid with our research.

Re-presentations of Sleeping Beauty

The film, *Sleeping Beauty*, is often described or presented visually within a racist binary that links white with goodness and black with evil (Hurley, 2005). To counter this problematic representation, Hurley suggests parents and educators supplement dominant Disney films with multicultural sources. Our aforementioned Pinterest board is a digital exploration of collecting imagery from numerous female illustrators of this tale throughout history. Further, *Sleeping Beauty* might be examined in terms of the overlooked feminist potential of the spindle, spinning, weaving, and sleeping within the narrative.

Drawing on this and other resources from Table 1, children, teachers, and parents/caregivers might consider Kate Gale's (2000) African *Sleeping Beauty*, the 2016 Mexican marionette play called *Sleeping Beauty Dreams*, or stories of Yunrong (from Chinese folk tales of Sleeping Beauty). Working with other educators, we have taught fairy tale-based units of curricula that included princesses from many cultures and lands, to consider both enduring themes of human emotions and experiences and also to better understand nuances of culture, family, relationships, and gender in specific times, places, and cultures. Table 1 summarizes our research of *Sleeping Beauty* adaptations for children by women illustrators and characteristics of each that may be useful in education and curriculum planning. These characteristics include cultural connections and the art historical context (including the various forms of artistic media and techniques (such as Photoshop, line drawing, or painting) employed in the production of the illustrations).

Table 1

Illustrator	Publication date	Key Features for Education
Shireen Adams	2018	Islamic version
Carolyn Carter	1965	highly colorful 1960s-influenced
Emma Chichester Clark	2001	ballet adaptation
Kinuko Craft	2002	Baroque-inspired style
Francesca Crepsi	2016	ballet adaptation pop-up
Valerie DoCampo	2017	ballet-inspired

Maja Dusikovaa	2012	watercolor images and story adapted for younger readers
Mindy Dwyer	2014	Alaskan adaptation
Margaret Early	1993	historic French Loire Valley setting
Sarah Gibb	2015	ink and silhouettes
Linda Hill	1995	ballet-inspired
Rachel X. Hobreigh	2000	African Sleeping Beauty; bilingual book
Carol Heyer	1996	prolific fairy tale artist/author
Trina Schart Hyman	1977	artist/author inspired by live models
Linnea Johansson	2015	online guerrilla coloring book promoting gender equality and LGBTQ rights
Erin McGuire	2017	vibrant illustrations of an elderly weaver
Ruth Sanderson	1996	detailed oil paintings
Christine San Jose	2016	features characters as mice, intended for young children

Note: Sleeping Beauty representations by women illustrators and key educational features identified by the authors in art education, art history, and English literature

      To elaborate further upon educational possibilities presented within the table of *Sleeping Beauty* representations, we would encourage educators to share these examples with students that focus on nuances of representation for discussion, and perhaps to inspire their own creative work with the fairy tale genre. For example, representations from ballet-related fairy tale books provide an array of female characters for educators and parents to discuss in contrast with versions that focus on kings and princes. Margaret Early's book encourages readers to consider the rich landscape and European setting of particular versions of the tale, in contrast with Kate Gale's retelling set in Africa or a recent Islamic *Sleeping Beauty*. So too, Linnea Johnson's coloring book is a particularly rich jumping off point for discussions of alterations of common narratives and images, with female "villains" appearing as nurturing, parental figures.

Speculations and Conclusions: Prices/Prizes/Poisons of Princesses
      Problems of gender and cultural representation in princess media are far from resolved with our work, but we hope that some of the possibilities mentioned are made more accessible, interesting, and generative for young artists and the parents and educators who curate and help them understand and build upon the princess media and tween objects they will encounter and engage with. In working with princess possibilities, we often revisited some basic assumptions,

fears, and hopes for gender studies. Initially, it is often our sense (as authors) that we must cast aside all problematic histories, stories, and artwork that might associate with any sexist themes. However, it was nourishing as an artist and a parent to consider what could be saved, treasured, critiqued, and remade. Perhaps, sometimes, the antidote to a fractured fairy tale or broken childhood relic lies within it, found by removing dust and polishing it for its feminist potential. Several of the young artists we have worked with remarked that they wished to explore more traditions and art works from the past. The princess stands as one of the few enduring symbols of powerful, often magical girls that young people may observe as interesting and valuable subjects. As another example, the symbol of the Sleeping Beauty as queen has been associated with beautiful and monumental mountain formations around the world.

Persisting problems of princesses deserve additional attention. One key historic issue is that princesses reflect society's ultimate prize for successful women: wealth, status, and romantic accomplishment. Princess stories from major films often involve the struggles of becoming a princess through marriage as a form of ascendency and/or to escape danger, poverty, or other hardships in the cases of Snow White, Cinderella, The Little Mermaid, Beauty (from the film *Beauty and the Beast*), or Rapunzel. This ascension can serve to reinforce gender-based discrimination and control for women. Other princesses by birth face the threat of losing their position (and associated power and possessions), and thus, marry to retain power. Such is the overt or implied predicament with Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty*), Anna and Elsa of *Frozen*, Merida from *Brave* (2013), and Jasmine from *Aladdin* (1992).

Along these lines, marriage is symbolized not only by the engagement ring (an obvious treasure; a sort of tiny crown) but also by other objects of prosperity. Notably, princesses are often passive spectators in their own lives. Indeed, as memoir writer and blogger Glennon Doyle Melton writes, as "a child of Disney, [one] learn[s] early that a wedding is a woman's finish line" (p. 93). The viewer too can become as passive as the princess to this message and trajectory of marriage, yet our project aims to inspire questioning of mainstream princesses and parallel revisions of their passivity through viewing and making other artistic representations. In this way, the young viewer and reader can become an active critic, collaborator, and maker in princess media that extends from the marriage narrative to a richer timeline of life. We have generated resource lists for educators and parents in hopes to begin collaborations to investigate gender, culture, and race more fully. These can be found on the following website:
https://princessesproject.blogspot.com/2018/11/for-teachers-and-parents-sleeping.html.

Like romance and female agency, racial representation is a major persisting problem among many of the mainstream princesses (Yoon, 2017). Author of young adult books, Nicola Yoon, observed during a children's birthday party that so many princess products continuously focus on European-looking characters, and society accepts this through our purchases, even when more diverse representations begin to emerge in the mainstream (Yoon, 2017). Meanwhile, as the PBS Digital Studio web series "It's Okay to Be Smart" observes of Disney princesses, the body proportions of recent princesses suggest they are pre-teens or even toddlers (Hanson, 2018). This tendency toward representation that is culturally limited yet evocative of its child audience (rather than adult princesses) reveals a targeting of children with messages about gender roles and cultural representations that may be unsettling.

In addition, although there are princess tales that vary somewhat in terms of the implied ethnicity of some of the princesses and their personalities (often more international/multicultural backgrounds), it should be emphasized that all Disney princess bodies still look the part of a Disney princess, with extraordinarily slender waistlines. While slender body sizes do exist, it is difficult

to imagine that these princesses could physically persist without being restrictively corseted. This incredible constraint of body and behavior is overwhelmingly disturbing because it represents a level of external corporeal control, restriction, and deprivation that few educators and parents would advocate for young people in their care. It is a fanatical denial of self and health that should disturb us as adults. Here we must also allow the possibility that the poisoned princess of *Snow White*, the immobilized/comatose princess Aurora, and the poverty-stricken Cinderella might each evoke very real and ongoing traumas of abuse, deprivation, starvation, and eating disorders among young women that are worthy of further discussion.

Symbolically, the slim waist itself cannot be overlooked as a hidden symbol of control that reins in every Disney princess: the price of success as a princess, one that is continuously maintained as the status quo while the princesses themselves are more and more child-like in appearance. Thus, the princesses are subtly becoming a more direct representation of their young audience while reinforcing messages about bodies and romantic relationships that are especially inappropriate for the age group of both the intended audience and the characterizations depicted.

Amidst these concerns, fairy tales remind us of the possibilities of retellings and re-envisionings. Although Aurora was not a historical figure, our media analysis underscores that, "multiple sleeping beauties do [for us to] admire . . . as subjects of pedagogical interest" (Jones, 2016; p. 145). We hope that illuminating and creating a more diverse collection of stories and images encourages richer and wider representations, not as definitive texts, but rather collaborative tales spun by collectives of creators. For example, we began with the treasure trove of *The Little Mermaid* and might consider the agency of princesses and their readers in archiving and rearranging their own symbols and stories. This spirit offers us all a more varied legacy of princesses, a true treasure trove: a legacy of literature, legend, creativity, magic, diverse beauty, and history.

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