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**The Multiplicity of Sleeping Beauty:  
Science, Technology, and Female Subjectivity in Twentieth-  
and Twenty-First-Century Literature and Cinema.**

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## ABSTRACT

Within the framework of third-wave feminist philosophy, this dissertation explores female subjectivity in twentieth and twenty-first century literary and cinematic representations of Sleeping Beauty in which the magic typical of the classical versions of the fairy tale has been substituted by science and technology.

In the 1970s, second-wave feminist scholars focused their attention on the role of fairy tales in female acculturation. Second-wave feminist methodology aims to identify sexual differences and affirm oppositions, like active/passive and subject/object. Owing to her comatose and paralyzed body, Sleeping Beauty emerged as a fragile, passive object in opposition to a dominant and active male subject.

Beginning in the 1980s and 90s, however, third-wave feminism rejected the binary model inherent to second-wave methodology and introduced a new theory of subjectivity. Instead of considering the subject in terms of opposition, third-wave feminists endorsed a “melting of boundaries” whereby the new, non-unitary subject was conceived in terms of hybridization. This new approach prioritized the individual experience of each woman rather than universalistic statements about all women. By applying a third-wave feminist framework to analyses of Sleeping Beauty, we reveal the complexities of female subjectivity in the different versions of the fairy tale and reject the universalistic notion of Sleeping Beauty as passive. We argue this position through both a classical and a contemporary corpus.

While contextualizing Sleeping Beauty in the historical, oral, and literary traditions from which she derived, we explore female subjectivity through a close reading of the tale’s classical versions, that is: Giambattista Basile’s “Sole, Luna e Talia” (1634), Charles Perrault’s “La Belle au bois dormant” (1697), and the Brothers Grimms’ “Dornröschen” (1812-1857). Drawing from third-wave feminist philosophy, we challenge univocal conceptions of the fairy tale princess as passive by arguing how each individual version of the fairy tale supports female activity in a distinctive way.

This study serves as the foundation for our subsequent investigation of Sleeping Beauty in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The advanced tools of third-wave feminism do not only allow us to revisit the problems arisen by previous feminist studies, they also provide us with a method to interpret the new subjectivities that are shaped by the contemporary age, that is, who we are in the process of becoming. Today, we cannot talk about subjectivities without addressing the varied and controversial ways in which science and technology influence them. The contemporary figure of Sleeping Beauty invites such an investigation. Since the middle of the twentieth century when a new “vogue” in fairy tale studies merged with the rising interest in the compatibility of science and the humanities, Sleeping Beauty has appeared at the crossroads of science and fiction in: Primo Levi’s “La bella addormentata nel frigo” (1966), Angela Carter’s “The Lady of the House of Love” (1979), Harold Pinter’s *A Kind of Alaska* (1982), Pedro Almodóvar’s *Hable con ella* (2002), Michel Gondry’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), and Marco Bellocchio’s *Bella Addormentata* (2012). Each work, or *hypertext* as Gérard Genette calls a work deriving from a previous work, uniquely builds on the Sleeping Beauty topos in a scientific and technological framework,

revealing the metaphorical richness of the subject. In this new framework, Sleeping Beauty is no longer a princess, but a patient in a medical context. We are thus invited to investigate how science and technology in the domain of medicine have influenced the subjectivity of a figure whose catatonic body has for centuries epitomized the notion of female objectification. In analyzing Sleeping Beauty in her new context, we analyze the relationship between science, technology, and the body. Third-wave feminism, with its reflection precisely on the interconnectedness between these three domains, was the obvious theoretical framework for such an endeavour. In the 1990s, feminist scholars turned their attention to the complex and contradictory ways in which science and technology have been affecting gender relations. While some warned against the risk that they could further polarize the binary model of gender, others conceived them as powerful instruments in the elimination of discriminatory dichotomies. The diverse kinds of interactions between science, technology, and the female body that we encounter in contemporary literary and cinematic representations of Sleeping Beauty – namely, through medical technology, the medical figure, and medical discourse – provide us with an ideal platform on which to address the influence of scientific and technological advances on female subjectivity.



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## INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, feminist scholars focused their attention on the role of fairy tales in female acculturation. While the issue was framed as a debate, it was not a balanced one; the majority of feminist critics condemned the fairy tale for endorsing a world in which men are active and women are passive. Today, the debate over fairy tales is anything but exhausted. In October 2015 the French Minister of Education, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, declared her intent to eliminate fairy tales from the primary school curriculum because of their sexist content.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, fairy tales are increasingly seen as the site of gender discrimination and sexism. One of the most frequently cited tales in the service of this argument is *Sleeping Beauty* – the story of the young princess cursed to prick her finger on a spindle, fall into a long slumber, and wait for a prince to wake her up.

*Sleeping Beauty* has come to be synonymous with female passivity. This has been the case since Simone de Beauvoir pre-empted feminist concern with fairy tales in her 1949 book *The Second Sex* in which she states,

Woman is *Sleeping Beauty*, *Donkey Skin*, *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, the one who receives and endures. In songs and tales, the young man sets off to seek the woman; he fights against dragons, he combats giants; she is locked up in a tower, a palace, a garden, a cave, chained to a rock, captive, put to sleep: she is waiting.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paolo Levi, “Da Cenerentola a Cappuccetto Rosso, la Francia dice no alle favole sessiste”, *La Stampa*, October 8, 2015, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/10/08/societa/da-cenerentola-a-cainppuccetto-rosso-la-francia-dice-no-alle-favole-sessiste-jDwwNV55L8y3ZFyBG1SJ2J/pagina.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, New York: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 352-353. Ebook.

For De Beauvoir and many others, Sleeping Beauty's comatose and paralyzed body reified her status as a fragile, passive object in opposition to a dominant and active male subject. The fact that at the centre of each version of the Sleeping Beauty tale is a comatose princess brings the judgment *woman as object* to the forefront of the narrative, making it the central problem. While an inanimate female body is not a prerequisite for addressing female passivity and objectification, it does render the issue explicit.

Feminist readings of fairy tales in the 1970s set themselves apart from earlier approaches in that they shed light on gender politics within these stories – an aspect that previous structuralist interpretations of fairy tales did not address. Second-wave feminists, those who first turned their attention to the fairy tale, propagated a binary framework. Their aim was to identify sexual differences and affirm oppositions, like active/passive, subject/object, hero/princess.

Beginning in the 1980s and 90s, however, third-wave feminism rejected the binary model inherent to second-wave methodology and introduced a new theory of subjectivity. Instead of considering the subject in terms of opposition, third-wave feminists endorsed a “melting of boundaries”<sup>3</sup> whereby the new, non-unitary subject was conceived in terms of hybridization. This new approach prioritized the individual experience of each woman rather than universalistic statements about all women.<sup>4</sup> In feminist theory, the binary model ceased to be considered an adequate methodological approach.

It is our conviction that this binary framework should be replaced in fairy tale scholarship, as well. In the domain of fairy tale studies, the application of third-wave methodology has been limited; for the most part, it has served to shed light on female fairy tale authors from the seventeenth-century onwards that had previously been unknown, and to introduce contemporary feminist authors and their subversive rewritings of classical tales. However, analyses of gender politics in the classical male-authored versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale have generally heralded the same interpretations as over sixty years ago: Sleeping Beauty has critically remained passive.

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<sup>3</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002, p. 129. Kindle edition.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 156.

Yet, while Sleeping Beauty has stereotypically been addressed in terms of *immobility*, *fixity*, and *singularity*, third-wave feminism is founded upon *mobility*, *flexibility*, and *multiplicity* and challenges the very notion of absolute identities. The objective of this dissertation is to analyze the figure of Sleeping Beauty insofar as a complex, non-unitary subject that transcends binary categorizations typical of fairy tale studies. The application of a third-wave feminist framework to the study of Sleeping Beauty would reveal the complexities of female subjectivity and reject the universalistic notion of Sleeping Beauty as passive. We aim to argue this position through both a classical and a contemporary corpus.

While contextualizing Sleeping Beauty in the historical, oral and literary traditions from which she derived, we will explore female subjectivity first through a close reading of the tale's classical versions, that is: Giambattista Basile's "Sole, Luna e Talia" ("Sun, Moon and Talia") published in *Pentamerone* or *Lo cunto de li cunti overo lo trattenemiento de peccerille* (*The Pentamerone* or *The Tale of Tales*, or *Entertainment for Little Ones*) (1634), Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant" ("The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood") published in *Les Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (*The Tales of Mother Goose*) (1697), and the Brothers Grimms' "Dornröschen" ("Little Brier Rose"), published in *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children's and Household Tales*) (1812-1857). These tales represent what Carolina Fernández-Rodríguez refers to as the "three classical versions of the [Sleeping Beauty] tale"<sup>5</sup> in her book *La Bella Durmiente a través de la historia* (1998).

The choice to focus our attention on these versions is grounded in three reasons. First, it is precisely these three texts that have received the most critical attention, especially with regards to Sleeping Beauty's passive status. Due to the difficult Neapolitan dialect in which it was originally written,<sup>6</sup> Basile's version of the tale has not entered into the public imagination as profoundly as that of Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, who instead used the more widespread French and German respectively. For this reason, certain elements of Basile's tale have not infiltrated

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<sup>5</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *La Bella Durmiente a través de la historia*, Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1998, p. 15. This and all subsequent translations of Fernández Rodríguez are ours. Original: "las tres versiones clásicas del cuento".

<sup>6</sup> Heidi Anne Heiner, "Il Pentamerone; or, The Story of Stories by Giambattista Basile," *SurLaLune Fairy Tales*, March 16, 2004, accessed January 14, 2012, <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/pentamerone/index.html>.

mainstream associations with Sleeping Beauty. Nevertheless, all three versions served to reify Sleeping Beauty as a passive entity in fairy tale criticism. Second, we have chosen to investigate each classical version in order to reveal not only the simultaneous presence of an active female model, but also to show that such a model presents itself uniquely in each text. By applying a third-wave methodological framework to the analysis of these three texts, we aim to demonstrate how instead of upholding polarized gender constructions and power dynamics, the Sleeping Beauty tales can become the ideal site for overturning them. The third reason we have selected these three versions for our analysis is that contemporary representations are derived from, and are often hybridizations of, specifically these three sources. The advanced tools of third-wave feminism do not only allow us to revisit the problems arisen by previous feminist studies, they also provide us with a method to interpret the new subjectivities that are shaped by the contemporary age, that is, who we are in the process of becoming. Two fundamental catalysts behind these transformations are science and technology. As Donna Haraway states in her famous Cyborg Manifesto, they are “the crucial tools recrafting our bodies.”<sup>7</sup> We thus cannot talk about subjectivities today without addressing the varied and controversial roles of science and technology in the matter.

Contemporary representations of the Sleeping Beauty tale, in which the magic typical of the classical fairy tale versions has been substituted with science and technology, provide a space in which to address the multiple ways in which scientific and technological advances influence female subjectivity. Since the middle of the twentieth century when a new “vogue” in fairy tale studies<sup>8</sup> merged with the rising interest in the compatibility of science and the humanities, Sleeping Beauty has appeared at the crossroads of science and fiction. Although many fairy tale scholars have written about various aspects of the Sleeping Beauty tradition, the Sleeping Beauties in a scientific or technological framework have never been identified as a category unto themselves. And yet, since the beginning of the new fairy tale vogue, we encounter numerous representations of Sleeping Beauty in this context. Thus, in “La

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<sup>7</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”, in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 164.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Haase, ed., *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales*, Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2008, p. xxxiii.



bella addormentata nel frigo” (“The Sleeping Beauty in the Fridge”) (1966), Primo Levi’s Sleeping Beauty is sent into the future by means of an innovative hibernation technique. In Angela Carter’s “The Lady of the House of Love” (1979), a soldier resolves to take Sleeping Beauty to a clinic so that she could be cured of her vampiric symptoms. In *A Kind of Alaska* (1982), Harold Pinter’s Sleeping Beauty has just woken up from the sleeping sickness *encephalitis lethargica* thanks to the invention of a new miracle drug L-DOPA. In *Hable con ella (Talk To Her)* (2002), Pedro Almodóvar presents two Sleeping Beauties as coma patients asleep in the clinic “The Wood”. Michel Gondry’s two Sleeping Beauties undergo a neurological procedure whereby their memories are erased in the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004). Finally, in Marco Bellocchio’s *Bella Addormentata (Dormant Beauty)* (2012), a doctor’s commitment to cure Sleeping Beauty of her drug addiction and thwart her suicide attempts is juxtaposed with a political debate concerning euthanasia. Each work uniquely builds on the Sleeping Beauty topos in a scientific and technological framework, revealing the metaphorical richness of the subject.

In this new framework, Sleeping Beauty is no longer a princess, but a patient in a medical context. The spindle is now a vaccine; the prince, a doctor. A good fairy no longer repairs Sleeping Beauty’s death curse into a slumber – a life support machine does. Each conventional fairy tale element finds its contemporary equivalent. We are thus invited to investigate how science and technology in the domain of medicine have influenced a figure whose catatonic body has for centuries epitomized the notion of female objectification, thus rendering palpable the mind/body dichotomy – that is, the oppositional framework by which man has been regarded in terms of activity and subjectivity, and woman in terms of their lack. In analyzing Sleeping Beauty in her new context, we thus analyze the relationship between science, technology and the body. Third-wave feminism, with its reflection precisely on the interconnectedness between these three domains, was the obvious theoretical framework for such an endeavour. In the 1990s, feminist scholars turned their attention to the complex and contradictory ways in which science and technology have been affecting gender dynamics. While some warned against the risk that they could further polarize the binary model of gender, others conceived them as powerful instruments in the elimination of discriminatory dichotomies. The diverse kinds of interactions between science,

technology and the female body that we encounter in contemporary Sleeping Beauty hypertexts provide us with an ideal platform on which to address the influence of scientific and technological advances on female subjectivity.

Sleeping Beauty remains one of the most widely adapted fairy tales.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, as suggested by her metaphorical flexibility, we can find her almost everywhere. For this reason, we saw the need to select our contemporary corpus based on a more refined methodological approach. Gérard Genette's theory of hypertextuality helped us to accommodate this requirement.<sup>10</sup>

According to Genette, hypertextuality is "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary."<sup>11</sup> In his study, Genette prioritizes *massive* hypertextuality, that is, when "an entire text B derives from an entire text A"<sup>12</sup>. By selecting massive hypertexts rather than traces or fragments of Sleeping Beauty for our corpus, we limit the risk of confusing Sleeping Beauty with other dormant female figures who might partly resemble her but who ultimately lead down distinct interpretative paths. We therefore recognized the importance of creating a Sleeping Beauty Model based on which to identify contemporary hypertexts. We created the model by isolating the elements common to all of the three hypotexts chosen – that is, Basile's, Perrault's, and the Brothers Grimms' classical versions of the tale – since, as we have stated, contemporary hypertexts are derived from these three sources. These common elements are: *Fate*, *The Spindle*, *A Long and Unnatural Sleep*, *Enclosure*, *Awakening*, and *Prince Charming*. While our close reading of each classical version in Part II will address the different ways in which these elements manifest and the varied interpretations to which they lend themselves, we list them now so as to

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<sup>9</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> We first looked to the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) folktale classification system for this task (Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography. Based on the system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*. FF Communications no. 284-286, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 2004). While the ATU tale type takes into account some of the variations that occur between the different versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale, owing to its brevity it does not address some crucial differences between Basile's, Perrault's, and the Grimms' versions and is therefore not a reliable model for identify Sleeping Beauty in contemporary works. Genette's theory conversely allows room for elements for which the ATU tale type does not.

<sup>11</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Dubinsky, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

introduce to our reader the methodology behind our corpus selection.

Genette also provides us with a method with which to account for transformations that occur between hypo and hypertext, allowing us to identify Sleeping Beauty in contemporary works that modify in some way these six elements while still recognizably relying on them. Genette says that a hypertextual relationship may result from a situation in which text B does not speak “of text A at all but [is] unable to exist, as such, without A, from which it originates through a process [...] call[ed] *transformation*, and which it consequently evokes more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it.”<sup>13</sup> Genette’s hypertextuality thus also accounts for changes we will encounter in our contemporary corpus, including changes in character motivation (*transmotivation*), changes in the value of a given action (*transvaluation*), and changes in modes of representation (*transmodalisation*), to name a few.

It is the latter that bears elaboration in our introduction. While our corpus spans different languages, cultural backgrounds and genres, attesting to the vast proliferation of Sleeping Beauty themes across the board, perhaps the most distinguishing factor between these works is the medium. We have chosen to analyze both literature and cinema because studying cinematic works allows us to examine more thoroughly fundamental questions regarding female subjectivity and the way in which it is displayed. In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon recognizes that the specific features of cinema open up distinct investigative paths. Remarking broadly on some of the differences between the written and visual modes of representation, Hutcheon states:

The performance mode teaches us that language is not the only way to express meaning or to relate stories. Visual and gestural representations are rich in complex associations; music offers aural “equivalents” for characters’ emotions and, in turn, provokes affective responses in the audience; sound, in general, can enhance, reinforce, or even contradict the visual and verbal aspects.<sup>14</sup>

Hutcheon addresses how a shift in medium renders accessible essential interpretative possibilities. This is why we will investigate, for example, how the onscreen manifestation of the gaze, a dynamic central to discussions of female subjectivity in

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 23.

feminist film theory, compares to its literary equivalent. Considering that our investigation focuses on the effects of technology on female subjectivity, studying how the technology of cinema influences female representation will complement our research.

This dissertation will be divided into three parts. In Part I, we will elaborate on the different aspects of our investigation and explain in greater detail how they fit together. First, we will introduce some of the dominant reflections on the mind/body dichotomy, specifically how it serves to fuel gender polarization. We will then discuss the theories of subjectivity of the second- and third-wave feminist movements, explaining why the third wave is preferable as a methodological framework. Subsequently, we will focus our analysis on third-wave reflections on science and technology and how they have influenced female subjectivity. After providing a brief history of feminist fairy tale criticism in order to contextualize our subject of investigation, focusing ultimately on the shortcomings of applying second-wave methodology to *Sleeping Beauty*, we will discuss how third-wave ideology serves as the ideal framework for addressing *Sleeping Beauty* in both her classical form as well as her contemporary medical context. In Part II, we will explore female subjectivity in *Sleeping Beauty* hypotexts, that is, in the three classical versions of the tale: “Sole, Luna e Talia”, “La Belle au bois dormant”, and “Dornröschen”. We will first investigate how the many oral and literary variants of the *Sleeping Beauty* tale and their historical contexts have helped to reify *Sleeping Beauty* as a passive female figure. This investigation will be followed by a re-reading of each classical version that excludes extra-textual factors, relying, instead, on the meaning offered by the text itself in order to demonstrate not only that an active female figure is also present, but that each *Sleeping Beauty* can become active in a distinct way. In Part III, we will contextualize *Sleeping Beauty* within the framework of third-wave discussions on the relationship between science, technology, and the body. We will identify works in our contemporary corpus as *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts based on their reproduction of the six elements of the *Sleeping Beauty* Model. Our analysis of the complex and contradictory ways in which science and technology influence female subjectivity in these works will be divided into three sections as our dissertation takes stock of the fact that the relationship between science, technology and the body manifests in different ways. We will

individually evaluate the role of medical technology (including devices, vaccines, and procedures), the role of the medical figure (such as the doctor, the nurse, and the technician), and the role of traditional medical discourse in subverting or reinforcing female subjectivity in *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts.



**PART I**  
**WEAVING THE COMPONENTS TOGETHER:**  
**GENDER, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE FAIRY TALE**





## 1.1 The Mind/Body Dichotomy

The question of body – or more specifically, of the female body – is central to discussions of gendered power dynamics. Historically, woman was represented as body and man as mind. In *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone de Beauvoir addresses the different experience of the body that this division entailed for men and women:

Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being. “Woman, the relative being,” writes Michelet. Thus Monsieur Benda declares in *Le rapport d’Uriel* (Uriel’s Report): “A man’s body has meaning by itself, disregarding the body of the woman, whereas the woman’s body seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male. Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man.” And she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called “the sex,” meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other.<sup>15</sup>

De Beauvoir’s argument renders clear that in addressing the mind/body dichotomy we cannot help but enter into the domain of other oppositional frameworks, namely, subject/object and active/passive. If woman is *body* she is *object*; woman is “nothing other than what man decides”, thus she is *passive*. On the other hand, in the role of *mind*, man creates meaning, so he is the *subject* and therefore *active*. These dichotomies often appear together in feminist discussions of gender politics. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) Judith Butler reiterates how in the framework of the mind/body dichotomy, the female object does not create meaning for herself, but is rather assigned meaning by the male subject:

[R]eason and mind are associated with masculinity and agency, while the

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<sup>15</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

body and nature are considered to be the mute facticity of the feminine, awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject.<sup>16</sup>

The result is the univocal appropriation of the word “subject”; if defined as body, woman cannot occupy the subject-position. Instead, she cedes her subjectivity to man.

In accordance with this dichotomy, in *Masculine Domination* (1998), Pierre Bourdieu designates woman as the “being perceived”<sup>17</sup> elaborating,

Everything in the genesis of the female habitus and in the social conditions of its actualization combines to make the female experience of the body the limiting case of the universal experience of the body-for-others, constantly exposed to the objectification performed by the gaze and the discourse of others.<sup>18</sup>

This conceptualization of the female body, and more importantly the patriarchal ideology that backs it up, causes a ripple effect whereby the consequences extend beyond the act itself. For example, Bourdieu claims that being ignored as subjects

forces [women] to resort to the weapons of the weak, which confirm the stereotypes – an outburst that is inevitably seen as an unjustified whim or as an exhibition that is immediately defined as hysterical [...].<sup>19</sup>

In her book *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), Susan Bordo similarly stresses that as a result of internalizing this ideology of mind versus body, “Most women in our culture, then, are ‘disordered’ when it comes to issues of self-worth, self-entitlement, self-nourishment, and comfort with their own bodies”<sup>20</sup>.

The twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first have seen much progress by way of gender equality, and Butler confirms that “the claim of universal patriarchy

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<sup>16</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995, p. 57.

no longer enjoys the kind of credibility it once did”<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, Bordo makes it a point to stress the misleading nature of claims typecasting men as oppressive, stating that “this would be to indulge in a cultural mythology about men as pernicious as the sexual temptress myths about women.”<sup>22</sup>

However, women face another, more personal, roadblock to equality. As Bordo highlights, part of the problem lies in the fact that women often reproduce the dichotomy of

male dominance and female subordination [...] “voluntarily,” through our self-normalization to everyday habits of masculinity and femininity. Within such a model, one can acknowledge that women may indeed contribute to the perpetuation of female subordination (for example, by embracing, taking pleasure in, and even feeling empowered by the cultural objectification and sexualization of the female body) without this entailing that they have power in the production and reproduction of sexist culture.<sup>23</sup>

The point, however, is not to suggest that the blame for women’s subjugated status lies with women themselves; as Bordo emphasizes ironically by her telling placement of quotation marks, women reproduce this ideology “voluntarily”. Rather, this attitude is a product of the pervasive dichotomies at the root of gender inequality.

Over the last few decades, third-wave feminist scholars have advocated a theory of subjectivity that seeks to overcome this dichotomous way of thinking.

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<sup>21</sup> Judith Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Bordo, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

## 1.2 Feminist Theories of Subjectivity

Since the 1980s and 1990s, third-wave feminists have challenged the concept of absolute identities that was so central to male/female differentiation. They propagated the elimination of a binary framework, a methodological approach that differed significantly from previous feminist theories of subjectivity.

The ways in which the three waves of feminism have sought to rectify the gender imbalance and allot woman the subject-position have varied. Beginning in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, first-wave feminists sought to secure legal equality for women, for example with the right to vote or equal rights for employment. In the words of Iris van der Tuin in her article “The arena of feminism”, the goal of first-wave feminists was to obtain recognition of equality through “access into the masculine domain”<sup>24</sup>. From the 1960s to the 1980s, for second-wave feminists, “the struggle for access into the masculine domain [was...] written off as inferior, as this strategy presupposed that those masculine domains need not change – it was merely necessary to include women.”<sup>25</sup> Instead, second-wave feminism “emphasized the differences between men and women, which involved a revaluation and/or stimulation of the feminine.”<sup>26</sup> Many of these discussions were modelled after *The Second Sex*, which came to be considered “the bible of second-wave feminism.”<sup>27</sup> De Beauvoir’s famous assertion therein, “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman”<sup>28</sup>, propagated the notion that masculinity and femininity were social constructs rather than a product of biology. Van der Tuin points out in her article,

De Beauvoir advances the theory that women are classified as second-class citizens in relation to men. She also maintains that men, as well as

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<sup>24</sup> Iris van der Tuin, “The arena of feminism: Simone de Beauvoir and the history of feminism”, in *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture*, eds. Rosemarie Buikema and Iris van der Tuin, New York Routledge, 2007, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

women, persist in affirming this unequal relationship, both in the choices they make and in their actions, as these appear to be the fruit of fixed patterns.<sup>29</sup>

In what was yet to become a defining characteristic of the second wave, “[b]inary oppositions [were] at the core of De Beauvoir’s discourse.”<sup>30</sup> Van der Tuin states:

De Beauvoir demonstrates that social structures, psychological processes, moral values, and representations are structured according to these mutually exclusive oppositions. Then she goes on to show that each such binary opposition is, in fact, gendered.<sup>31</sup>

Following De Beauvoir, feminism during the second wave was rooted in identifying oppositions and affirming sexual differences; second-wave feminists shed light on inequalities between men and women in social and professional domains.

If one of the defining characteristics of the second wave was its operation within a dialectical framework, third-wave feminism can be addressed in terms of its opposition to that framework. The goal of third-wave feminism was to go beyond that very notion of binaries that they saw, instead, as a limiting factor of the second wave’s philosophy. Third-wave feminists proposed to consider the subject not in terms of binary oppositions – like male/female, active/passive, mind/body – but in terms of the space of their convergence.

Taking a cue from De Beauvoir’s assertion “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman”<sup>32</sup>, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity is centred on the theoretical possibilities entailed in the separation of sex and gender. She notes, “The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms”<sup>33</sup> and that “woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification”<sup>34</sup>. She therefore urges us to make “gender trouble”<sup>35</sup> through the

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<sup>29</sup> Iris van der Tuin, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

<sup>33</sup> Judith Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

practice of drag. “The parodic repetition of gender,” she says, “exposes [...] the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance.”<sup>36</sup> Promoting thus the “subversive play of gendered meanings”<sup>37</sup>, Butler rejects the dualistic approach to gender. This includes opposing the “dialectical reversal of power” whereby women and men would swap social roles, since, according to her, “power appeared to operate in the production of that very binary frame for thinking about gender.”<sup>38</sup> Instead, she embraces the concept of multiplicity as a solution towards female subjectivity, thus proposing “that we explode the category ‘women’ by letting many other alternative genders proliferate: not one, not two, but as many genders as there are individuals.”<sup>39</sup>

Rosi Braidotti reiterates the need for thinking in terms of multiplicity, advocating, like Butler, a “melting of boundaries”<sup>40</sup>. Echoing some of Butler’s original reflections on resignification, in *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002) Braidotti proposes a paradigm shift that would mark the switch from thinking about concepts to thinking about processes. In other words, she encourages us to think in terms of “the process of what goes on in between A and B [...] rather than [...] about the concept A or B, or of B as non-A”<sup>41</sup>. This means that we would need to disengage from binary conceptions of gender, meaning that, like Butler, Braidotti opposes the “dialectical reversal of power” as a solution to female subjectivity. Braidotti states, “What matters here is [...] not to stop at the dialectical role-reversal that usually sees the former slaves in the position of new masters or the former mistresses in the position of dominatrix. The point is to go beyond the logic of reversibility.”<sup>42</sup> Her rejection of the binary approach is rooted in her belief “that both sexuality and sexual difference are so central to the constitution of the subject that they cannot be eradicated merely by reversing socially-enforced gender roles. Instead, in-depth transformation or metamorphoses need to be enacted.”<sup>43</sup> Like other third-wave

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxx.

<sup>39</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses, op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

feminists,<sup>44</sup> Braidotti defends the concept of *situated knowledge* which places value on the individual experience of each woman and rejects universalistic statements about all women. In *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2011), Braidotti claims,

[T]he women's movement rests on a consensus that all women partake of the condition of 'the second sex,' [...] This recognition as a common condition of sisterhood in oppression, however, cannot be the final goal: women may have common situations and experiences, but they are not, in any way, *the same*. In this respect, the idea of the politics of location is very important. This idea, developed into a theory of recognition of the multiple differences that exist among women, stresses the importance of rejecting global statements about all women and instead attempts to be as aware as possible of where one is speaking from. Attention to the *situated* as opposed to the universalistic nature of statements is the key idea.<sup>45</sup>

In order to overcome the binary opposition model which sees women's experiences homogenized under umbrella descriptions, Braidotti articulates the political and philosophical theory of the nomadic subject. She states:

Nomadic subjects are transformative tools that enact progressive metamorphoses of the subject away from the program set up in the phallogocentric format. [...] They are hybrid, contested, multilayered figurations that challenge dichotomous and dialectical oppositions between margins and center.<sup>46</sup>

Instead of conceiving identity in terms of singularity, a practice that had dominated feminist theory until recently, Braidotti claims that the point is to "relocat[e...] identities on new grounds that account for multiple belongings"<sup>47</sup>.

So far during this discussion we have addressed the negative implications of the

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<sup>44</sup> For example, Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984; Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", in *Feminist Studies*, 14.3., Autumn 1988, p. 575-599 (1988); Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity'?", in *Feminist Epistemologies*, eds. Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 49-82.

<sup>45</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, *op. cit.*, p. 155-156.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

mind/body dichotomy and looked at possible ways through which feminist scholars have sought to secure female subjectivity. Second-wave feminism sets itself apart from first-wave feminism in its objective to change the structures of social domains rather than simply include women in them. Whereas second-wave feminism addresses gender inequality within a binary framework, third-wave feminism seeks to “blur the boundaries”<sup>48</sup>, as Braidotti states, of that very framework, embracing the subject in terms of “complexity and multiplicity”<sup>49</sup> rather than singularity.

To be sure, addressing the different waves of feminism strictly in oppositional terms would herald just as outdated of an analysis as applying that framework to gender. As Van der Tuin points out, developments in the feminist movements are characterized by “both continuity and discontinuity”<sup>50</sup>. “What the waves in feminism have in common,” she states, is “a radical position with respect to inequality between men and women”<sup>51</sup>. Nevertheless, it should be noted that by putting into question the binary approach to gender inherent to the second-wave, third-wave feminist thought, – with its focus on the multiplicity of the subject – and more broadly, the field of Gender Studies – with its interdisciplinary approach to the study of gender identity – provide the diversified assortment of tools necessary to interpret, as Braidotti puts it, “the kind of hybrid mix we are in the process of becoming.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, *Metamorphoses*, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Iris van der Ruin, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.



### 1.3 Science, Technology, and Gender

We cannot talk about subjectivities in the contemporary age without recourse to the role of science and technology in the shaping of identity. As Braidotti claims, “The boundaries between the categories of the natural and the cultural have been displaced and to a large extent blurred by the effects of scientific and technological advances.”<sup>53</sup> In other words, science and technology are two fundamental catalysts behind our hybridization.

In her famous article “The Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” (1991), Donna Haraway discusses the positive influence of science and technology on female subjectivity. According to Haraway,

Communications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies. These tools embody and enforce new social relations for women worldwide. Technologies and scientific discourses [...should] be viewed as instruments for enforcing meanings.<sup>54</sup>

She thus suggests that female emancipation will result from the growing fusion of science and technology and our bodies. Haraway terms the new identity that emerges from this fusion the *cyborg*, a “cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism”<sup>55</sup>. Despite the images that such a description elicits, the cyborg should be conceived in both literal and metaphoric terms. To this effect, Cecilia Åsberg points out in her article “The arena of the body: The cyborg and feminist views on biology” (2007),

For Haraway the cyborg was not so much about the visible technological appendixes of a body, as about the way in which science and technology had managed to become such an intricate part of the way we live and

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

make sense of our lives.<sup>56</sup>

Understanding that the cyborg is both a physical reality as well as a metaphor is a crucial step to recognizing its pervasiveness and, consequently, the extent of its emancipating potential.

Like Butler and Braidotti, Haraway advocates a “pleasure in the confusion of boundaries”<sup>57</sup>. She says that the cyborg’s positive influence can be derived from the fact that it opposes binary models of subjectivity: “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves”<sup>58</sup>. According to Haraway, the cyborg has put all of these dualisms “in question ideologically”<sup>59</sup>, dualisms among which Haraway cites self/other, mind/body, and active/passive<sup>60</sup>.

Before addressing in more detail the possibilities offered by the cyborg, it is important to look at the recent history of science and gender. Even prior to feminist theory of the cyborg, the influence of feminist thought on the relationship between gender and science was immense. For one, Beauvoir’s famous statement “One is not born, but rather becomes, woman” challenged biological determinism. Invoking Butler’s observations, Åsberg notes that “[t]he separation between socially constructed gender and biological sex [...] enabled feminists to contest the belief that social inequalities of women were rooted in and hence justified by biology”<sup>61</sup>. Yet it was not until 1978 that the words “Gender and Science” first appeared together as the title of Evelyn Fox Keller’s article on the topic.<sup>62</sup> That article later became the introduction to her book<sup>63</sup> *Reflections on Gender and Science* (1985), in which Keller recognizes that “both gender and science are socially constructed categories. [...] Women, men and science are created, together, out of a complex dynamic of interwoven cognitive,

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<sup>56</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, “The arena of the body: The cyborg and feminist views on biology”, in *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture*, eds. Rosemarie Buikema and Iris van der Tuin, New York Routledge, 2007, p. 34.

<sup>57</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>61</sup> Judith Butler 1990 *paraphrased in* Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>62</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, “Gender and Science: Origin, History, and Politics”, in *Osiris*, 2nd Series, Vol. 10, Constructing Knowledge in the History of Science, 1995, p. 27.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28. k

emotional, and social forces”<sup>64</sup>. According to Fox Keller, these forces have contributed to “the historic conjunction of science and masculinity, and the equally historic disjunction between science and femininity”<sup>65</sup>. In her study, Fox Keller examines more profoundly some of the roots of this disjunction, including the gendered identification of science as male and that which it dominates, nature, as female. She states:

Naming nature is the special business of science. Theories, models, and descriptions are elaborated names. In these acts of naming, the scientist simultaneously constructs and contains nature [...].<sup>66</sup>

[T]he motives of scientific inquiry appear to have been defined by Bacon, for it was he who first and most vividly articulated the equation between scientific knowledge and power, who identified the aims of science as the control and domination of nature.<sup>67</sup>

It is important, however, to see how deeply Bacon’s use of gender is implicated in his conception of mastery and domination. The fact that mastery and domination are, invariably, exercised over nature as ‘she’ can hardly escape our attention, and indeed has not gone unnoticed [...].<sup>68</sup>

The conceptualization of science as masculine and nature as feminine does not only contribute to the exclusion of women from scientific domains by perpetuating the “historic disjunction between science and femininity”. In her article “Gender and Science: Origin, History, and Politics” (1995), Fox Keller states that “metaphors of gender [...] import social expectations into our representations of nature, and by so doing they simultaneously serve to reify (or naturalize) cultural beliefs and practices.”<sup>69</sup> In other words, the conceptualization of nature as feminine and dominated permeates women’s cultural roles. It is thus that “the implications of a gendered vocabulary in scientific discourse”<sup>70</sup> are also reflected in social inequalities between men and women.

It is not only the conceptualization of science as masculine, but also how science

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3-4.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, “Gender and Science”, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

itself has been politically appropriated that is of significance with respect to gender relations. For example, in his book *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1990), Thomas Laqueur discusses how towards the end of the Enlightenment, “female sexual arousal bec[a]me irrelevant to an understanding of conception”<sup>71</sup>. According to Laqueur, science has thereafter been used in the service of “creating the model of the passionless female who stands in sharp biological contrast to the male”<sup>72</sup>. This is not to say that science is the cause of a hierarchical classification of sex. On the contrary, Laqueur stresses that it is political appropriations of scientific discourse that spur gender inequalities<sup>73</sup>: he reminds us that “no one was much interested in looking for evidence of two distinct sexes, at the anatomical and concrete physiological differences between men and women, until such differences became politically important.”<sup>74</sup> Social Darwinism is another example of this. As Laqueur emphasizes, “The Darwinian theory of natural selection provided and still provides seemingly limitless material for imagining the process of sexual differentiation.”<sup>75</sup> This is true not just in sexual politics, however; Laqueur stresses that “science has historically worked to ‘rationalize and legitimize’ distinctions not only of sex but also of race and class, to the disadvantage of the powerless”<sup>76</sup>.

Turning once again to the issue of gender, in “The Race of Hysteria: ‘Overcivilization’ and the ‘Savage Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology’” (2000), Laura Briggs discusses how the use of science against women could be identified in the political appropriation of hysteria. According to Briggs, hysteria

was never just a disease. It was also the way nineteenth-century U.S. and European cultures made sense of women's changing roles. Industrialization and urbanization wrought one set of changes, while the women's rights movement brought another. Together, these included higher education for women, their increasing participation in a (rapidly changing) public sphere, paid employment, and declining fertility. These

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 10.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21-22.

cultural changes were accompanied by a virtual epidemic of “nervous weakness” largely among women, causing feminist historians to begin asking whether the diagnostic category of hysteria was simply a way of keeping women in the home.<sup>77</sup>

Feminist scholars have thus addressed whether science in the form of medical discourse in the nineteenth century was used in the service of undermining gender equality.

In present day medical discourse we encounter a similar paradigm. Åsberg states that feminism in the twentieth century investigated contemporary ideas on PMS, post-natal depression, and anorexia, identifying therein a bias that conceived the male body as superior. She writes:

One of the most important conclusions of these studies is that the entire discourse on medicine, down to the letter of scientific articles on cells, has imagined the female body as more susceptible to pathologies and ailments than the male body.<sup>78</sup>

Åsberg thus addresses how appropriation of scientific knowledge to the “disadvantage of the powerless”, as Laqueur states, continues up until the present day.

Studies such as the ones we just surveyed were fundamental in identifying the gender bias not only with regards to women’s exclusion from the scientific domain but also in the narrow and inaccurate conceptualization of the female body that the masculinized domain of science offered. In *Reflections on Gender and Science*, Fox Keller summarizes that one of the main purposes of feminist investigations of the relationship between science and gender is not only to “redress the absence of women in the history of social and political thought”<sup>79</sup>, but more importantly, to “ask how ideologies of gender and science inform each other in their mutual construction, how that construction functions in our social arrangements, and how it affects men and women, science and nature.”<sup>80</sup> The goals outlined by Fox Keller were complemented by another study published a year later. In her 1986 book *The Science Question in Feminism*, Sandra Harding introduces another important task of feminist inquiry into

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<sup>77</sup> Laura Briggs, “The Race of Hysteria: ‘Overcivilization’ and the ‘Savage’ Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology”, in *American Quarterly*, 52.2, June 2000, p. 246.

<sup>78</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>79</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections, op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

the sciences: reimagining the field of science outside of its masculine structure. As summarized by Åsberg, Harding's book

announced a turn away from the problems of representing gender in the sciences and advanced instead the science question of feminist theory. She focused on the question of what kind of science feminist approaches would generate. [...] The problematic of gender in science shifted from the equality question towards a concern with fundamental changes within the sciences.<sup>81</sup>

Harding and Fox Keller were pioneers in their emerging field. Their work on the relationship between science and gender in the 1980s opened a path for the new direction that would soon declare itself.

In the 1990s, feminist criticism began to reflect on science, technology, and the body, identifying the many intersections between them. This allowed for the development of a theory that simultaneously became increasingly aware of the positive potential of science and technology on gender relations, but also of its risks. This theory was crystallized in the figure of the cyborg. As summarized by Åsberg,

The cyborg is a figuration containing both promises and threats with respect to the future of our bodies and our sense of self. It symbolizes the destructive as well as the reproductive powers of modern science.<sup>82</sup>

On one side of the spectrum, the hybridizing potential of the cyborg offers an escape from the binary model of gender. As a new kind of emerging identity, the cyborg has yet to be coded with meaning, and according to Haraway, therein lies its emancipating potential. Haraway thus urges feminists to seize the occasion, stating: "The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code."<sup>83</sup> Åsberg also recognizes the emancipating potential of the cyborg, stating how the advent of "techniques for artificial insemination and fertilization" (as famously endorsed by Shulamith Firestone in her book *The Dialectic of Sex* [1970]), as well as the birth control pill, another example of "cyborg

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<sup>81</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

engineering”<sup>84</sup>, afforded women more autonomy over their bodies. She claims that technological adaptation of the human body “has led to a radical redefinition of bodies, identities, and the scientific discourse of biology in general.”<sup>85</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum, many have highlighted the negative potential of science and technology on female subjectivity. For example, Bordo invites us to reflect on how scientific and technological progress may actually be assisting the further polarization of gender by fuelling “fantasies of rearranging, transforming, and correcting”<sup>86</sup> in a culture where “not one part of a woman's body is left untouched, unaltered. No feature or extremity is spared the art, or pain, of improvement.”<sup>87</sup> According to Bordo,

This alteration is an ongoing, repetitive process. It is vital to the economy, the major substance of male-female differentiation, the most immediate physical and psychological reality of being a woman.<sup>88</sup>

Scientific and technological progress can thus serve to fuel hyper-femininity rather than blur gender boundaries. To cite another example, Åsberg points out that in the 1980s there was also “a growing feminist resistance to the misogynist application of genetics and reproductive engineering (such as embryo screening and sex selection resulting in the abortion of female fetuses)”<sup>89</sup>. The group FINRRAGE (Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering), for one, claimed that “the development of reproductive technologies was a form of patriarchal exploitation of women’s bodies.”<sup>90</sup> In her article “Cyberfeminism with a difference”, Braidotti also addresses the risks of technological advances. She cautions against

the paradoxes and the dangers of contemporary forms of disembodiment, which accompany [...] new technologies. I am especially struck by the persistence of pornographic, violent and humiliating images of women that are still circulating through these allegedly “new” technological

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<sup>84</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Susan Bordo, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

products. I worry about designing programmes that allow for “virtual rape and virtual murder”.<sup>91</sup>

The ongoing debate attests not only to the diverse relationships between science, technology, and gender, but to how prevalent the topic is in academic discourse today. Taking note of the valid arguments either side has to offer, Åsberg accordingly states, “It is no use to either demonize science or simply celebrate it”<sup>92</sup>. Such is the point of Braidotti’s discourse. While advocating, like Haraway, science and technology as a means towards a new construction of subjectivity, Braidotti emphasizes her desire to

take my distance equally from, on the one hand, the euphoria of mainstream postmodernists who seize advanced technology and especially cyber-space as the possibility for multiple and polymorphous reembodyments; and on the other hand, from the many prophets of doom who mourn the decline of classical humanism.<sup>93</sup>

While on the one hand recognizing their harmful potential, Braidotti also perceives in science and technology a powerful tool for constructing a new kind of subjectivity. Similarly to how Haraway’s *cyborg* provides a new, as yet uncoded self to which feminists may lay claim, so Braidotti believes science and technology to influence the possibility for the emergence of a female subject, stating that “the current scientific revolution[...] creates powerful alternatives to established practices and definitions of subjectivity.”<sup>94</sup> She insists that in a world where “the blurring of the boundaries between humans and machines is socially enacted at all levels”<sup>95</sup>, women must use technology to their advantage.<sup>96</sup> In other words, science and technology have the potential to both impede our progress towards equality and facilitate it, depending on how we use them. It is thus not enough for them to permeate our culture, we also must learn how to apply them if we are to benefit from the possibilities they offer.

Contemporary representations of the Sleeping Beauty tale, in which the magic

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<sup>91</sup> Rosi Braidotti, “Cyberfeminism with a difference”, *Women’s Studies Utrecht*, July 3, 1996, accessed June 14, 2015, [http://www.let.uu.nl/womens\\_studies/rosi/cyberfem.htm](http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studies/rosi/cyberfem.htm).

<sup>92</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>93</sup> Rosi Braidotti, “Cyberfeminism”, *op. cit.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Posthuman*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, *Metamorphoses*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, “Cyberfeminism”, *op. cit.*



typical of the classical fairy tale version has been substituted with science and technology, allow us to address the multiple ways in which science and technology influence female subjectivity. However, before exploring new territory in fairy tale scholarship, it is first necessary to have a look at what has already been done.

#### 1.4 The Fairy Tale, The Princess, and The Cyborg

The first reason we have chosen *Sleeping Beauty* as the subject of our investigation regards the suitability of the fairy tale in general as a platform for addressing gender issues. Beginning in the 1970s, second-wave feminists focused attention on the role of fairy tales in female acculturation, thereby shining a light on issues that previous formalist and structuralist analyses – such as those of Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss respectively – had overlooked.

Feminist interest in the fairy tale developed out of what Donald Haase calls the latest “vogue” in fairy tale studies. He states:

[I]n the last four decades of the twentieth century [...] an enormous amount of cultural energy and creative, intellectual, and economic capital have been invested internationally in the folktale and fairy tale—and this continues to be the case [...].<sup>97</sup>

Haase recognizes that it is “no mere coincidence that this remarkably rapid expansion parallels other scholarly developments and cultural trends.”<sup>98</sup> According to him,

The simultaneous surge in the study of children’s literature during this period reinforced the rise of critical interest in the fairy tale. In the same vein, sociohistorical and political approaches to literature—which were influenced by Marxism, critical theory, and the sociopolitical dissent of the 1960s and 1970s—focused a critical light on classical fairy tales, which were thought to have been co-opted by a conservative bourgeois ideology and enlisted in the repressive cultural indoctrination of children. The feminist critique of fairy tales, which emerged explosively in the 1970s, also fueled public debate in the West about the social value and historical role of fairy tales.<sup>99</sup>

It is thus in the 1970s that the question of gender representation monopolized

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<sup>97</sup> Haase, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

discussions of the fairy tale, taking the form of a debate between those who considered the fairy tale an appropriate model for young women, and those who admonished its misogynistic messages.

Prior to the 1970s, De Beauvoir pre-empted feminist fairy tale criticism as early as 1949. In *The Second Sex*, she condemns fairy tales for teaching the young girl that “to be happy, she has to be loved; to be loved, she has to await love.”<sup>100</sup> Because of this passive role attributed to women, De Beauvoir stresses that “only their beauty is asked of them in most cases”, teaching young women that “one must always be pretty to conquer love and happiness”<sup>101</sup>. De Beauvoir thus plants the seeds for the principle debate that would soon take over the domain of fairy tale studies: to what extent do fairy tales assist in the acculturation of women into submissive roles?

Triggered by the publication of Alison Lurie’s article “Fairy Tale Liberation” in 1970, feminist interest in the fairy tale suddenly erupted. As Haase summarizes, Lurie argues “that strong female characters could be found not only among the classic fairy tales but also among the much larger and more representative corpus of lesser-known tales”<sup>102</sup>. Coupled with her subsequent publication in 1971, “Witches and Fairies”, Lurie thus lauds the fairy tale as a positive model for young women. She states, “These stories suggest a society in which women are as competent and active as men, at every age and in every class”<sup>103</sup>. In 1972, Marcia Lieberman responded with her article “‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale.” As the title suggests, Lieberman likewise focuses on the influence of the fairy tale in shaping the young girl’s view of herself and the world around her, but in contrast to Lurie, Lieberman insists that this influence is negative. She stresses that the fairy tale teaches young readers what their limitations are based on their sex.<sup>104</sup> Echoing, some of De Beauvoir’s initial thoughts, she insists that these tales place “the focus on beauty as a

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<sup>100</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *op. cit.*, p. 352.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>102</sup> Alison Lurie, “Fairy Tale Liberation”, in *The New York Review of Books*, December 17, 1970, paraphrased in Donald Haase, “Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship”, in *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches*, ed. Donald Haase, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> Alison Lurie, *op. cit.*, p. 42, accessed on December 10, 2015, available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1970/12/17/fairy-tale-liberation/>.

<sup>104</sup> Marcia Lieberman, “‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale”, in *College English*, Vol. 34, No. 3, December 1972, p. 384.

girl's most valuable asset, perhaps her only valuable asset"<sup>105</sup> and teach us that "[g]irls win the prize if they are the fairest of them all; boys win if they are bold, active, and lucky."<sup>106</sup> Lurie and Lieberman put the question of gender representation centre stage in discussions of the fairy tale.

Along with Lieberman, an ever-increasing number of critics took a stand against the passive representations of women in traditional fairy tale narratives. Shawn Jarvis tells us,

Literary and social historians began to look at the negative stereotypes within the canonical tales and how those images conditioned female acculturation. Feminists viewed the most popular fairy tales as a primary site of contention within the civilizing process and argued that the most popular stories shaped the sexual, gender, and social politics of modern society and kept women subordinate to men.<sup>107</sup>

More specifically, many feminist scholars condemned the misogynistic ideology that promoted the relationship between femininity and victimhood. In her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975), Susan Brownmiller claims that fairy tales contribute to women's "indoctrinat[ion] into a victim mentality"<sup>108</sup> and goes as far as to say that fairy tales teach women, in effect, "to be rape victims"<sup>109</sup>. In *Woman Hating* (1974), Andrea Dworkin claims, "In the personae of the fairy tale [...] we find what the culture would have us know about who we are."<sup>110</sup> Women therefore learn to be victims from popular fairy tale heroines:

Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow-white, Rapunzel —all are characterized by passivity, beauty, innocence, and *victimization*. They are archetypal good women — victims by definition. They never think, act, initiate, confront, resist, challenge, feel, care, or question. Sometimes they are forced to do housework.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 385.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Shawn Jarvis, "Feminism", in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

<sup>108</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, New York: Simon, 1975, p. 309.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *Woman Hating*, New York: A Plume Book, 1974, p. 32.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Psychoanalytic analyses of fairy tales likewise provided insight with regards to the question of gender equality. Both Freudian and Jungian interpretations of fairy tales have garnered much critical attention. However, it is not only because of their role in our reception of classical fairy tales but likewise because of their influence on contemporary fairy tale representations that psychoanalytic studies require our attention. As Fernández notes, specifically the works of Bruno Bettelheim and Marie Louise von Franz “are two published works from the seventies that have intensely affected subsequent male and female authors of both critical and fictional works.”<sup>112</sup>

In his famous 1976 study *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Freudian psychologist Bruno Bettelheim counter-argues claims of a gender hierarchy in fairy tales by asserting that a child, regardless of sex, will intuitively associate him or herself with both female and male protagonists. Bettelheim states:

Recently it has been claimed that the struggle against childhood dependency and for becoming oneself in fairy tales is frequently described differently for the girl than for the boy, and that this is the result of sexual stereotyping. Fairy tales do not render such one-sided pictures. Even when a girl is depicted as turning inward in her struggle to become herself, and a boy as aggressively dealing with the external world, these two *together* symbolize the two ways in which one has to gain selfhood: through learning to understand and master the inner as well as the outer world. In this sense the male and female heroes are again projections onto two different figures of two (artificially) separated aspects of one and the same process which *everybody* has to undergo in growing up. While some literal-minded parents do not realize it, children know that, whatever the sex of the hero, the story pertains to their own problems.<sup>113</sup>

Bettelheim’s study has offered important insight into the meaning of fairy tale symbols, and elements of his analysis can be useful in discrediting a gender hierarchy in the fairy tale. However, as a result of his study, Bettelheim was also severely criticized for what was deemed a fundamentally anti-feminist approach. His “methodology was criticized

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<sup>112</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 47. Original: “son dos obras publicadas en los años setenta que han repercutido con mucha intensidad sobre autores y autoras posteriores tanto de obras críticas como de ficción.”

<sup>113</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, New York: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 226.

for being unscientific, biased [against women], and even harmful to children.”<sup>114</sup> Bettelheim was moreover reproached for his “generalizations about children’s responses to fairy tales (disregarding varieties linked to sex, age, social and historical background)”<sup>115</sup>. Nevertheless, Bettelheim has provided us with important tools with which to analyze female fairy tale characters as active agents. For example, in Part II of this dissertation, we will discuss how an application of his proposal of a gender neutral narrative to the Brothers Grimms’ “Dornröschen” helps reevaluate and contest the widespread conceptualization of Sleeping Beauty as passive by framing the question of sleep as one of introspection for both male and female characters rather than one of female submission.

Although his method for destabilizing a gendered reading of fairy tale characters was critically undermined, the idea that fairy tale characters do not necessarily represent a gendered hierarchy persisted in other psychoanalytic studies. Jungian scholar Marie Louise von Franz also discredits gendered readings of fairy tale characters, albeit through another approach. In her 1972 book *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*, von Franz states that male and female identities in the fairy tale are projections of the anima and animus. She says,

A feminine figure in a fairy tale with the whole story circling around it does not necessarily prove that the tale has to do with a woman’s psychology. Many long stories of the sufferings of a woman have been written by men and are the projection of their anima problem.<sup>116</sup>

Like Bettelheim, von Franz has received criticism for an approach that seems simultaneously feminist and anti-feminist. She lifts female fairy tale characters from the gender debate by discrediting the importance of gender in the tales with regards to gender politics, while elsewhere propagating what some have deemed sexist views on femininity.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, the emerging pattern in psychoanalytic analyses of the fairy tale appears to be that there is no direct correlation between the characters’ gender and

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<sup>114</sup> Vanessa Joosen, “Bettelheim, Bruno (1903-1990)”, in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Marie Louise von Franz, *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*, Boston & London: Shambhala, 1993, p. 1-2.

<sup>117</sup> Fernández Rodríguez, for example, criticizes von Franz’s repetitive linking of women to domesticity. Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

cultural gender roles.

In 1991, Clarissa Pinkola Estés, another Jungian scholar, echoes the viewpoint that female and male characters in stories do not necessarily speak to the social roles of women and men. In *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, Estés states, “In psychological interpretation we call on all aspects of the fairy tale to represent the drama within a single woman’s psyche.”<sup>118</sup> As an example, she gives the story of Bluebeard, whom she says “represents a deeply reclusive complex which lurks at the edge of all women’s lives, watching, waiting for an opportunity to oppose her.”<sup>119</sup> Although these critics’ approaches differ, they each contest the misogynistic reputation of fairy tales by suggesting that fairy tale characters, whether male or female, are not direct representations of the gender they embody. Despite the fact that this approach has often been rejected by feminist scholars, as suggested by the myriad of criticism directed at Bettelheim and von Franz, we will defend its merit in our application of psychoanalytic tools to the study of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Concern with gender issues in fairy tales went beyond their reception; critical interest in fairy tales went hand in hand with their creative production. As Haase states in *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches* (2004), “Awareness of the fairy tale as a primary site for asserting and subverting ideologies of gender is evident throughout the genre’s history”<sup>120</sup>. He elaborates “how women have – for three hundred years at least – quite intentionally used the fairy tale to engage questions of gender and to create tales spoken or written differently from those told or penned by men.”<sup>121</sup> Thus, he states how in seventeenth-century France, the *conteuses* (female fairy tale writers) such as Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard, Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier de Villandron, and Henriette-Julie de Castelnau, Comtesse de Murat<sup>122</sup> “experimented with constructions and reconstructions of the male and female, and thus gave voice to a

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<sup>118</sup> Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women Who Run With The Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1992, p. 44.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Donald Haase, “Preface”, in *Fairy Tales and Feminism*, *op. cit.*, p. vii.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii-ix.

<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Wanning Harries, “Literary Fairy Tale”, in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, p. 580.

complex fairy-tale language that was distinct from that of Charles Perrault”<sup>123</sup>. Female authors continued to pen subversive tales throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially in Germany where female authors like Benedikte Naubert, Bettina von Arnim, and Gisela von Arnim rejected the predominant male perspective at the time. As Haase notes, these female authors

recognized the predominantly male point of view that characterized influential fairy-tale publications, especially those by Johann Karl August Musäus and the Brothers Grimm, and they consciously challenged these collections by creating a female perspective and by pointedly deconstructing the models of gender offered by their more widely read male counterparts [...].<sup>124</sup>

Since the second half of the twentieth century, feminist fairy tale authors like Angela Carter, Anne Sexton, and Margaret Atwood have continued to render the fairy tale an important site for addressing gender issues. According to Haase,

Responding to the same cultural trends that have motivated scholars to critically reexamine the fairy-tale tradition, creative writers for both children and adults have produced an enormous corpus of new tales that question, challenge, subvert, revise, and otherwise adapt classical tales.<sup>125</sup>

The idea that emerges is that, beginning with second-wave feminism and overlapping temporally with the third wave, feminist fairy tale scholarship was and continues to be predominantly concerned with either the identification of gender inequality in these tales or with its subversion through powerful rewritings. Despite some notable digressions from this model – including psychoanalytic studies of the fairy tale which have themselves been continuously undermined in the feminist arena – the overwhelming trend seems to be the perpetuation of the belief that female fairy tale characters of the classical fairy tale tradition are passive. Note that Haase credits seventeenth-century female writers with establishing a language “*distinct* from that of Charles Perrault”<sup>126</sup>. As does he credit nineteenth-century female authors with rejecting

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<sup>123</sup> Donald Haase, “Preface”, in *Fairy Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. vii-viii.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii.

<sup>125</sup> Donald Haase ed., *The Greenwood Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>126</sup> Donald Haase, “Preface”, in *Fairy Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. vii-viii.



the patriarchal notions of the Brothers Grimm. Asserting opposition to the classical male-authored tales has been key.

We see a similar attitude in analyses of the Sleeping Beauty tale specifically. Like in discussions of the fairy tale in general, Sleeping Beauty has predominantly attracted negative criticism from feminist scholars. For example, many have suggested that the tale endorses the suppression of female sexual identity. Fernández stresses that “negation of feminine desire is a constant throughout all of the versions of Sleeping Beauty”<sup>127</sup>. In her article “Women Subdued: The Abjection and Purification of Female Characters in Perrault’s Tales”, Anne Duggan echoes the belief that Sleeping Beauty is about policing female sexuality, insisting that the tale “focus[es] on the dangers of female desire and the importance of a patriarchal law to keep these desires from wreaking havoc on the body politic”<sup>128</sup>. Dworkin has likewise addressed the glorification of female passivity in the tale. She states:

For a woman to be good, she must be dead, or as close to it as possible. Catatonia is the good woman’s most winning quality. Sleeping Beauty slept for 100 years, after pricking her finger on a spindle. The kiss of the heroic prince woke her. He fell in love with her while she was asleep, or was it because she was asleep?<sup>129</sup>

In her essay “Intellectualizing Smut: The Role of Tradition in Anne Rice’s Sleeping Beauty,” Sarah Lash offers a similar viewpoint, stating, “Implicit in oral and literary versions of the tale is a paradigm of female passivity and submission.”<sup>130</sup> In the *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, Harriet Goldberg asserts that, “Given the social changes with regard to gender roles in Western societies, it is inconceivable for the fairy-tale princess of the classic ‘Sleeping Beauty’ tradition to serve as a model for female readers in contemporary fairy tales.”<sup>131</sup> Karen Rowe also condemns the tale as one which

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<sup>127</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 33. Original: “la negación del deseo femenino es una constante en todas las versiones de ‘La bella durmiente’”.

<sup>128</sup> Anne Duggan, “Women Subdued: The Abjection and Purification of Female Characters in Perrault’s Tales”, in *The Romanic Review*, 99.2, 2008, p. 223.

<sup>129</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>130</sup> Sarah Lash, “Intellectualizing Smut: The Role of Tradition in Anne Rice’s Sleeping Beauty”, in *Marvels & Tales*, 22.1, 2008, p. 67.

<sup>131</sup> Harriet Goldberg, “Sleeping Beauty” in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. Jack Zipes, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000, p. 476, quoted in Sarah Lash, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

“glorif[ies] passivity, dependency, and self-sacrifice as a heroine’s cardinal virtues”<sup>132</sup>. Even Lurie, who famously made her argument in favour of fairy tales’ positive influence on women, makes clear that the “strong female characters” to whom she refers do not include Sleeping Beauty, who, instead, is representative of “an extreme form of [...] passivity”<sup>133</sup>. The overwhelming judgment is that Sleeping Beauty is unequivocally passive.

While one branch of feminist criticism condemns the tales’ negative message regarding female representation, others, though much fewer in number, counter-argue that female agency does persist in these tales. As we have seen in our discussion on the history of fairy tale criticism, some psychoanalytic approaches contribute to the debate regarding gender politics by circumventing it altogether. Thus, while Sleeping Beauty’s catatonic state has served as the ultimate symbol of feminine passivity, according to Bettelheim, it represents “nothing but a time of quiet growth and preparation”<sup>134</sup> during the child’s (male or female) transition from childhood to adulthood. As a Jungian psychologist, von Franz has also lifted Sleeping Beauty from the gender debate by characterizing the tale as a potential representation of a man’s “anima problem.” Von Franz, also being concerned with archetypes, accordingly calls Sleeping Beauty “a very archaic and very archetypal motif [of...] a feminine figure remaining dormant and reappearing after a time.”<sup>135</sup> The Jungian scholar thus distances herself from the many feminist readings that emphasize the passive connotations of Sleeping Beauty’s catatonic state, instead putting equal weight on the fact that she also wakes up. Martine Hennard Dutheil De la Rochère has also highlighted the potential for female activity in the tale, although her analysis is limited to Perrault’s version. In her article “But Marriage Itself Is No Party: Angela Carter’s Translation of Charles Perrault’s ‘La Belle au Bois Dormant’; or, Pitting the Politics of Experience against the Sleeping Beauty Myth” (2010), she claims that with regards to “La Belle au bois dormant” the “disparity

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<sup>132</sup> Karen Rowe, “Feminism and Fairy Tales”, in Jack Zipes, *Don’t Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy Tales in North America and England*, New York and London: Routledge, 2012, p. 210.

<sup>133</sup> Alison Lurie, “Witches and Fairies: Fitzgerald to Updike”, in *The New York Review of Books*, December 2, 1971, accessed on December 10, 2015, available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1971/12/02/witches-and-fairies-fitzgerald-to-updike/>.

<sup>134</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>135</sup> Marie Louise von Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

between popular perceptions of the story and the reality of Perrault's text [indicates] that the fairy tale was a more complex document than most critics of the story were suggesting."<sup>136</sup> She asserts that it "contain[s] a genuine potential for women's emancipation" and "easily lends itself to a feminist reading that mocks the influence of sentimental stories that fool girls into marrying young"<sup>137</sup> rather than inscribing it. Feminist author Angela Carter herself has similarly claimed in her article "The Better to Eat You With" (1976) that despite having expected a strongly patriarchal view in Perrault's contes, she found that "Charles Perrault, academician, folklorist, pedant, but clearly neither nutter nor regressive, takes a healthily abrasive attitude to his material."<sup>138</sup> De la Rochère adds that Carter, in fact,

rehabilitated Perrault as a progressive writer against feminist indictments of the male-authored (Western, privileged, white) fairy-tale canon. Rather than subverting Perrault's tales, indeed, I wish to argue that Carter *reclaimed them for feminism* [...].<sup>139</sup>

Analyses that highlight the emancipating potential of the Sleeping Beauty tale are rare. Moreover, even if Perrault's version has been identified as progressive by a few feminist critics, the same cannot be said for other versions of the tale. Most often, Basile's, Perrault's and the Brothers Grimms' versions are considered as sharing a patriarchal ideology. Such is Fernández's conviction: the fairy tale scholar claims that feminist revisions allowing for alternative ideologies did not surface until after the Grimms' publication<sup>140</sup>, and in her taxonomical investigation of Sleeping Beauty she claims that the three classical versions all perpetuate a patriarchal message:

[I]n terms of the archetype, there is a practically total consistency between the versions of the three authors. In Grimm, like in their predecessors, the marriage is the source of absolute happiness; the heroine is passive, virtuous, and beautiful and the redeemer inexcusably

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<sup>136</sup> Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, "'But Marriage Itself is No Party': Angela Carter's Translation of Charles Perrault's 'La Belle au Bois Dormant'; or, Pitting the Politics of Experience against the Sleeping Beauty Myth", in *Marvels & Tales*, 24.1, 2010, p. 132.

<sup>137</sup> Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>138</sup> Angela Carter, "The Better to Eat You With", in *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writing*, London: Vintage, 1998, p. 452-53, quoted in Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>139</sup> Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>140</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

masculine.<sup>141</sup>

Even well into the second decade of the twenty-first century, some of the most notable fairy tale scholars perpetuate the same criticism. As recently as 2014, in her article “Show and Tell: Sleeping Beauty as Verbal Icon and Seductive Story”, Maria Tatar calls Sleeping Beauty not just passive, but “supremely passive”<sup>142</sup>. In his 2011 article “Kiss and Tell: Orality, Narrative, and the Power of Words in ‘Sleeping Beauty’”, Haase asks, “Isn’t it possible that the tale of Sleeping Beauty is ‘about’ something else, that it has a different potential – multiple potentialities – that can give us reason to think of canonical tales in new ways?”<sup>143</sup> While his engaging essay about the Sleeping Beauty tales’ “underlying preoccupation with the power of storytelling”<sup>144</sup> answers his question in the affirmative, that “something else” is removed from gender politics, once again closing off the possibility of reading Sleeping Beauty as an active agent. In *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World* (2002), Jack Zipes states, “‘Sleeping Beauty’ is not only about female and male stereotypes and male hegemony, it is also about death, our fear of death, and our wish for immortality.”<sup>145</sup> Perhaps. But apparently it is first and foremost about male hegemony. Tatar, Haase and Zipes all confirm the notion that a gendered reading of the fairy tale will almost always herald a passive Sleeping Beauty.

To be sure, the second-wave feminist approach to fairy tales whereby gender inequalities are identified and condemned was fundamental in revealing the fairy tale as an important site for addressing gender issues when the concern first arose. However, the binary model to which fairy tale criticism still often adheres has already been rejected by third-wave feminism in terms of methodology in feminist theory. As a

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44. Original: “en el plano de lo arquetípico la consistencia es prácticamente total en las versiones de los tres autores. En Grimm, como en sus predecesores, el matrimonio es fuente de felicidad absoluta; la heroína es pasiva, virtuosa y bella y el redentor inexcusablemente masculino.”

<sup>142</sup> Maria Tatar, “Show and Tell: Sleeping Beauty as Verbal Icon and Seductive Story”, in *Marvels & Tales*, 28.1, 2014, p. 156.

<sup>143</sup> Donald Haase, “Kiss and Tell: Orality, Narrative, and the Power of Words in ‘Sleeping Beauty’”, in *Études de lettres: Des Fata au fées: regards croisés de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, 3-4, 2011, accessed on November 17, 2015, available at <http://edl.revues.org/210>.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>145</sup> Jack Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World, Second Edition*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002, p. 215.

theoretical framework for reading fairy tales, it is equally outdated. The typical approach taken by feminist fairy tale scholars therefore needs revision.

Today, third-wave feminism has provided us with the tools to revisit some of these tales and reveal the complexity of gender relations inherent to each. Such an approach would not be rooted in liberating the fairy tale heroines from their oppressive roles as damsels in distress (as many rewritings seek to do), but would rather question their position as passive to begin with. Indeed, the emblematic blurring of boundaries inherent to third-wave feminism stipulates the elimination of the boundary between active and passive, rendering the notion of absolute judgments obsolete. During our investigation of the classical versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale in Part II, we aim to challenge univocal conceptions of the fairy tale princess as passive by arguing how each individual version supports female activity in a distinctive way. Although the subject matter is different, our approach embraces an aspect of the concept of situated knowledge; just as the umbrella term “Woman” no longer adequately expresses the individuality of each woman, so, too, is “Sleeping Beauty” too inadequately homogenizing of a term. Our aim is to challenge the widespread belief that all Sleeping Beauty tales are ideologically identical by demonstrating why each Sleeping Beauty, like each individual woman, displays a unique subjectivity.

The new theoretical tools of third-wave feminism allow us not only to address the drawbacks of second-wave feminist methodology with regards to the analysis of classical fairy tales; they likewise provide us with the instruments to interpret the new kind of subjectivities emerging in the wake of our scientific and technological era. Haraway has pointed out that within the broad categories of science and technology, the cyborg is a staple of modern medicine. She contends, “Modern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices, in an intimacy and with a power that was not generated in the history of sexuality.”<sup>146</sup> Today, the unprecedented historical figure of the cyborg is reflected in the image of the contemporary Sleeping Beauty; in twentieth-and twenty-first century literature and cinema, Sleeping Beauty is no longer a fairy tale princess, but a patient in a medical context. This reconfiguration allows us to analyze various channels through which science and technology in the medical field affect female subjectivity.

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<sup>146</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, *op. cit*, p. 150.

To reiterate Åsberg's observation, Haraway's cyborg is not just a physical manifestation of the interaction of machine and body. Rather, the cyborg is a metaphor for the myriad of complex and contradictory ways in which science and technology affect our lives. Our dissertation takes stock of these different forms of interaction. In our analysis of contemporary *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts, we will investigate three distinct relationships between science, technology, and the body in medicine.

We will first study how medical technology – including vaccines, devices, and procedures – contributes to the reinforcement or subversion of female subjectivity in our contemporary corpus. Next, we will analyze the implications of professional conduct versus abuse of power in interactions between the patient and the medical figure – that is, doctors, nurses, and technicians. Finally, we will evaluate the limits of medical discourse in representing the female experience of the body, and investigate to what extent the creative discourse of the patient can challenge this misrepresentation. In our analysis of contemporary *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts, we will thus investigate three distinct avenues through which science and technology can either facilitate female objectification or encourage the emergence of a female subject.

In order to evaluate the effect of science and technology on female subjectivity in contemporary *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts, we must first examine the nature of female subjectivity in *Sleeping Beauty* hypotexts. Firstly, this allows us to analyze how the historical context and content of *Sleeping Beauty*'s classical versions and previous oral and literary variants contributed to the conceptualization of *Sleeping Beauty* as passive. It also provides us with an opportunity to challenge the notion of absolute judgments by investigating how each classical version upholds *Sleeping Beauty* as an active agent in a unique way. Lastly, an in-depth study of the three classical versions serves as a basis for the selection of our contemporary corpus; by becoming better acquainted with the various manifestations and meanings of the six fairy tale elements comprising the *Sleeping Beauty* Model, we will be able to better identify and interpret them in contemporary works. Thus, in order to go forward, we must first go back.

**PART II**  
**PUTTING ABSOLUTE JUDGMENTS TO SLEEP:**  
**FEMALE PASSIVITY AND ACTIVITY IN SLEEPING BEAUTY HYPOTEXTS**





Since the 1980s and 1990s, third-wave feminists have rejected the binary framework as an appropriate methodological approach in feminist theory. Instead of propagating oppositions like active/passive or mind/body, they endorsed a theory of subjectivity based on the conceptualization of the subject in terms of multiplicity and hybridization. This new approach revealed the complexity of each subject, allowing the individuality of each woman, rather than a homogenizing and biased stereotype, to emerge. While this framework has become the basis of third-wave feminist theory, it has yet to permeate fairy tale scholarship.

In the 1970s, feminist scholars turned their attention to the role of fairy tales in young women's lives. Most of these studies concluded that the fairy tale was a harmful educational aid, teaching girls how to be passive and submissive. Sleeping Beauty has been at the centre of this argument; her comatose and paralyzed body has served as the ultimate symbol of female passivity. It has likewise perpetuated the notion *woman as object*, thereby reinforcing the traditional mind/body dichotomy that sees women as lacking the capacity for self-definition and, instead, "awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject", as Judith Butler contends. This negative perception of Sleeping Beauty continues to dominate contemporary feminist fairy tale scholarship today. As recently as 2014, one of the foremost scholars in the domain of fairy tale studies, Maria Tatar, identified Sleeping Beauty as "supremely passive". Along with Tatar, countless others reject the possibility of an active Sleeping Beauty.

Studies of the fairy tale since the beginning of the third-wave have encompassed research into the subversive writings of little-known female authors from the seventeenth century onwards and the empowering messages of contemporary feminist fairy tale revisions. However, the male-authored classical tales have retained their status as symbols of ultimate female submissiveness and objectification. This is especially true of Sleeping Beauty tales, the misogynistic connotations of which continue to be the site of feminist contempt.

Despite the insistence on the part of feminist scholars that Sleeping Beauty is unequivocally passive, it is almost inconceivable that the fairy tale princess still garners such academic consensus considering the changes introduced by third-wave feminist methodology. This new methodology, which prioritizes focus on the individuality of each woman as opposed to generalized conclusions of woman's common subjugated status, rejects absolute judgments. An application of a third-wave framework to the analysis of Sleeping Beauty would consequently reveal the complexities of female subjectivity in these tales rather than woman's compulsory relegation to oppression. Our objective is to show not only how each classical version of the Sleeping Beauty tale also holds within its pages an active female figure, but that each Sleeping Beauty, like each woman, can be unique and active in her own way. Thus, with the help of her female protectors, a dynamic that Clarissa Pinkola Estés calls the *female-to-female nutritional system*, Basile's Talia returns to a lively state following her passive slumber upon becoming a mother and nurturing her children. Perrault's tale lends itself to a reading that reveals the prevalence of female subjectivity through the affirmation, rather than subjugation, of female desire and pleasure. The Brothers Grimms' Sleeping Beauty becomes active if the German tale is recognized as a story about Dornröschen's passage from girlhood to womanhood. Whereas in the context of the mind/body dichotomy the woman is considered a passive entity waiting to be defined by a man, each classical version of the Sleeping Beauty tale presents the female body as a creator of meaning for itself, whether through motherhood, sexual agency, or sexual maturation. Despite the nearly univocal conclusions reached by second-wave feminists regarding Sleeping Beauty's passive status, our reading of Sleeping Beauty will show that she emerges as a dynamic female figure in each version of the tale. Just as third-wave feminist theory rejects absolute judgments, so, too, does each classical version of Sleeping Beauty reject a single-perspective approach; instead, a comprehensive analysis takes stock of the co-presence of female passivity and activity in each story.

In order to overturn dominant ideologies, however, it is first necessary to understand their roots. For this reason, before arguing for alternative interpretative possibilities, we must investigate more closely the reasons due to which Sleeping Beauty has come to be regarded so widely as passive in the first place. While a reading of the classical versions as representing a submissive female model can be attributed to

textual indications, historical determinants have also influenced *Sleeping Beauty*'s reception. In fairy tale criticism, scholars often refer to a combination of three extra-textual factors when determining a work's ideological framework. Firstly, this includes an investigation of how the ideas and morals propagated in a tale's earlier oral and literary variants persist in versions down the line – a process that Zipes calls *duplication*.<sup>147</sup> Secondly, in a climate of academic controversy regarding the topic of intentionality, fairy tale critics still also regard authorial intent as an important interpretative tool; this is particularly the case in studies of the tales of the Brothers Grimm, whose patriarchal beliefs are well-chronicled. A third predominant factor that appears time and again in fairy tale criticism as an indicator for the moral framework of a text is the era in which it was published; that is, gender politics in a particular work have been said to reflect the gender relations of the historical era in which the author lived. In the following pages, we will thus evaluate how earlier oral and literary variants, documented information regarding the author's values, as well as gender politics in the author's era have worked in tandem with the classical texts themselves to reify *Sleeping Beauty* as a submissive female figure.

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<sup>147</sup> Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994, l. 141. Kindle edition. For all citations retrieved from Kindle editions that do not have references to page numbers, we have substituted page numbers (p.) with Kindle locations (l.).

## 2.1 The Historical Roots of Female Passivity in Sleeping Beauty Hypotexts

According to a vast majority of critics, the three classical Sleeping Beauty tales – that is, Basile’s “Sole, Luna e Talia”, Perrault’s “La Belle au bois dormant” and the Brothers Grimms’ “Dornröschen” – propagate the same patriarchal ideology. In Part I, we referred to some of the general criticism Sleeping Beauty has attracted, citing scholars like Tatar, Fernández, and Duggan, who claim that Sleeping Beauty is a tale about endorsing female passivity and sublimating female desire. The way in which patriarchal ideology is advanced, however, differs depending on the version. In addition to the generalized judgments regarding Sleeping Beauty’s lack of agency, predominantly drawn from the implications of her comatose and paralyzed body, differences between the three texts have contributed individually to the reification of Sleeping Beauty as a passive figure. For this reason, we will now investigate the particularities inherent to each individual text so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the different factors contributing to Sleeping Beauty’s submissive status.

### 2.1.1 A Historical Reading of Giambattista Basile’s “Sole, Luna e Talia”

Giambattista Basile published “Sole, Luna e Talia” in 1634 along with forty-nine other tales in a collection entitled *Pentamerone* or *Lo cunto de li cunti overo lo trattenemiento de peccerille*. It is chronologically the first of the three classical Sleeping Beauty versions. In spite of poorer public recognition due to the complicated Neapolitan dialect in which it was originally written, it has been fiercely condemned in feminist criticism for its misogynistic ideology. The plot of the tale is as follows:

A king calls upon the wise men and soothsayers of his kingdom to foresee the future of his newborn daughter, Talia. It is thus predicted upon her birth that Talia’s life would be threatened by a splinter of flax. As a preventative measure, the king bans the

use of spindles in his kingdom. However, when Talia grows up, she is overcome with curiosity upon seeing an old woman spinning and asks to try for herself. As soon as she does, a splinter of flax gets caught under her fingernail and she falls to the ground dead. Her father thereafter locks her in the castle, leaving her under a brocade canopy on a velvet chair, and departs hoping to forget the event ever occurred. Sometime later, a young king comes across Talia's castle during a hunting expedition. His falcon flies through the window of the castle, and refuses to return when beckoned. Seeing no other way in, the king acquires a ladder with which to get inside. He spots Talia and, believing her to be asleep, tries to reanimate her to no avail. Unable to resist her beauty, he lays Talia on the bed where he "couze li frutte d'amore"<sup>148</sup>, as Basile metaphorically refers to the sexual encounter, and leaves. Nine months later, Talia gives birth to twins, named Sun and Moon, who are cared for by two fairies who place the children at their mother's breasts. Upon mistaking the mother's finger for her nipple, the children suck out the splinter of flax, thereby awakening their mother. Eventually, the second king returns to the castle and falls in love with his new family. Although he attempts to hide them from his wife, the queen, she becomes suspicious of her husband's frequent disappearances. When she learns from her steward about Sun, Moon and Talia, she orders her cook to kill the children and feed them to her husband. The cook, taking pity on Sun and Moon, substitutes them with lambs, leaving the real twins in the care of his wife. Ultimately, the queen orders Talia to be burned in a fire, but is interrupted when the king arrives at the scene. He orders his wife to be thrown onto the fire instead, marries Talia, and lives happily ever after with her, Sun, and Moon.

In Basile's tale, the paradigm of female passivity is mainly informed by the control male authority places on female sexuality. This control presents itself in three ways: interdiction of female sexual agency, punishment for sexual transgression, and appropriation of the female body for male sexual gratification.

The king's ban of spindles upon hearing that his daughter is in danger because

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<sup>148</sup> Giambattista (Giovanni Battista) Basile, "Sole, Luna e Talia", *Lo cunto de li cunti ovvero lo trattenimento de peccerille*, 1634, Edizione di riferimento: ed. Michele Rak, Milano: Garzanti, 1995, p. 444, accessed February 16, 2016, available at *Biblioteca della Letteratura Italiana*, [http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/pdf/Volume\\_6/t133.pdf](http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/pdf/Volume_6/t133.pdf). Translation: "picked the fruits of love." Translation retrieved from Giambattista Basile, *The Tale of Tales or Entertainment for Little Ones*, trans. Nancy Canepa, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007, p. 423. Kindle edition. Unless otherwise specified, subsequent translations of Basile's "Sole, Luna e Talia" are Nancy Canepa's.

of a splinter of flax constitutes the first. Bettelheim has noted, “It does not take much imagination to see the possible sexual connotations in the distaff”<sup>149</sup>. By virtue of the threatening material’s characterization as a sharp object capable of puncturing the body, the splinter of flax, like the spindle from which it derives, bears the phallic symbolism of sexual penetration. The phallic nature of the flax suggests that Talia’s encounter with it constitutes a sexual experience. It is not, however, the sexual undercurrents in the tale that have provoked a negative response from feminist critics, but rather the patriarchal ideology in which they are rooted. Talia’s encounter with the flax is not only called a danger, suggesting its perilous quality, but it is important to consider that only men characterize it as such. In her article, “Archetypal Interpretation of ‘Sleeping Beauty’: Awakening the Power of Love”, Grace Hogstad notes in this regard,

The only parent in this tale is the father, as if he alone, without the help of the mother, is responsible for the birth of the child. He confers with wise men instead of the wise women of the later versions [...].<sup>150</sup>

The absence of Talia’s mother in combination with the fact that male diviners determine Talia’s future seems to reaffirm the traditional mind/body dichotomy which, in the words of De Beauvoir, perceives woman as “nothing other than what man decides”<sup>151</sup>. The masculine authority that considers the incident with the splinter of flax as threatening tries to avoid it altogether. In banning the use of spinning in his kingdom, Talia’s father takes precautions “pe sfoire sto male scuntro”<sup>152</sup>. In the first place, the event’s negative characterization could be interpreted as a reference to the king’s sorrow should physical harm befall his daughter, suggesting that his reaction is in line with that of any protective father. However, the sexual connotation of the splinter suggests that the king’s attempts to neutralize the threat could be read as his hopeful evasion of the circumstance because of which his daughter would lose her virginity. In

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<sup>149</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

<sup>150</sup> Grace Hogstad, “Archetypal Interpretation of ‘Sleeping Beauty’: Awakening the Power of Love”, *Mythological Studies Journal*, 2, 2011, accessed December 12, 2015, available at *Mythological Studies Journal*, <http://journals.sfu.ca/pgi/index.php/pacificamyth/article/viewArticle/29>.

<sup>151</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>152</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. 443. Translation: “aimed at avoiding that baleful encounter”, p. 422.

this light, the king's grief may not be caused by the physical loss of a daughter, but by the embarrassment caused by his daughter's premarital sexual activity.

Eventually, the father's interdiction proves insufficient given Talia's ultimate violation of it through her encounter with the spindle. In *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp explains how the functions of interdiction and violation "form a paired element"<sup>153</sup> in many fairy tales. Tatar also notes how "Prohibition/violation [...] stand as one of the fairy tale's most fundamental plot sequences."<sup>154</sup> In Basile's tale, Talia violates her father's interdiction by seeking out the spindle. When she is grown up, she sees a woman spinning pass by her window and, overcome with curiosity, invites her to come in:

Ma, essenno Talia grannecella e stanno a la fenestra, vedde passare na vecchia che filava; e perché n'aveva visto mai conocchia né fuso e piacennole assai chello rocioliare che faceva, le venne tanta curiosità che la fece saglire 'ncoppa [...].<sup>155</sup>

Upon taking the spindle in her hand, the flax punctures the skin beneath her nail and she "cadette morta 'n terra"<sup>156</sup>. Considering the flax's negative characterization by the men in the tale coupled with Talia's disregard for her father's interdiction, the invocation of death following an event with such a symbolically erotic value could be read as a punishment for female sexual transgression. Such is the conclusion reached by Hogstad who claims, "If one accepts these symbols as masculine, then the flax or spindle pricking the princess to sleep means the masculine principle putting the feminine principle to sleep"<sup>157</sup>.

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<sup>153</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott and Louis Wagner, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009, l. 782. Kindle edition.

<sup>154</sup> Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 165.

<sup>155</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.* Translation: "But when Talia came to be a big girl and was looking out the window one day, she saw an old woman who was spinning pass by. Since she had never seen a distaff or a spindle and was greatly pleased by all that winding, she became so curious that she had the woman come up", p. 423.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: "fell dead to the ground", p. 423.

<sup>157</sup> Grace Hogstad, *op. cit.*

In an earlier variant of Sleeping Beauty, the Norse myth of Brunhild, recognized critically as one of the sources of the Sleeping Beauty tradition<sup>158</sup>, the valkyrie Brunhild is “stung with the thorn of sleep” because of her disobedience:

One of Odin’s Valkyries was named Brunhild, and she was the most beautiful of all the maidens that chose heroes for his war-host. But she was wilful too, and did not always obey the All-father’s behests. And when Odin knew that she had sometimes snatched the doomed from death, and sometimes helped her chosen friends to victory, he was very angry. And he drove her away from Gladsheim, and sent her, friendless and poor, to live among the children of men, and to be in all ways like them. But, as she wandered weary and alone over the earth, the good old King of Isenland saw her beauty and her distress, and pity and love moved his heart; and, as he had not children of his own, he took her for his daughter, and made her his heir. And not long afterward he died, and the matchless Brunhild became queen of all the fair lands of Isenland and the hall of Isenstein. When Odin heard of this, he was more angry still; and he sent to Isenstein, and caused Brunhild to be stung with the thorn of Sleep.<sup>159</sup>

Cause and effect are laid out unambiguously as transgression and punishment in the myth of Brunhild; the valkyrie is put to sleep because she disobeys a patriarchal authority. Like Brunhild, Talia is put to sleep after violating her father’s wishes. The similarities between “Sole, Luna e Talia” and the myth of Brunhild suggest that the motif of sleep in Basile’s tale could have a similarly punitive connotation.

While Basile thus seems to promote the control of female sexuality through Talia’s comatose state, Talia’s transgression is arguably further punished by a double state of imprisonment. Upon his daughter’s death, Talia’s father abandons her and the palace forever locking the doors behind him “pe scordarese ‘n tutto e pe tutto la memoria de sta disgrazia”<sup>160</sup>. Before thus imprisoning her in the castle, he places her

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<sup>158</sup> For example, in Heidi Anne Heiner 2010, Grace Hogstad 2011, Carolina Fernández Rodríguez 1998.

<sup>159</sup> “Brunhild”, *Sleeping Beauties: Sleeping Beauty and Snow White Tales from Around the World*, ed. Heidi Anne Heiner, Nashville: SurLaLune Press, 2010, p. 13. Kindle edition.

<sup>160</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. 444. Translation: “to completely forget the memory of this disgrace.” Our translation. We did not use Nancy Canepa’s translation in this case since she translates “disgrazia” with “misfortune” which, in our opinion, does not render the array of connotations in English.



“seduta a na seggia de velluto, sotta a no bardacchino de ‘mbroccato”<sup>161</sup>. A primary interpretation of such an act suggests that the king is symbolically reviving his daughter by placing her upright as though she were still alive, thereby exhibiting symptoms of denial that commonly manifest following the death of a loved one. It is significant to note, however, that Talia’s death is described as a “desgrazia”, or “disgrace”, meaning “loss of grace,”<sup>162</sup> or loss of “a virtue coming from God”<sup>163</sup>, something with which the loss of virginity may be equated under Catholic ideology. The sexual connotation of her encounter with the splinter is therefore further underscored. In such a light, Talia’s vertical positioning among such rich materials gains a new meaning: it recalls the pervasive religious imagery of the enthroned Virgin Mary. Indeed, it may be stated that Talia is placed in such a way as to recall the state of grace from which the mother of Jesus has arguably never fallen.<sup>164</sup> Talia’s imprisonment is thus not only represented by the walls of the castle in which she is locked, but also by the position of her body through which her father aspires to symbolically undo any evidence of her sexual agency. In this way, Talia’s own body has become a vehicle for patriarchal expression.

Control of female sexuality in fairy tales is not only limited to its interdiction and punishment by male authority; it is also represented by the way in which male characters appropriate the female body for their personal desires, effectively turning women into objects. Sometime after her father’s departure, Talia is visited by a second king who had been hunting with his falcon. Unable to restrain himself because of the girl’s beauty (“pigliato de caudo de chelle bellezze”<sup>165</sup>) the king lays Talia down on the bed where he “couze li frutte d’amore”<sup>166</sup>. In departing immediately after the sexual act, he abandons Talia in a manner recalling that of her father, suggesting that the second

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443-444. Translation: “seated on a velvet chair under a brocade canopy”, p. 423.

<sup>162</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “Disgrace”, 2015, accessed on February 16, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disgrace?show=1>.

<sup>163</sup> *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “Grace”, 2015, accessed on February 16, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/grace>.

<sup>164</sup> Such a comparison does not seem out of place considering that Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 228 likewise discusses the parallels between Talia and the Virgin Mary on the basis of the birth of her children, stating: “In this tale Talia, who does not know that she has had intercourse or that she has conceived, has done so without pleasure and without sin. This she has in common with the Virgin Mary, as she, like the Virgin, in such manner becomes the mother of God(s).”

<sup>165</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. 444. Translation: “her beauty had enflamed him”, p. 423.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “picked the fruits of love”, p. 423.

king has substituted the first.<sup>167</sup> Should *picking the fruits of love* have been too ambiguous of an idiom, Basile's reference of nine months – the typical length of pregnancy – and the birth of the children at the end of this time period clarifies that a sexual encounter had taken place during the king's visit to Talia's room. Considering that in the text Talia is described as having died as a result of the splinter of flax, some critics have proposed that the king's sexual act is necrophilic in nature. However, the fact that Talia carries a pregnancy to term suggests that she is, in fact, only asleep. Her encounter with the king would therefore be more appropriately characterized as rape given Talia's inability to give or withhold consent in her catatonic state. Such is the conclusion reached by Sarah Lash, who claims that Talia is thus "raped by her 'rescuer'"<sup>168</sup>. In this context, the hunting expedition gains another metaphoric layer, whereby the falcon can be likened to the king's sexual desire, anticipating the sexual act to come when he flies through the open window. As the falcon's mark, Talia, consequently, can be equated to the hunter's prey. Her powerlessness to react to the king's abuse due to her physical immobility has validated assertions like that of Susan Brownmiller who claims that fairy tales teach women how "to be rape victims"<sup>169</sup>.

The similarities between this episode of Basile's tale and two anonymous fourteenth-century texts suggests that the Italian author may have been inspired by earlier literary versions in the Sleeping Beauty tradition. The Catalan poem "Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser" and the French romance *Perceforest* are two of the earliest known literary variants of the Sleeping Beauty tale.<sup>170</sup> Like "Sole, Luna e Talia", each depicts a maiden who is raped while asleep and delivers a child. In the Catalan poem, the young Sor de Plaser inexplicably falls into a deep slumber. During her coma, she is visited and impregnated by Frayre de Joy and gives birth nine months later. In an episode of *Perceforest*, we read that Zellandine, like Talia, had fallen into a deep sleep when a splinter of flax punctured her skin while she was spinning. During her coma, prince Troylus visits her bedchamber and impregnates her. As a result, Zellandine gives birth

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<sup>167</sup> Based on the disappearance of the first king from the narrative prior to the appearance of the second, Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 228 asks, "Might these two kings not be substitutes for each other at different periods in the girl's life, in different roles, in different disguises?"

<sup>168</sup> Sarah Lash, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>169</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *op. cit.*

<sup>170</sup> A third Catalan poem, *Blandin de Cournoualha*, written between the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century is also considered an early written version of the Sleeping Beauty tale (Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 23).

to a son who breaks her sleeping spell by sucking out the splinter in her finger. While Basile seems to have eliminated any direct reference to the sexual act as a rape in his tale, the two preceding versions are more explicit with regards to this issue. Upon awakening, Sor de Plaser is angered that the prince “took away from me my precious virginity. A thing has no value if it is stolen, or taken, obtained by force, or sold for money, but only if it is granted by love.”<sup>171</sup> Once she learns the truth, Zellandine similarly “began to cry because she did not believe that any man could have done something with her body”<sup>172</sup>. Talia gives no such testimony; in fact, whereas other characters in “Sole, Luna e Talia” engage in dialogue, Basile paraphrases Talia’s words, whereby her voice is always filtered and appropriated through the male author’s narration, effectively rendering her voiceless. By excluding any mention of Talia’s criticism of the sexual act, it is as though Basile condones the normalization of sexual violence against women. In fact, Basile underscores that the king’s desire for Talia emerges as a result of her beauty, the irresistibility of which seems to be offered as a justification for rape; we may recall that he takes her to bed because he was “pigliato de caudo de chelle bellezze”<sup>173</sup>. It is likely that Basile was inspired by earlier variants on this occasion as well, since both Frayre de Joy and Troylus are unable to control their urges because of the maiden’s attractive physical appearance. In the Catalan poem, once Frayre de Joy arrives at Sor de Plaser’s bed chamber, he is so enchanted by her beauty that he cannot help but kiss her: “when he saw the fresh color and the beauty of the girl, he said: ‘No eyes have seen such beauty, not even nature could have made it, nor mouth could tell it, nor heart imagine it. [...]’”<sup>174</sup>. Thus he decides, “I will kiss her, and if it is no offence, I will take more pleasure from her”<sup>175</sup> and “he kissed her once more, and more than a hundred times before he took away his lips from their sweetness.”<sup>176</sup> Similarly in *Perceforest*, we read that upon finally approaching the sleeping Zellandine, Troylus is “unable to keep himself from kissing her many times, because of her

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<sup>171</sup> “Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser”, trans. Ester Zago, *Merveilles & contes*, 5.1, May 1991, p. 84.

<sup>172</sup> “The Complete Tale of Troylus and Zellandine from the ‘Perceforest’ Novel: An English Translation”, trans. Susan McNeill Cox, in *Merveilles & contes*, 4.1, May 1990, p. 134.

<sup>173</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.* Translation: “her beauty had enflamed him”, p. 423.

<sup>174</sup> “Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser”, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

beauty.”<sup>177</sup> In addition to apparently excusing sexual violence, Basile moreover seems to reward the king’s actions with regards to Talia by allotting him a hero title. The author seems to applaud sexual assault as a heroic act rather than a criminal one by insinuating that Talia would not have woken up if it weren’t for the king; the children who suck out the flax seed from underneath her fingernail exist only because of his biological contribution. The causality between the male suitor’s actions and the princess’s awakening is even more clearly emphasized in *Perceforest*, in which Troylus performs the sexual act because the goddess Venus convinces him it will wake Zellandine up. She instructs Troylus to:

penetrate inside the tower,  
Where the lady of noble appearance  
Is sleeping, as stiff as stone,  
And afterwards you could through the opening  
Find the fruit where lies a remedy,  
The poor maid will be cured.<sup>178</sup>

Although the king’s role in Talia’s awakening is only implied in “Sole, Luna e Talia”, the similarities between Basile’s tale and *Perceforest* suggest that the Italian author drew inspiration for this episode, as well as the ideological framework, from this earlier variant. Fernández affirms that this is a distinct possibility, considering that Basile may have had access to the Italian translation of *Perceforest* that appeared during the sixteenth century.<sup>179</sup>

While it is thus possible that Basile’s tale was influenced by earlier literary Sleeping Beauty versions, Zipes confirms how the sexual attitudes in “Sole, Luna e Talia” also reflected gender relations in the Italian author’s time. He states,

[I]t is apparent that the salvation of a sleeping princess in the Baroque period was secondary to the fulfilment of male sexual passion and power. That is, the description of the raw power of princes and knights who exploited sleeping women corresponded to social reality.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> “The Complete Tale of Troylus and Zellandine”, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>179</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>180</sup> Jack Zipes, *The Brothers Grimm*, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

Basile's endorsement of male sexual agency and condemnation of female desire continues in the second part of his tale. Unlike the more widely recognized ending of the Brothers Grimms' version in which the story concludes upon Sleeping Beauty's awakening<sup>181</sup>, both Basile and, as we will later see, Perrault, introduce a second plot in which a jealous female rival puts Sleeping Beauty and her children in danger. In *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, Maria Tatar explains that the second parts of "Sole, Luna e Talia" and "La Belle au bois dormant" are actually distinct stories:

The second phase of action in the Italian and the French versions features postmarital conflicts that, according to some folklorists, constitute separate narratives. It is not at all unusual for the tellers of tales to splice stories together to produce a narrative that charts premarital conflicts as well as what happens in the not so happily-ever-after.<sup>182</sup>

Bettelheim attributes the fusion of different storylines to the evolution of myths and fairy tales as a constantly fluctuating process:

Myths and fairy tales alike attain a definite form only when they are committed to writing and are no longer subject to continuous change. Before being written down, these stories were either condensed or vastly elaborated in the retelling over the centuries; *some stories merged with others*.<sup>183</sup>

In his *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp also elaborates at length on the subject of how stories merge over time. This means that motifs from one fairy tale or myth, through their evolution, crisscross into one another, suggesting how the story of Sleeping Beauty eventually merged with another story to form one distinctive tale in the case of "Sole, Luna e Talia" and "La Belle au bois dormant". Owing to its distinct origins, to the fact that it is not included in all classical versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale, as well as to the fact that it is relatively unknown due to the popularity of the Grimms' version, the second plotline is not part of the Sleeping Beauty Model based on

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<sup>181</sup> The Brothers Grimm do, however, include in the first edition of their collection a *separate* tale entitled "The Mother-in-Law" that bears similarities with the second part of Basile's and Perrault's narrative. This tale disappeared from the Grimm's collection in subsequent editions (Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Brothers Grimm*, New York: Norton, 2004, p. 376-7).

<sup>182</sup> Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, New York: Norton, 2002, p. 96.

<sup>183</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Our italics.

which we have selected our contemporary corpus. Nevertheless, in the case of “Sole, Luna e Talia” and “La Belle au bois dormant”, it contributes to the perpetuation of female passivity. With respect to Basile’s tale, this narrative appendix endorses the sublimation of female desire and advocates male sexual agency much like in the first part of the tale. Just as the king evades consequences for the rape of Talia in the first storyline, Fernández points out how in the second storyline “the king enjoys two women for a time”<sup>184</sup> without repercussions. She emphasizes that “male sexual aggression and promiscuity are seen as lesser evils that do not merit additional commentary nor imply any kind of punishment”<sup>185</sup>. In fact, only Talia suffers the consequences of the queen’s vengeance, while the king goes unpunished despite the queen’s attempts to feed him his own children for revenge. Killing the husband’s children for revenge is not an infrequent plot device in Greek mythology. We know from Euripides’ play that Medea kills her own two children in order to punish their father Jason for marrying another woman; to this effect, Basile even writes that the queen has “chillo core de Medea”<sup>186</sup> upon ordering her cook to kill Sun and Moon. Similarly, in the myth of Tereus and Procne, Procne boils their son and feeds them to her husband to avenge her sister. In the case of Basile’s tale, however, owing to the cook’s substitution of Sun and Moon with lambs, the king neither cannibalizes his children nor learns that he almost does. On the other hand, the consequences of the queen’s actions for Talia are manifest. Like in the first part of the tale, Talia’s sexual freedom is threatened: by wanting to kill Sun and Moon the jealous queen seems to be trying to eliminate the proof that the sexual act between her husband and Talia had ever taken place. We are reminded of the way in which Talia’s father attempts to eliminate proof of his daughter’s sexual activity by positioning her in such a way so as to recall the Virgin Mary’s sexual purity and thus to symbolically undo the circumstances by which his daughter loses her virginity. Furthermore, the queen resolves to burn Talia on a fire once she finds out that she has slept with her husband, reminding us of the way Talia is put to death upon her encounter with the spindle, the erotic connotations of which have been discussed. The

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<sup>184</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Original: “el rey goza a un tiempo de dos mujeres”.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37. Original: “la agresividad sexual y la promiscuidad en el hombre están vistas como males menores que no merecen más comentario ni implican ningún tipo de castigo”.

<sup>186</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. 445. Translation: “that heart of Medea”, p. 424.

fact that Talia is to be punished for the sexual act instead of the king suggests that Talia's rape becomes a symbol of female rather than male transgression. In wanting to punish Talia for her sexual misconduct, the queen ostensibly becomes a mouthpiece for patriarchal ideology. While in both the first and second part of Basile's story the punishment with which Talia is threatened is death, the symbolism of the fire by which she is supposed to die in the second plotline needs some further explanation. On the one hand, according to J.E. Cirlot's *A Dictionary of Symbols*, the element of fire represents libido<sup>187</sup>, or sexual desire, suggesting that Talia's intended style of death is synonymous with that for which she is being punished. On the other hand, fire can also symbolize "purification" or "victory over the power of evil (the forces of darkness)"<sup>188</sup>, as though Talia were being purified of her sins.

Although in the end it is the queen that dies instead of Talia, this does not necessarily detract from the patriarchal connotation of the tale. For one, the fact that Talia is rescued by the king from being thrown onto the fire, as well as the fact that the children are only saved by the intervention of the cook, reaffirm, as Fernández claims, that Basile's tale allots men "the role of liberators"<sup>189</sup>. It is thus suggested that Talia's punishment by one patriarchal authority is only prevented because of the actions of another; the hero status of Basile's king is thus reemphasized. From another angle, Basile's tale likewise lends itself to a reading that puts into question Talia's salvation altogether because of the crossover significance of the queen's death on Talia. Carolyn Fay's article "Sleeping Beauty Must Die" (2008) discusses the interchangeability of the jealous female rival and Sleeping Beauty in Perrault's tale.<sup>190</sup> While we will examine her argumentation in more detail when we analyze "La Belle au bois dormant", Fay's article inspired us to take a look at the relationship between the queen and Talia in Basile's tale and the ways in which their interchangeability is evidenced. Among the various elements suggesting that one character may serve as a substitute for the other, their interchangeability is most unambiguously indicated when Talia replaces the first queen as the king's wife, thereby herself becoming queen. Talia's eventual regality is

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<sup>187</sup> J.E. Cirlot, "Fire", in *Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage, London: Routledge, 1990.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Original: "el papel de libertadores".

<sup>190</sup> Carolyn Fay, "Sleeping Beauty Must Die: The Plot's of Perrault's "La Belle au bois Dormant", in *Marvels & Tales*, 22.2, 2008.

foreshadowed earlier in the tale, when her seating among rich materials on a thrown-like velvet chair under a brocade canopy evokes an image of queenship as much as it does the Virgin Mary. Fairy tale scholar Anne Duggan also notes the metaphorical similarity between Talia and the queen in the fact that “the queen dies in the manner in which she intended on killing her rival”<sup>191</sup>. Finally, their interchangeability is implied by the symbolism of the exchange of clothing; when the queen orders Talia to be thrown onto the fire, Talia kneels before her and asks to be allowed to remove her clothes so that they would not be burned. Under the pretense of keeping the beautiful clothes for herself, the queen gladly orders Talia to undress herself. However, not only does Talia offer the queen her clothes, but it is implied that Talia acquires the queen’s regal paraphernalia upon her ascent to the throne. We know from other fairy tales like “Goose Girl” and “Prince and the Pauper” that an exchange of clothes usually signals an exchange of identity. In “Sole, Luna e Talia” it seems to suggest that the queen and Talia have switched places. By virtue of their substitution for one another, another reading of the queen’s death at the end of the tale is that it is Talia who dies, and is thus punished for her transgression after all. Such an interpretation suggests that the policing of female sexual identity propagated in the first part of the tale persists in the second storyline, as well.

There have been many hypotheses as to the sources of inspiration for the second part of Basile’s story. The myths of Medea and Procne, as mentioned above, are two possibilities. It must also be noted that although Basile incorporates the motif of rape and the resulting pregnancy that previously appears in “Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser” and *Perceforest*, Talia is the first of the three Sleeping Beauties to give birth to twins, named Sun and Moon. It is for this reason that Bettelheim proposes that Basile was inspired by

the story of Leto, one of the many loves of Zeus, who bore him Apollo and Artemis, the sun god and the moon goddess. If so, we may assume that, as Hera was jealous of those whom Zeus loved, the queen in this tale is a distant memory of Hera and her jealousies.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Anne Duggan, introduction to “The Jealous Princess”, by Jean-Pierre Camus, trans. Anne Duggan, in *Marvels & Tales*, 22.2, 2008, p. 313.

<sup>192</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 228.



Von Franz echoes that in Basile's tale, "if the children are called Sun and Moon, or Day and Dawn, as in other versions, you are away again in the realm of what we normally call the world of the gods"<sup>193</sup>, thus reaffirming Bettelheim's observation that Talia has given birth to deities. To this effect, Fernández believes that Basile was inspired by Aeschylus' lost tragedy *Aitnaiai*, in which the maiden Thaleia is seduced by Zeus and bears him two children, the Palici. In order to keep his conquest a secret from Hera, Zeus keeps Thaleia hidden underground until she gives birth.<sup>194</sup> Fernández claims:

It is doubtless that points in common exist between this myth, dramatized by Aeschylus, and subsequent versions of "The Sleeping Beauty", especially with respect to Basile's tale, whose protagonist is also called Talia. Moreover, the abduction motif and that of the heroine who gives birth to twins, remaining hidden until the birth of her children, is repeated in Basile's and Perrault's tales.<sup>195</sup>

While analyzing the origin of the second part of Basile's tale helps us identify the source of the jealous female rival, the first part of the story, that which constitutes the core of the Sleeping Beauty myth, leads back to two other ancestors. In the myth of Danaë, Danaë's father Acrisius locks his daughter in a tomb-like subterranean chamber to keep her away from male suitors in order to prevent the fulfilment of an oracle that her son would kill him. Zeus, enamoured with the maiden, turns himself into a golden rain so that he can access Danaë's chamber. It is thus that Danaë becomes pregnant and gives birth to Perseus.<sup>196</sup> We are invited to see parallels with Basile's Talia who, like Danaë, has been imprisoned in an enclosed space by a patriarchal authority. While Acrisius seemingly imprisons his daughter in order to prevent his own prophesized death, on a more symbolic level we see in his actions the attempt to prevent manifestations of his daughter's sexuality, just as Talia's father tries to do by banning the use of spindles in his kingdom. If we look even further back, the interpretation of

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<sup>193</sup> Marie Louise von Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>194</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* Original: "Es indudable que existen puntos en común entre este mito teatralizado por Esquilo y posteriores versiones de 'La bella durmiente', en concreto, la proximidad mayor se da con respecto al cuento de Basile, cuya protagonista se llama asimismo Talía. Pero, además, el motivo del rapto y el de la heroína que engendra dos gemelos, permaneciendo escondida hasta el nacimiento de sus hijos, se repite en los relatos de Basile y de Perrault."

<sup>196</sup> Karl Kerényi, *The Heroes of the Greeks*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1981, p. 148-149.

the myth of Danaë as one of control of female sexuality is supported by the customs on which the myth is based. James Frazer's research of the similarities between tribal behaviour of different peoples of the world and the myth of Danaë suggests that Danaë's seclusion in her dark chamber developed from the mythologization of rituals in which girls were secluded in huts at the onset of puberty.<sup>197</sup> As summarized by Pamela Gossin in her article "'All Danaë to the Stars': Nineteenth-Century Representations of Women in the Cosmos", this was done "to protect the tribe from the ill effects of girls' burgeoning fertility"<sup>198</sup>. We can thus trace how the historical control of female sexual agency was mythologized, and how it later evolved into fairy tale form. It is pertinent that in the myth of Danaë Zeus appears as a golden rain, since Frazer speaks at length about how "not to see the sun"<sup>199</sup>, which the golden rain recalls visually, was an important rule of the ritual of seclusion in many tribes. Even etymologically the name *Zeus* corresponds to sunlight, as it means *day* and comes from the root "dyeu-" meaning "to gleam, to shine"<sup>200</sup>. By interacting with Zeus who arrives in the form of a golden rain, Danaë arguably breaks a fundamental rule regarding female sexuality, similarly to how Talia violates her father's interdiction upon touching the spindle. Moreover, like in the Italian tale, so in the myth the maiden's encounter with her male suitor connotes rape: Danaë has no defences against her omnipotent victimizer just as Talia is helpless in her comatose state. To this effect many artistic re-elaborations of the scene depict Danaë's vulnerability by portraying her sleeping, for example, Hendrik Goltzius (1603) and Gustav Klimt (1907). The symmetrical interpretations to which the myth of Danaë and the tale of Talia lend themselves suggest how the patriarchal precepts of one story likely pervaded the other.

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<sup>197</sup> James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, January 2003, accessed November 18, 2015, available at *The Project Gutenberg*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3623/3623-h/3623-h.htm>.

<sup>198</sup> Pamela Gossin, "'All Danaë to the Stars': Nineteenth-Century Representations of Women in the Cosmos", in *Victorian Studies*, 40.1, 1996, p. 70.

<sup>199</sup> James George Frazer, *op. cit.*

<sup>200</sup> *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "Zeus", 2016, accessed on November 18, 2015, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Zeus>.



FIGURE 1. Hendrik Goltzius, *Danaë Receiving Jupiter as a Shower of Gold*, 1603.

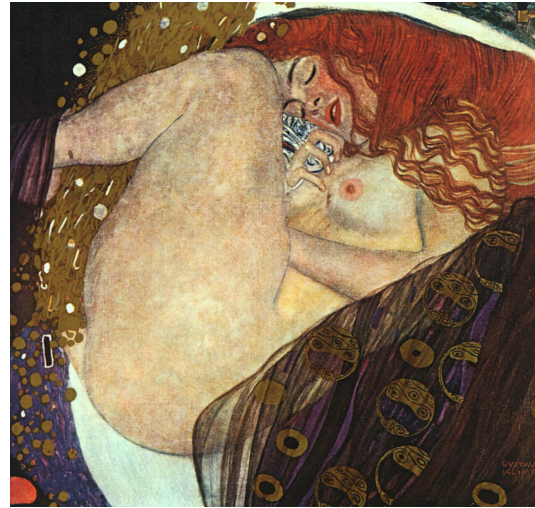


FIGURE 2. Gustav Klimt, *Danaë*, 1907.

The mythological figure of Persephone, or Kore, is possibly another source for Sleeping Beauty. The myth tells of how Persephone, while playing with “the daughters of Okeanos and with Athene and Artemis”<sup>201</sup> in the Nysaeen Fields, is abducted by Hades and taken to the Underworld. In *Gods of the Greeks*, Karl Kerényi writes, “The earth opened, a chasm appeared in the Nysaeen Fields, and from it sprang the Lord of the Underworld [...]. He set the struggling maiden on his golden chariot and carried her off despite her wails”<sup>202</sup>. It is thus that Persephone becomes the Queen of the Underworld. In her daughter’s absence, Demeter leaves Olympus and refuses to allow the Earth to blossom until Persephone’s return. Zeus thus orders Hermes to persuade Hades to release Persephone. However, since she ate a pomegranate seed while in the Underworld, she must return to it every year.<sup>203</sup> The cyclical nature of Persephone’s descent and ascent to and from the Underworld has served as an explanation for the changing seasons, her disappearance standing for winter and her return symbolizing the arrival of spring. Like the name Persephone, that of Talia is also associated with springtime; the name *Thalia* means “‘the blooming’ in the sense of springtime greenery and blossoms”<sup>204</sup>. In the Grimms’ version of Sleeping Beauty, the metaphor of the

<sup>201</sup> Karl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1982, p. 240.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239-240.

<sup>204</sup> *Theoi*, s.v. “Thalia”, 2015, accessed on December 3, 2015, <http://www.theoi.com/Ouranios/KharisThalia.html>.

arrival of spring is further underscored by the fact that the hedge of thorns that encircles Sleeping Beauty's castle once she falls asleep blooms upon her awakening, just as spring returns to the Earth upon Persephone's release. In *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*, von Franz has recognized in the tale of Sleeping Beauty "a special variation" of "the Demeter myth, in which Persephone disappears in winter and in spring returns to her mother on the surface of the earth – that is, of a girl goddess who disappears into death, or sleep, and returns at a certain time"<sup>205</sup>. Fernández has also noted that both the Persephone myth and the story of Sleeping Beauty contain "the motif of the sleeping maiden who is subsequently revived"<sup>206</sup>. Fay likewise points out the connection between the myth and the tale, commenting how "The Sleeping Beauty tale, in its many versions, is often read as a tale of renewal, rebirth, and resurrection, similar to the myth of Demeter and Persephone"<sup>207</sup>. Like Persephone, Talia also metaphorically returns from the Realm of the Dead, a feat which classical mythology has taught us only a few extraordinary heroes have ever accomplished. As a story about the return to life, the tale of Sleeping Beauty, like the myth of Persephone, arguably depicts a woman who reclaims her agency after an extended period of passivity. The similarities between the myth of Persephone and Basile's tale could thus facilitate a reading of Sleeping Beauty as an active female figure. However, the positive connotations of the classical myth with regards to female agency are often overlooked. Fernández, for example, perceives a relationship between Sleeping Beauty and Persephone based exclusively on their common subjugated status. Fernández never suggests that the shared motif of rebirth and renewal in the Persephone myth and the Sleeping Beauty tale could imply female agency. On the contrary, she underlines the maidens' dependence on a male hero for salvation, claiming that both Persephone and Sleeping Beauty are only rescued "thanks to the intervention of a masculine agent"<sup>208</sup>; while Basile's king indirectly causes Talia's awakening by impregnating her, Fernández argues that Persephone is only released because Zeus gives the orders. Persephone's and Talia's submissiveness is not only

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Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. 95 also suggests that Talia's "name derives from the Greek word Thaleia, meaning 'the blossoming one'".

<sup>205</sup> Marie Louise von Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>206</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Original: "el motivo de la doncella dormida y posteriormente reavivada"

<sup>207</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>208</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Original: "gracias a la intervención de un agente masculino".

suggested by their dependence on a male rescuer, but the abduction of Persephone by Hades, like the king's encounter with Talia, has been interpreted as rape. According to Laura Strong in her article "The Myth of Persephone: Greek Goddess of the Underworld", "Another great mystery surrounding the story of Persephone is whether she was just swept away by Hades or actually raped."<sup>209</sup> In her article, Strong interprets Persephone's descent into the Underworld as a metaphor for "the often difficult transition from maidenhood to marriage", whereby her experience "in the realm of the dead" can be likened to "her initiatory experience"<sup>210</sup>. That a transition into womanhood is at the heart of the Persephone myth is also suggested by the circumstance from which Persephone is taken – playing with her friends in a field, an image of childhood. Given that Persephone's abduction symbolizes a girl's initiation into womanhood, coupled with the violence and force with which Persephone is taken despite her protests, Persephone's abduction easily lends itself to a reading that implies sexual violence. Such is the conclusion reached by Tamara Agha-Jaffar in her book *Demeter and Persephone: Lessons From a Myth* in which she states, "I have been no less intrigued by the image of the young Kore, innocently picking flowers only to be brutally initiated into womanhood through abduction and rape."<sup>211</sup> Owing to the similarities between the myth of Persephone and "Sole, Luna e Talia", one might posit that the misogynistic undercurrents of Basile's tale derive from the classical myth.

Tracing Basile's tale to the myths of Persephone or Danaë gives us a hint as to why the Sleeping Beauty lineage necessarily evolved from representations of dormant female figures rather than male ones. While there is no lack of dormant male figures in Greek mythology – including Cupid, whom Psyche observes sleeping, or Endymion, whom the moon goddess visits in the night – as a representation of control of female sexuality the Sleeping Beauty tradition could only have begun with a woman.

As we have seen in "Sole, Luna e Talia", patriarchal policing of female sexual identity in fairy tales can take three forms. The first is interdiction, symbolized by

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<sup>209</sup> Laura Strong, "The Myth of Persephone: Greek Goddess of the Underworld", *Mythic Arts*, 2001, accessed on November 20, 2015, <http://www.mythicarts.com/writing/Persephone.html>.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> Tamara Agha-Jaffar, *Demeter and Persephone: Lessons From a Myth*, Jefferson, North Carolina & London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002, p. 4.

Talia's father's banning of spindles in the kingdom. The second is punishment, as suggested by Talia's transgression, the punitive connotation of her slumber, and her imprisonment in both the castle and in her own body. The third way in which control of female sexual identity manifests in fairy tales is through male appropriation of the female body. In Basile's tale, this is represented by the king's objectification of Talia's beauty resulting in her rape while she is unconscious. All three forms persist in subsequent classical versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale. However, Perrault and the Brothers Grimm omit from their versions any sexual violence, arguably so as to adapt to the new ideologies of their time. It has been suggested that despite the omission of sexually explicit content from their tales, "La Belle au bois dormant" and "Dornröschen" promote patriarchal dogma to no less of an extent than their Italian predecessor.

#### 2.1.2 A Historical Reading of Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant"

In 1697, Charles Perrault published the fairy tale "La Belle au bois dormant" in a collection entitled *Les Contes de me mère l'Oye*. The Sleeping Beauty of Perrault's tale more closely resembles the fairy tale princess we have come to know since Perrault's version has more profoundly permeated public imagination than that of Basile. The plot of "La Belle au bois dormant" begins with the long-awaited birth of the princess. To her christening and to the feast that follows, Belle's parents invite seven fairies, each of whom bestows a gift on the child. An older, eighth fairy – popularly referred to as the *wicked fairy* – had not been invited. Once she shows up anyway, the hosts do not have an extra gold place-setting to offer her like the others. Enraged, she condemns the princess to die upon piercing her finger on a spindle. The last of the initial seven fairies, who had not yet bestowed a gift, changes the death curse to a sleep of one hundred years, from which, she declares, the princess will be awoken by a prince. Belle's father bans the use of spindles in the kingdom in hopes of preventing the curse from coming to pass. At the age of fifteen or sixteen, the princess nevertheless encounters an old woman spinning in a tower and intrigued, she tries spinning herself; as was predicted, the spindle pierces her finger and she falls into a deep sleep lasting

one hundred years. Her father moves her to a gold and silver bed in the best apartment of the castle and leaves with the mother. The young seventh fairy immediately enchants the castle so that a hedge of thorns grows around it. She likewise puts to sleep the rest of the castle's inhabitants so that they will wake up with the princess. One hundred years later, the son of a king hears rumours that the castle is haunted, or inhabited by either witches or an ogre. An old countryman finally tells him the story of the beautiful princess that dwells within, and the young prince decides to go and awaken her. The hedge of thorns opens for him, he arrives at the room where the princess is sleeping, sees her, and immediately falls in love with her because of her beauty. Upon approaching her, he kneels beside her bed and she opens her eyes, at which point he declares his love for her. He notes her outdated fashion sense by remarking that "elle était habillée comme sa mère-grand"<sup>212</sup>. They go to dine in the hall of mirrors with the other inhabitants of the castle who had awoken, as well. Shortly thereafter, the prince and the princess marry, and within two years they have two children, Dawn and Day. The prince keeps his bride and children a secret for two years, as he distrusts his mother, who is said to be "de race ogresse"<sup>213</sup>. Yet upon the death of his father, he publicly declares his marriage and moves his family into his castle. One day he must depart for war, and so he leaves his family behind with his mother. She promptly declares that she wants to eat both children and her daughter-in-law, and orders the clerk of the kitchen to prepare them for her "à la sauce Robert". However, the kitchen clerk tricks the queen mother by feeding her a lamb, a young goat, and a deer instead, thereby rescuing all three. When the ogress realizes that she has been deceived, she decides to throw them all into a vat filled with toads and serpents. Before she has the chance, her son comes. Enraged, the ogress throws herself into the vat, and the prince and the princess live happily ever after with their children. Perrault ends his tale with a moral in which he declares that no woman today would wait for a husband as long as Sleeping Beauty has.

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<sup>212</sup> Charles Perrault, "La Belle au Bois dormant", *Contes de ma mère l'Oye*, 1697, Édition de référence: Éditions Rencontre, 1968, accessed February 17, 2016, available at *La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec*, <http://beq.ebooksgratuits.com/vents/Perrault-contes.pdf>, p. 40. Translation: "she was dressed like Grandmother in the old days". Translation retrieved from Charles Perrault, "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood", *The Complete Fairy Tales*, trans. Christopher Betts, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 89. Unless otherwise specified, subsequent translations of Perrault's "La Belle au Bois Dormant" are Christopher Betts'.

<sup>213</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 42. Translation: "she came from a family of ogres", p. 93.

Perrault's incorporation of humoristic elements, like the reference to the princess's outdated fashion sense or the ogress's desire to eat Day and Dawn "à la sauce Robert", were the result of his intended audience: attendants of the royal court whom he wished to amuse.<sup>214</sup> The light-hearted tone of his narration coupled with his omission of explicit sexual content suggests that the French author may not have been promoting as patriarchal of an agenda as his Italian predecessor. However, this has not been the interpretation of a wide majority of feminist critics who have argued that the active/passive dichotomy persists just the same. Fernández argues that the misogynistic undertones of "La Belle au bois dormant" are discernible as early as the title. According to her,

Of all the wonder tales, that of 'The Sleeping Beauty' is without a doubt that which most clearly transmits a patriarchal message to the reading public. In fact, it does this straight from the title, only and exclusively employing two words: beautiful and sleeping. Both adjectives describe what must be, in essence, the daughter of patriarchy.<sup>215</sup>

Contrary to Basile or the Brothers Grimm whose Sleeping Beauties are named Talia and Dornröschen respectively, Perrault's Sleeping Beauty has no name of her own and is thus known to us only as La Belle au Bois Dormant, suggesting that her identity is synonymous with her beauty and passivity. This judgment has been interpreted as the common thread that informs the rest of the plotline.

The valorization of female beauty and passivity in "La Belle au bois dormant" is first evidenced by the motif of gift-giving that accompanies Perrault's substitution of the wise men and soothsayers of Basile's tale with fairies.<sup>216</sup> In celebration of the birth

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<sup>214</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>215</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Original: "De todos los relatos maravillosos, el de 'La bella durmiente' es con seguridad el que más claramente transmite un mensaje patriarcal al público lector. Lo hace, de hecho, desde el título mismo y empleando única y exclusivamente dos palabras: bella y durmiente, adjetivos ambos con los que se expresa lo que ha de ser, en esencia, la hija del patriarcado."

<sup>216</sup> The motif of the offended non-invitee as an explanation for Sleeping Beauty's sleep seems to have skipped a generation with Basile, who does not refer to the motive behind Talia's death aside from its characterization as a prophecy. However, in *Perceforest*, Zellandine is cursed to a death-like sleep because one of the three goddesses invited to celebrate her birth was offended by her inadequate place-setting. In the realm of classical mythology, we may also be reminded of Eris, the goddess of Strife (or Discord): "Because of Eris' disagreeable nature she was the only goddess not to be invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. When she turned up



of the newborn princess, seven fairies are invited to each bestow upon her a gift so that she could have “par ce moyen toutes les perfections imaginables”<sup>217</sup>. However, while the word “*don*”, or “gift”, generally carries a positive connotation, it is not the case in Perrault’s tale where each of the fairies’ gifts seems to be a curse in itself. Instead of benefitting Sleeping Beauty, these gifts resemble a list of rules for appropriate appearance and conduct. They include that the princess

serait la plus belle personne du monde [...] qu’elle aurait de l’esprit comme un ange [...] qu’elle aurait une grâce admirable à tout ce qu’elle ferait, [...] qu’elle danserait parfaitement bien, [...] qu’elle chanterait comme un rossignol, [...] qu’elle jouerait de toutes sortes d’instruments dans la dernière perfection.<sup>218</sup>

While the gift of beauty reinforces the objectification of the female body based on physical appearance already suggested by Belle’s name, the rest of the gifts seem to dictate appropriate ladylike composure and behaviour for an implied male presence. We may note that just as Talia’s body is positioned by her father in such a way as to recall a state of grace, so, too, is Belle required to be graceful in all of her endeavours. It is as though the female body were being groomed to appease patriarchal expectations both visually and kinetically. The patriarchal nature of the fairies’ gifts has been noted by

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anyway, she was refused admittance and, in a rage, threw a golden apple amongst the goddesses inscribed ‘To the fairest.’ Three goddesses laid claim it, and in their rivalry brought about the events which led to the Trojan War”, *Theoi*, s.v. “Eris”, 2015, accessed on November 4, 2015, <http://www.theoi.com/Daimon/Eris.html>. While we may intimate because of the apple and its inscription this myth’s hypotextual relationship to another popular fairy tale, that of Snow White, the vengeful actions of the goddess of Discord are clearly reflected in the wicked fairy in “La belle au bois dormant”. Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. 97 has likewise pointed out the connection between this myth and the Sleeping Beauty tale only with regards to the Brothers Grimm version. She states: “The resentment of the slighted wise woman calls to mind the wrath of Eris, goddess of Discord, who, when not invited to the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis, exacted her revenge by throwing the notorious Apple of Discord, marked with the words “For the Fairest,” among the assembled wedded guests. The elaborate debates and negotiations over the Apple of Discord led, eventually, to the Trojan War.”

<sup>217</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 30. Translation: “then she would be as perfect as you could possibly imagine”, p. 83.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31-32. Translation: “she would be the most beautiful person in the world; [...] that she would have the disposition of an angel; [...] that she would apply an admirable grace to all her endeavours, [...] that she would dance perfectly [...] that she would sing like a nightingale; [...] the she would play all sorts of instruments to perfection.” Our translation. We did not use Christopher Betts’ translation in this case because, in our opinion, he does not sufficiently convey the patriarchal tone of the gifts in English.

Zipes who recognizes that it is as though Sleeping Beauty were “bred to become the ideal aristocratic lady.”<sup>219</sup>

The catatonic state into which she eventually falls ensures that she fulfils these patriarchal expectations. As Tatar observes, “the choice of a catatonic [...] Sleeping Beauty as the fairest and most desirable of them all may offer a sobering statement on folkloristic visions of the ideal bride.”<sup>220</sup> Once the curse comes to pass, the narrator declares with regards to the sleeping princess, “On eût dit un ange, tant elle était belle”<sup>221</sup>. She is thus described both as angelic and as beautiful – an allusion to two of the original gifts bestowed upon her birth – once she is unconscious, implying that to fulfil patriarchal standards, a woman must be comatose. Moreover, her beauty is arguably the only reason behind the prince’s quest to wake her. He begins his journey once he is told that in the castle dwells “une princesse, la plus belle qu’on eût su voir”<sup>222</sup>. When he finally arrives at her chamber and perceives her sleeping, she is described as “le plus beau spectacle qu’il eût jamais vue”<sup>223</sup>. In this way, Sleeping Beauty’s catatonic state reduces her to the status of a “beautiful object of contemplation”<sup>224</sup>. In her article “This Sex Which Is Not One”, Luce Irigaray argues that female passivity derives from the consignment of women to this role.<sup>225</sup>

Sleeping Beauty’s passive nature is further suggested by her dependence on a male hero for salvation. In Perrault’s tale, she is arguably rescued by a prince twice: when he appears at her castle to awaken her and when he arrives in time to prevent his ogress mother from killing her and the children. Unlike in Basile’s version, the prince’s role in both of these cases is less direct – there is no contact between him and Sleeping Beauty when she awakens and his ogress mother decides to throw herself into the vat of beasts upon her son’s arrival. Nevertheless, his presence is still associated with the resolution of the story; however marginal, the role of saviour is always attributed to

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<sup>219</sup> Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 24.

<sup>220</sup> Maria Tatar, *The Hard Facts*, p. 146.

<sup>221</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Translation: “You would have said she was an angel, she looked so beautiful”, p. 86.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37. Translation: “a Princess, who was the most beautiful in the world”, p. 88.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39. Translation: “the most beautiful sight that he had ever seen”, p. 89.

<sup>224</sup> Luce Irigaray, “This Sex Which Is Not One”, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 26.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

him, including by the good fairy who declares that Sleeping Beauty “tombera seulement dans un profond sommeil qui durera cent ans, au bout desquels le fils d’un roi viendra la réveiller.”<sup>226</sup>

Like in Basile’s tale, in “La Belle au bois dormant”, Sleeping Beauty’s passivity is often informed by patriarchal control of female sexual identity through interdiction, punishment, and appropriation of the female body. Recalling the actions of Talia’s father, Belle’s father places an interdiction on his daughter’s sexual behaviour by banning the use of spindles in his kingdom. Although he thus hopes to prevent his daughter’s curse from manifesting, despite his efforts, Belle tries spinning “[a]u bout de quinze ou seize ans”<sup>227</sup> and, as predicted by the good fairy, falls into a deep sleep once she pricks her finger on the spindle: “Elle n’eut pas plus tôt pris le fuseau, que comme elle était fort vive, un peu étourdie, et que d’ailleurs l’arrêt des fées l’ordonnait ainsi, elle s’en perça la main, et tomba évanouie.”<sup>228</sup> The sexual connotation of the spindle coupled with Belle’s disregard for her father’s interdiction suggests that, like for Talia, Belle’s encounter with the spindle symbolizes a form of female desire and thus female sexual transgression. The consequent slumber therefore likely bears a punitive connotation. Such is the conclusion drawn by Duggan, who claims:

for Perrault women indeed incarnate the abject, and in order to alleviate any threat women pose to male authority or the body politic, they must either be expelled from the public sphere or be put through a process of purification that renders them powerless and that reintegrates them as passive vessels into the domestic order of the family, an order guaranteed by a male and implicitly Catholic authority.<sup>229</sup>

Although in Perrault’s tale Sleeping Beauty’s catatonic state results from a female fairy’s curse rather than a wise man’s prophecy – suggesting that Belle’s future, unlike that of Talia, is not determined by male authority figures but female ones – the mind/body dichotomy that sees the fate of women decided by a masculine authority

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<sup>226</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 32. Translation: “she will fall into a deep sleep. It will last for a hundred years, and at the end of that time the son of a king will come to waken her”, p. 84.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33. Translation: “Fifteen or sixteen years went by”, p. 84.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “She took the spindle; and because she was hasty and impulsive, and in any case the fairies’ decree had decided what would happen, no sooner had she done so than she pricked her hand and fell down in a faint”, p. 86.

<sup>229</sup> Anne Duggan, “Women Subdued”, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

arguably rests intact: Duggan's interpretation of Belle's long slumber as a "process of purification" suggests that it remains symbolic of patriarchy's suppression of female sexual desire. This implies that the fairies who evoke Belle's slumber propagate patriarchal ideology to no less of an extent than their male counterparts in earlier versions. This is true of both the wicked fairy who places a death curse upon Belle and the good fairy who only seemingly repairs it. Although the curse has been changed from death to sleep, the similarity between the two states has justified claims that Belle's coma renders her no less passive than death would. As explained by Fay:

Sleep and death have a long association with each other in Western culture, a relationship crystallized in their personification in Greek mythology as the identical twin brothers Hypnos and Thanatos. The brothering of sleep and death suggests that there is something other than mere resemblance that connects them. [...] Sleep's immobility and passivity make it an apt metaphor for death [...].<sup>230</sup>

Bettelheim has commented on the similarity between the sleep curse and the death curse, claiming, "The alteration of the original curse, which threatened death, to one of prolonged sleep suggested that the two are not all that different."<sup>231</sup> Duggan also recognizes the irrelevance of the substitution of death with sleep with regards to Belle's agency, noting, "Especially evident in *Sleeping Beauty's* hundred-year postponement for a husband, part of the point of the process is to completely pacify or suppress female desire", adding that she is "so desireless she appears dead"<sup>232</sup>. The elimination of Belle's desire is also reflected in the symbol of the fire, which the good fairy extinguishes when she puts to sleep the castle's inhabitants:

gouvernantes, filles d'honneur, femmes de chambre, gentilshommes, officiers, maîtres d'hôtel, cuisiniers, marmitons, galopins, gardes, suisses, pages, valets de pied ; elle toucha aussi tous les chevaux qui étaient dans les écuries, avec les palefreniers, les gros mâtons de basse-cour et la petite Pouffe, petite chienne de la princesse, qui était auprès d'elle sur son lit. [...] Les broches mêmes qui étaient au feu toutes pleines de perdrix et de faisans, s'endormirent, et le feu aussi.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>231</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

<sup>232</sup> Anne Duggan, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>233</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 35-36. Translation: "governesses, maids of honour, ladies' maids, gentlemen of the household, stewards, footmen, cooks, scullions, turnspits, guards,

The primary significance of the infectious sleep is in the fact that it brings to attention the interconnectedness of the tale of Sleeping Beauty and the myth of Persephone: we are reminded of the way in which Demeter puts the Earth to sleep during Persephone's absence, whereby the sleep of all around Belle can symmetrically be interpreted as a sign of mourning. Additionally, it symbolizes how there are no living souls in the Underworld where Persephone dwells. Yet in putting the entire castle to sleep the good fairy also puts out the fire, the element that represents libido.<sup>234</sup> By dousing the fire, the fairy thereby symbolically extinguishes the princess's sexual desire, as well.

Like in "Sole, Luna e Talia", the consequences for female sexual transgression in "La Belle au bois dormant" are invoked through different channels. As a symbol for Belle's imprisonment, the hedge of thorns with which the good fairy encircles Belle's castle, like the walls and locked doors of Talia's castle, bears similarly punitive repercussions with regards to Belle's sexual agency. We read:

il poussa, dans un quart d'heure, tout autour du parc, une si grande quantité de grands arbres et de petits, de ronces et d'épines entrelacées les unes dans les autres, que bête ni homme n'y aurait pu passer: en sorte qu'on ne voyait plus que le haut des tours du château, encore n'était-ce que de bien loin. On ne douta point que la fée n'eût fait là encore un tour de son métier afin que la princesse, pendant qu'elle dormirait, n'eût rien à craindre des curieux.<sup>235</sup>

Although Perrault's phrasing suggests that the hedge of thorns serves to protect Belle from "des curieux", we may recall how in the myth of Danaë Acrisius's decision to lock his daughter in a chamber is actually a way by which he polices his daughter's sexuality rather than protecting her from male suitors. The symbolic function of the hedge of

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pages, doormen; she also touched all the horses in the stables, the ostlers there, the great guard-dogs in the stable-yard, and little Puff, the Princess's lapdog, who was lying beside her on her bed. [...] Even the spits in front of the kitchen fire, all covered with pheasants and partridges, went to sleep, and the fire did too", p. 87.

<sup>234</sup> J.E. Cirlot, "Fire", *op. cit.*

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36. Translation: "within a quarter of an hour so many trees had shot up, large and small, all around the castle park, with brambles and thorns all intertwined, that neither man nor beast could have got through. All that could still be seen was the top of the castle towers, and only from a long way off. No doubt this was another of the fairy's devices to make sure that the Princess would have nothing to fear from inquisitive visitors while she was asleep", p. 87.

thorns is thus arguably more a prison than a shelter. This interpretation also leads us back to Persephone, who is taken to the Underworld by force and kept there against her will. The hedge of thorns may thus be a reflection of the river Styx, a barrier encircling the Underworld ensuring Persephone's incarceration within. It is therefore perhaps not incidental that in both *Perceforest* and "Frayre de Joy e Sor de Plaser", the tower in which Sleeping Beauty sleeps is encircled by an uncrossable moat, resembling physically the infernal river.

While the hedge of thorns provides a physical barrier symbolizing Belle's imprisonment following her transgression, in her article "Sleeping Beauty Must Die", Fay has suggested that Belle is arguably further disciplined for her sexual behaviour through the metaphoric death of the ogress. Fay suggests that by virtue of the "strong metaphorical connection between Sleeping Beauty and the Ogress"<sup>236</sup>, the death of the former symbolizes the death of the latter. Fay first outlines the ways in which their substitution for one another is suggested in the text. Among the various indications she finds, Fay refers to the way in which Sleeping Beauty herself is mistaken for the ogress, to the way in which both female characters provoke the death or sleep of those around them, and to their literal substitution in the vat of beasts:

Perrault alludes to [their substitution] broadly in the segment where the prince first spies the castle in the sleeping woods. Rumor has it that it may be a haunted castle, a meeting place for witches, or the abode of a child-eating ogre who alone has the power to penetrate the forest [...]. Noting the irony of these tall tales, Anne Duggan remarks that 'it is as if the rumors about Sleeping Beauty's castle refer instead to the [ogress] queen'<sup>237</sup> [...]. Indeed, the ogre-in-the-woods rumor not only foreshadows the cannibalism plot, but also slyly hints at the deeper metaphorical relationship between the two figures.<sup>238</sup>

The ogress's feeding is remarkably similar to the way sleep overtakes everyone surrounding the enchanted princess. [...] Both the sleeping woman and the devouring woman function as a kind of vortex, pulling in the people surrounding them.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>237</sup> Anne Duggan, *Salonnières, Furies, and Fairies: The Politics of Gender and Cultural Change in Absolutist France*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2005, p. 154.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

When the ogress literally takes the princess's place in the vat of deadly creatures, she reinforces their link as substitutes for each other.<sup>240</sup>

Once Fay establishes that the ogress is a substitute for Sleeping Beauty, she concludes that Sleeping Beauty "dies too by virtue of her relationship with the ogress. [...] Behind the satisfyingly 'right' death of the evil ogress lies the symbolic death of the princess."<sup>241</sup> According to Fay, the substitution is necessary so that Sleeping Beauty is metaphorically punished through the ogress's death:

The literal death of the ogress and the imaginary death of Sleeping Beauty ensure the full dilation and closure of the story. [...] Thanks to the play of substitution, the original death curse comes full circle, from one problematic woman to another. And thanks to the play of substitution, one problematic woman is another.<sup>242</sup>

Like Sleeping Beauty whose erotically-charged encounter with the spindle is cause for unprecedented alarm, the ogress, too, arguably symbolizes the dangers of female sexuality. Such is the conclusion of Duggan, who states:

[T]he queen-mother's transgressive desire to eat human flesh could be read as a displacement of her transgressive incestuous desire for her son. In other words, the ogress-mother's wish to devour her grandchildren (she only later wishes to devour Sleeping Beauty) could be read as a displacement of her desire to sexuality 'devour' her son.<sup>243</sup>

By virtue of the prince's heroic vanquishment of the ogress, the tale seems to portray the elimination of female desire not only as favourable, but moreover as essential for the safety of women and children, and therefore for the continuity of the species.

The suppression and containment of female sexual agency in Perrault's tale, either through sleep, a physical barrier, or death, ensures that female sexuality only serves a patriarchal purpose, that is, reproduction. Fay states:

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<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>243</sup> Anne Duggan, *op. cit.*, p. 223-223.

No longer the immobile, silent, and closed woman who is effectively unavailable to the narrative, the awakened princess is quickly recuperated and transformed into a wife, a mother, a queen – a woman defined by societal and familial roles.<sup>244</sup>

Duggan also perceives in Perrault's tale the restriction of female sexuality to the role of reproduction. She states, "Upon her awakening, [Sleeping Beauty] has become a fully passive vessel at the disposal of her prince, serving as the receptacle for the two children she bears him."<sup>245</sup> Duggan's choice of language by which she characterizes Sleeping Beauty in terms of a receptacle or a vessel (for the second time) reduces the fairy tale princess to the role of a hostless ship. By comparing Sleeping Beauty to an unconscious container lacking the autonomy for self-action, Duggan invites a reading of Perrault's tale as one that reinforces the notion *woman as body and object*, whereby Belle's lack of bodily agency is underscored.

While female sexuality is disputably contained within a patriarchal framework, male sexuality appears to be endorsed. This is first suggested by the fact that the prince "se sentit tout de feu"<sup>246</sup> before embarking on his quest to find the princess, whereby the fire imagery symbolizes his desire. While Belle is disciplined for hers by a catatonic state, the prince is conversely encouraged to act upon his. As Tatar observes, "the prince is rewarded for his curiosity, which takes the form of the desire to find the fabled castle in which Sleeping Beauty slumbers"<sup>247</sup>. The endorsement of male sexuality also appears to contribute to the further objectification of the woman. The prince's admiration of the princess's beauty commodifies her as it suggests that the female body exists mainly to be appreciated by a male observer, confirming Bourdieu's assertion that woman is the "being perceived"<sup>248</sup> and that "the female experience of the body" is as "the body-for-others"<sup>249</sup>. Unlike in Basile's tale, there is no sexual violence in that of Perrault, a change that Fernández attributes to the sexual mores of the French author's time. In "La Belle au bois dormant", the prince wakes up Sleeping Beauty no longer through a sexual act, but by kneeling beside her bed. Fernández comments that due to

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<sup>244</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 270-271.

<sup>245</sup> Anne Duggan, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

<sup>246</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 37. Translation: "took fire", p. 88.

<sup>247</sup> Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>248</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.



Perrault's omission of "the motifs of rape and necrophilia", Sleeping Beauty "arrives at marriage a virgin", and "her children are legitimate"<sup>250</sup>, insisting,

It can be deduced from these changes that Perrault's version adapts itself more to the new ideology of the eighteenth-century European bourgeoisie, more strict in sexual matters and more preoccupied with sanctifying the family institution.<sup>251</sup>

However, Perrault's adherence to the stricter sexual mores of his time does not mean that traces of the rape scene disappear altogether in his version of Sleeping Beauty, only that they are masked. While the prince does not take sexual advantage of the unconscious princess, his monstrous tendencies, like those of Basile's king, are nevertheless implied by the fact that he is an ogre's son. Heidi Anne Heiner accordingly notes that "this makes the prince half human and half Ogre"<sup>252</sup>. The lack of sexual violence in Perrault's tale thus does not detract from the French author's perpetuation of the same ideological patterns we observe in Basile's tale. Like "Sole, Luna e Talia", so "La Belle au bois dormant" lends itself to a reading in which female desire is sublimated and male sexual agency valorized.

### 2.1.3 A Historical Reading of the Brothers Grimms' "Dornröschen"

Like Perrault, the Brothers Grimm omit from their version of Sleeping Beauty any explicit sexual content. The German authors, particularly Wilhelm Grimm, are well known for their censorship of sexual themes. In *Hard Facts*, Tatar confirms as such, stating:

Pregnancy, whether the result of a frivolous wish [...] or of an illicit

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<sup>250</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 39. Original: "los motivos de la violación y la necrofilia"; "llega virgen al matrimonio"; "sus hijos son legítimos".

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.* p. 40. Original: "De estos cambios se puede deducir que la versión de Perrault se adecua más a la nueva ideología de la burguesía europea del siglo XVIII, más estricta en temas sexuales y preocupada por santificar la institución familiar".

<sup>252</sup> Heidi Anne Heiner, "Annotations for Sleeping Beauty", *SurLaLune Fairy Tales*, October 2, 2014, accessed November 5, 2015, <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/sleepingbeauty/notes.html#FORTY6>.

sexual relationship [...], was a subject that made the Grimms uncomfortable. In fact, any hints of premarital sexual activity must have made Wilhelm Grimm in particular blush with embarrassment.<sup>253</sup>

When it came to passages colored by sexual details [...], Wilhelm Grimm exhibited extraordinary editorial zeal. Over the years, he systematically purged the collection of references to sexuality [...].<sup>254</sup>

Despite their caution to eliminate any sexually explicit material, the alterations made by the Grimms were not well-received in the feminist community. On the contrary, their puritanical values earned them much criticism.<sup>255</sup> According to Hande Birkalan-Gedik, through their editing of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* the Brothers Grimm “often creat[ed] and reforc[ed] the very images of female characters that came under fire from feminist scholarship.”<sup>256</sup> Their adaptation of *Sleeping Beauty* has constituted one of the tales most vigorously criticized by feminist scholars for its patriarchal undertones. Our analysis focuses on the seventh and best-known edition of “*Dornröschen*”, published in 1857. As Zipes notes, this is the edition with which readers are most familiar and is “considered the standard if not definitive edition”<sup>257</sup> of the Grimms’ *Sleeping Beauty* tale. Zipes also states that while “the tales in the first edition tend to be more raw and stamped by an ‘authentically’ oral tradition<sup>258</sup> [...] the changes made by the Grimms [in later editions] indicated their ideological and artistic preferences.”<sup>259</sup> Thus, owing to the Grimms’ continual alterations, the seventh edition also best reflects the German authors’ editorial voice rather than that of their informants. Our interest in studying the seventh edition of “*Dornröschen*” is predicated on eventually discrediting authorial intent, along with other extra-textual factors, as a definitive indicator of a tale’s ideological framework.

At the start of the tale, a frog announces the arrival of the newborn princess, whose birth was long-wished for by her parents. Upon the birth of *Dornröschen*, twelve

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<sup>253</sup> Maria Tatar, *Hard Facts*, *op. cit.*, p. 7-8.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>255</sup> Jack Zipes, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. xxxi. Kindle edition.

<sup>256</sup> Hande Birkalan-Gedik, “Women”, in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia*, *op. cit.* p. 1038.

<sup>257</sup> Jack Zipes, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales*, *op. cit.*

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

wise women are invited to the celebration to each bestow upon her a gift, including virtue, beauty, and wealth. A thirteenth wise woman is excluded from the festivities because there were not enough place settings. She appears anyway and curses the princess to die upon pricking her finger on a spindle. The twelfth wise woman thereby repairs the curse into a one-hundred-year sleep. Despite the father's orders to burn every spindle in the kingdom, the curse is nevertheless fulfilled on the princess's fifteenth birthday; while wandering about the castle in her parents' absence, she comes across an old tower. At the top of the stairs she finds a little door with a key. She turns the key in the lock and, upon entering, sees an old woman spinning. Curious to try for herself, Dornröschen takes the spindle in her hand. As soon as she does, she pricks her finger and falls into a deep slumber. The sleep extends to the whole castle, including to her parents upon their return home. A hedge of thorns magically grows around the castle, covering it more and more each year. Any princes that tried to get through were caught in the thorns and perished. At the expiration of one hundred years, a prince hears the story of a beautiful sleeping princess and decides to visit the maiden. The hedge of thorns opens upon his arrival, having bloomed into a hedge of roses. The prince finds the sleeping princess and wakes her with a kiss upon admiring her beauty. They marry and live happily ever after.

In the Brothers Grimms' version of the Sleeping Beauty tale, we may identify some of the same patriarchal ingredients familiar to us from Perrault's and Basile's versions. These include the patriarchal gifts, the father's protective interdiction, the princess's transgression, the phallic spindle, the punitive sleep, the incarcerating hedge of thorns, and the prince's hero status upon waking the princess. Nevertheless, the changes introduced by the German authors with respect to earlier versions arguably render their version of the tale even more patriarchal in nature.

Like in "La Belle au bois dormant", the absence of sexually explicit material in "Dornröschen" does not mean that sexual content has disappeared altogether. This becomes obvious if one analyzes the moment where Dornröschen climbs to the top of the stairs in the tower and opens a small door with a key, an element unique to the Grimms' version of the tale:

Now, on the day she turned fifteen, it happened that the king and queen were not at home, and she was left completely alone in the palace. So she

wandered all over the place and explored as many rooms and chambers as she pleased. She eventually came to an old tower, climbed its narrow winding staircase, and came to a small door. A rusty key was stuck in the lock, and when she turned it, the door sprang open, and she saw an old woman in a little room sitting with a spindle and busily spinning flax.<sup>260</sup>

Bettelheim has called it an episode that “abounds in Freudian symbolism”<sup>261</sup>. He states:

As she approaches the fateful place, the girl ascends a circular staircase; in dreams such staircases typically stand for sexual experiences. At the top of this staircase she finds a small door and in its lock a key. As she turns the key, the door “springs open” and the girl enters a small room in which an old woman spins. A small locked room often stands in dreams for the female sexual organs; turning a key in a lock often symbolizes intercourse.<sup>262</sup>

On the one hand, the sexual undercurrents of the key and the door opening prefigure the sexual connotation of the spindle that Sleeping Beauty will find in the room. On the other hand, the opening of a door can also be interpreted as a sign of transgression of the parental interdiction, which reinforces the punitive connotation of Dornröschen’s subsequent sleep. As Tatar points out, “Sleeping Beauty’s curiosity, her desire to see what is behind the door and her fascination with the spindle, gets her into trouble.”<sup>263</sup> In fairy tales, opening a locked door often symbolizes transgression, as a look at two other tales from the Brothers Grimms’ own collection reveals. The motif of the forbidden locked door appears in the tale of “Bluebeard”, in which a husband prohibits his new wife from unlocking a closed door in his absence. She does so anyway and discovers within the room the dead bodies of his former wives. Once Bluebeard learns of her disobedience, he threatens to kill her but her brothers rescue her just in time.<sup>264</sup> Like in the case of Sleeping Beauty who falls into a catatonic state as soon as she opens the door and touches the spindle, Bluebeard’s wife opens the door and is nearly killed for it because of her husband’s wrath. We encounter a similar use of the symbol of the locked

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<sup>260</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, “Brier Rose”, *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. Jack Zipes, New York: Bantam Books, 2003, l. 4060-466. Kindle edition.

<sup>261</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*: p. 232-233

<sup>263</sup> Maria Tatar, *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>264</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, “Bluebeard”, *op. cit.*

door in the tale “The Virgin Mary’s Child”<sup>265</sup>, where “the Virgin entrusts the girl with the keys to thirteen doors, twelve of which she may open, but not the thirteenth. The girl cannot resist this temptation; she lies about it, and in consequence has to return to earth, mute.”<sup>266</sup> In this tale, as in “Bluebeard”, the danger of opening a locked door and the penalty that awaits one who does are underscored, prompting us to read the analogous episode in “Dornröschen” as transgression and punishment. Moreover, Dornröschen” makes use of the number thirteen in a similarly ominous manner as “The Virgin Mary’s Child”; while in the latter the young girl is punished for opening the thirteenth door, Dornröschen is cursed by the thirteenth wise woman. Unlike in previous versions in which Sleeping Beauty’s sexual experience is uniquely represented by her encounter with the spindle, the Brothers Grimms’ introduction of the door and key reinforces not only the sexual innuendo of the episode, but also the way in which patriarchy resolves female sexuality and agency (Dornröschen’s curiosity and wish to know and explore) through punishment.

Owing to the Grimms’ firm patriarchal beliefs, Fernández claims that it is more important for the German authors that Sleeping Beauty be considered virtuous than for their Italian and French predecessors. First of all, unlike in Basile’s tale in which Talia is chastised for her adultery, the fact that the Brothers Grimm do not include a second plotline eliminates any possibility of Sleeping Beauty’s infidelity or engagement in premarital sex. To this effect, Fernández comments:

With regards to the heroine, a strengthening of her virtuous character has already been observed in Perrault’s tale, achieved by eliminating premarital sex between her and the king. In the Grimms’ tale, her virginity is equally unquestioned [...].<sup>267</sup>

Fernández also claims that the Grimms’ tale presents a heroine even more virtuous than that of Perrault. She compares the descriptions of the hedge of thorns in both versions to conclude that in that of the Grimms’, it is characterized as taller and less easily

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<sup>265</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, “The Virgin Mary’s Child”, *op. cit.*

<sup>266</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>267</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 44-45. Original: “En cuanto a la heroína, ya se había observado un reforzamiento de su carácter virtuoso en Perrault, conseguido mediante la supresión de las relaciones sexuales prematrimoniales entre ella y el rey. En Grimm, su virginidad queda igualmente incuestionada [...].”

penetrable so as to ensure Sleeping Beauty's sexual purity. Indeed, in the Grimms' version, the castle completely disappears behind the hedge: "Soon a brier hedge began to grow all around the castle, and it grew higher each year. Eventually it surrounded and covered the entire castle, so that it was no longer visible. Not even the flag on the roof could be seen."<sup>268</sup> In the Grimms' tale, the thorns even kill anyone who seeks to pass through, an element unique to the German version.<sup>269</sup> We read:

From time to time princes came and tried to break through the hedge and get to the castle. However, this was impossible because the thorns clung together tightly as though they had hands, and the young men got stuck there. Indeed, they could not pry themselves loose and died miserable deaths.<sup>270</sup>

In "Sole, Luna e Talia", we offered a symmetrical reading of Talia's body and the castle in which she dwells by underscoring the way in which both could be read in terms of a prison. In the Grimms' tale, the castle and the female body are again connected metaphorically. The gradual disappearance of the castle behind the brier hedge in combination with the image of princes attempting to penetrate its barrier suggests that the castle might be a symbol for the princess's own body, which is shielded from view and protected against the intrusion of trespassers. Dornröschen's virtue is lastly ensured by the wise women's gifts. Virtue constitutes one of the gifts – indeed, the first gift – offered by the wise women upon her birth, whereas it does not number among the gifts of the fairies in "La Belle au bois dormant". In the German tale we read:

The feast was celebrated with tremendous splendor, and when it drew to a close, the wise women bestowed their miraculous gifts upon the child. One gave her virtue, another beauty, the third wealth, and so on, until they had given her nearly everything one could possibly wish for in the world.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *op. cit.*, l. 4075.

<sup>269</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>270</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *op. cit.*, l. 4076-4079.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 4052.

The German authors' decisive valorization of female virtue, which appears to be synonymous with sexual purity, arguably subverts the sexual agency of their Sleeping Beauty.

Among the different changes introduced by the German authors, the kiss with which the prince awakens Sleeping Beauty has constituted one of the most negative in terms of reinforcing female passivity. It is also one of the elements most widely associated with the Sleeping Beauty tale. The passage in the German tale reads:

Finally, he came to the tower and opened the door to the small room in which Brier Rose was asleep. There she lay, and her beauty was so marvelous that he could not take his eyes off her. Then he leaned over and gave her a kiss, and when his lips touched hers, Brier Rose opened her eyes, woke up, and looked at him fondly.<sup>272</sup>

As Lash points out, "The kiss so ubiquitous in the modern conception of the story is likely a result of the Grimms' version"<sup>273</sup>. Owing to the fact that Sleeping Beauty awakens upon being kissed, the kiss can be read as a symbol for the sleeping woman's dependence on a male rescuer, reaffirming traditional conceptualizations of female fairy tale characters as helpless. However, the role of the rescuer in Sleeping Beauty's awakening is possibly even more direct in the Grimms' tale than in that of Basile or Perrault, since the princess wakes up immediately after physical contact with the prince. In Basile's version, she awakens nine months after her encounter with the king upon the birth of her children. In Perrault's version, the prince never touches the sleeping girl, he only kneels beside her. Thus, according to many feminist critics the kiss reifies Sleeping Beauty's passivity by concretizing the prince's heroic and active role in her awakening, unlike the indirect role played by Basile's king and Perrault's prince.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 4092.

<sup>273</sup> Sarah Lash, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>274</sup> Such is the reading of the tale of Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 45. She states: "[T]he role of [the] kiss in the liberation and the disenchantment of the young princess is decisive, while the same does not occur in Basile or in Perrault. In the first, the disenchantment occurs when Talia's children suck one of her fingers and extract from it the splinter that caused her sleep; in the second, the awakening takes place without any physical contact between the prince and the princess: the prince, upon entering the chamber in which the princess is located, simply kneels at her side, after which, having already passed the hundred years needed for the expiration of the curse, the Sleeping Beauty recuperates consciousness. In Grimm, nevertheless,

Owing to their puritanical beliefs, the Grimms removed any sexually explicit content from their version of the Sleeping Beauty tale. The kiss, for example, can be read as a product of their censorship as it replaces any references to sexual violence present in earlier Sleeping Beauty variants. Nevertheless, the alterations introduced by the German authors with respect to their French and Italian predecessors endorse female passivity to no less of an extent; in fact, according to certain scholars, they even strengthen the patriarchal connotation in relation to earlier versions.

Reading the individual textual indications of Basile's, Perrault's, and the Brothers Grimms' versions reveals how their structural differences, rather than just the similarities between them, have contributed to the reification of Sleeping Beauty as a passive female figure. Historical factors including the tales' relationship to earlier oral and literary variants, documentation of authorial intent, and gender politics in the texts' eras of publication have additionally aided feminist scholars in defining the ideological framework of the tales. Studying the unique characteristics of the three versions reveals the various ways in which the Sleeping Beauty tradition advances patriarchal ideology and endorses female inactiveness. Indeed, Fernández, Duggan, Tatar and countless others dismiss the possibility of any agency in Sleeping Beauty.

However, as we intend to demonstrate, despite the nearly univocal conclusion reached in feminist fairy tale scholarship regarding Sleeping Beauty's lack of agency, the fairy tale princess cannot conclusively be termed a passive figure. One of the biggest drawbacks of feminist fairy tale criticism is the binary framework within which it operates. Third-wave feminist methodology opposes the binary framework that supports absolute judgments, like active or passive. Instead, it proposes a theory of subjectivity that reinforces the hybridization of dualities rather than their polarization,

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it is obvious that the question of passed time is fundamental, but it is no less true that the kiss actively intervenes in the princess's return to wakefulness."

Original: "el papel de su beso en la liberación y en el desencantamiento de la joven es decisivo, mientras que no ocurre lo mismo en Basile o en Perrault. En el primero el desencantamiento se produce cuando los hijos de Talía succionan uno de sus dedos y extraen de él la arista que provocara el sueño; en el segundo, el despertar tiene lugar sin que haya contacto físico entre ambos jóvenes: el príncipe, al entrar en la cámara en la que yace la princesa, simplemente se arrodilla a su lado, tras lo cual, pasados ya los cien años que había de tardar en prescribir la maldición, la Bella Durmiente recupera la consciencia. En Grimm, sin embargo, es obvio que la cuestión del tiempo transcurrido es fundamental, pero no lo es menos el hecho de que el beso interviene activamente en la devolución de la princesa a la vigilia".



whereby identity is considered not in terms of singularity but in terms of multiplicity – not passive or active, but passive and active. An application of third-wave feminist methodology to the study of Sleeping Beauty would show the various ways in which Sleeping Beauty can also be seen as a female figure whose agency is not entirely dormant.

## 2.2 Changing the Subject: Identifying Female Activity in Sleeping Beauty Hypotexts

Speaking in response to feminist critics in the 1970s that claimed fairy tales propagated female passivity and submissiveness, in his study *The Uses of Enchantment* Bruno Bettelheim states, “Fairy tales do not render such one-sided pictures.”<sup>275</sup> Bettelheim, a child psychologist and author, thus establishes his opposition to second-wave feminist views of the fairy tale. However, his outlook reflects at least one key tenet of the third-wave feminist philosophy that would take shape a decade later: the rejection of absolutes. Unlike second-wave feminists, Bettelheim did not view the fairy tale as a forum for sexual stereotyping. Instead, he believed that the fairy tale was much more flexible and that male and female characters therein portrayed characteristics that both male and female readers could relate to, regardless of sex.

Reading fairy tales outside of the binary was uncommon in the 70s when feminists first turned their attention to fairy stories. It continues to be a rare occurrence today. Owing to her comatose and inanimate body, *Sleeping Beauty* is still one of the most often-cited examples of how fairy tales propagate a passive and submissive female model. To promote this perspective, in combination with textual indications, feminist scholars have relied on extra-textual factors like earlier oral and literary variants, authorial intent, and era-specific gender relations. Ironically, even feminist scholars who so adamantly reject the possibility of an active *Sleeping Beauty* acknowledge the pluralistic nature of fairy tales. The same Fernández who unquestionably describes *Sleeping Beauty* as “passive, virtuous and beautiful”<sup>276</sup> in each of the three versions characterizes fairy tales as stories that transform each time we look at them:

[T]he fairy tale is a live organism and it proves impossible to reduce it to *one* invariable, definitive, and unchangeable form. The wonder tale evolves, grows, develops, or shrinks and fragments with the passing of time on each occasion it is retold, reread, or rewritten.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>276</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 44. Original: “pasiva, virtuosa y bella”.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42. Original: “el cuento de hadas es un organismo vivo y resulta imposible reducirlo a *una* forma invariable, definitiva e inmutable. El cuento maravilloso evoluciona, crece, se

Our conviction is that reducing Sleeping Beauty to one invariable interpretation proves just as inconclusive. Given the layered meaning of fairy tales, it is inconceivable that Sleeping Beauty's identity can be comprehensively described from one viewpoint. Applying a third-wave perspective to Basile's, Perrault's and the Brothers Grimms' versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale would reveal that, like the fairy tale in general, so, too, does Sleeping Beauty lend herself to a multiplicity of interpretations.

In order to unlock these alternative interpretative possibilities, it is necessary to disengage from an overreliance on extra-textual indicators as guidelines for determining the ideological framework of a given work. This is because such factors often occlude the richness of significance in the narrative and symbols of the tale itself. In other words, the gender politics of a given text can be interpreted independently of that text's earlier variants, historical era, or author's documented beliefs.

While each of the three classical versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale holds within its pages both a passive and active female figure, owing to each text's unique attributes, each Sleeping Beauty expresses agency for a distinct reason. Thus, in Basile's tale, Talia emerges from her state of catatonia once she becomes a mother with the aid of *the female-to-female nutritional system*. In Perrault's tale, Belle's agency manifests owing to the text's valorization of female sexual subjectivity as opposed to objectification. Finally, the Grimms' tale presents an active Sleeping Beauty by virtue of its significance as a story of a girl's transition into womanhood. In each tale Sleeping Beauty's body becomes a site for creating meaning, whether through motherhood, sexual experience, or sexual maturation. In line with the third-wave rejection of umbrella generalizations regarding woman's subjugated status, the distinct manner in which each text represents female activity attests to how each Sleeping Beauty, like each woman, is active in her own way.

That Sleeping Beauty lends herself to multiple interpretations is not just evidenced on a narrative level; it is also reflected in the symbols of each tale. Each story presents symbols that represent the interdependence of the passive and active principles. These include the Sun and Moon of Basile's tale, the mirror and its reflection of

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desarrolla, o mengua y se fragmenta con el transcurrir del tiempo en cada ocasión que es recounted, releído o reescrito.”

Perrault's, and the rose and thorn of the Grimms'. These symbols represent Sleeping Beauty insofar as they anticipate the hybridization of opposing principles we will find within the heroine herself. For this reason, prior to our analysis of how each Sleeping Beauty displays bodily agency, we will elaborate on the fairy tale symbols that direct us to such an investigation in the first place.

### 2.2.1 *The Female-to-Female Nutritional System in Giambattista Basile's "Sole, Luna e Talia"*

Feminist critics have fiercely condemned Basile's "Sole, Luna e Talia" for its misogynistic content. The rape of Talia has constituted one of the main points of focus of this criticism. The motif of the raped sleeping beauty who is subsequently awakened after the birth of her children is not novel to "Sole, Luna e Talia" as it appears both in "Frayre de Joy et Sor de Plaser" as well as in *Perceforest*. However, out of the three texts, Basile's is the only one to incorporate the birth of twins named Sun and Moon. The importance of these symbols with respect to Talia's identity is evidenced as early as the title, "Sole, Luna e Talia", in which the three names appear together. Among the many interpretations that the symbols of the Sun and the Moon carry individually, by virtue of their pairing in Basile's tale – given that they are twins – we are inclined to analyze them together. According to Cirlot, twins stand for thesis and antithesis<sup>278</sup>, meaning that they represent two opposing principles. In the case of Basile's tale, these opposing principles are activity and passivity; Cirlot states: "The Sun and the Moon [are] symbols of the active and the passive principles of the Universe"<sup>279</sup>. He elaborates that while "the Moon merely fulfils the passive role of reflecting the light which the Sun actively diffuses"<sup>280</sup> [...] the core of solar symbolism" lies in its "heroic and courageous force, creative and guiding"<sup>281</sup>. Interpretations of the Sun and Moon as active and passive tend to inform their gendered characterizations; Kerényi remarks how the Sun and the Moon have often been classified as male and female respectively, including in

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<sup>278</sup> J.E. Cirlot, "Mirror", *op. cit.*

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, "Sun", *op. cit.*

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

Greek mythology where the sun was represented by the masculine Helios while his moon sister, Selene, was feminine.<sup>282</sup> Cirlot, too, says that “solar ‘passion’, so to speak, with its heroic and fierce character, clearly had to be assimilated to the masculine principle, and the pale and delicate nature of lunar light, with its connection with the waters of the ocean (and the rhythm of woman), obviously had to be classified as feminine.”<sup>283</sup> Such a gendered interpretation inclines one to suppose that the duality represented by the symbols of the Sun and the Moon in the Italian tale serves as a reflection of the active male/passive female dichotomy. This would be in line with one interpretation of the story, indeed, the one with which we have already provided readers in our discussion of how “Sole, Luna e Talia” propagates female submission. However, the symbols Sun and Moon likewise lend themselves to an alternative interpretation that negates a gender-based reading. In Basile’s text, there is no indication that the children Sun and Moon are male and female respectively; although we are told that Talia “scarricaie na cocchia de criature, uno mascolo e l’altra femmena”<sup>284</sup> and that their names were Sun and Moon, we never learn which is which. This suggests that in the context of the story, the active principle usually associated with the sun need not necessarily be attributed to men nor that lunar passivity necessarily represents the feminine. Indeed, Cirlot reveals the bias behind the dominant classification, claiming, “When patriarchy superseded matriarchy, a feminine character came to be attributed to the moon and a masculine to the sun.”<sup>285</sup> Kerényi likewise notes, “It was not *a priori* impossible to regard the sun as a maternal divinity. Our language even had a feminine name, ‘Helia’ [...] that means ‘sun’”<sup>286</sup>. Moreover, scholars have traced Sleeping Beauty to the Indian folktale Surya Bai, where the title of the tale and name of the female protagonist means “the Sun Lady”<sup>287</sup>; solar imagery in Sleeping Beauty variants has thus already been associated with the feminine principle. Considering how culturally embedded the notions of the masculine Sun and the female Moon are, it is very probable that Basile omitted gender specifications in his tale simply because he

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<sup>282</sup> Karl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>283</sup> J.E. Cirlot, “Sun”, *op. cit.*

<sup>284</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. p. 444. Translation: “unloaded a pair of babies, one a boy and the other a girl”, p. 422.

<sup>285</sup> J.E. Cirlot, “Moon”, *op. cit.*

<sup>286</sup> Karl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>287</sup> “Little Surya Bai”, *Sleeping Beauties: Sleeping Beauty and Snow White Tales from Around the World*, ed. Heidi Anne Heiner, Nashville: SurLaLune Press, 2010, p. 320 Kindle edition.

thought it would be redundant to spell out something that was so obvious. Nevertheless, the text introduces ambiguity regarding which gender corresponds to the Sun and which to the Moon, suggesting that the significance of the celestial bodies lies beyond their symbolism of masculinity and femininity. Indeed, both Sun and Moon derive from Talia, since she gives birth to them, indicating that the two opposite entities embody the two polarized principles within the mother. Just as the Moon gives way to the Sun in the transition from night to day, we are inclined to interpret Talia's recovery of agency in a similarly chronological sense; the replacement of the moon by the sun can be seen to correspond to Talia's transition from a catatonic state to awakening. By embodying the dual nature of Talia, Sun and Moon reflect symbolically what the narrative reveals thematically: Talia is not only a passive female figure, but upon her awakening she also becomes active.

The key to reading Talia's awakening as an indication of her agency as opposed to a feat accomplished by a male rescuer lies in the various maternal bonds in the story. As has already been pointed out, these bonds form what Pinkola Estés calls a *female-to-female nutritional system* and constitute that which destabilizes the active/male passive/female dichotomy of Basile's tale. In our first look at the Italian tale we discussed how the king's role in Talia's awakening can serve to reaffirm her helplessness since it suggests that she must depend on a man for animation. Such is the principle of the mind/body dichotomy which, as De Beauvoir states, promotes the notion that "man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself; she is not considered an autonomous being."<sup>288</sup> So, too, can we posit that Talia lacks autonomy; she arguably awakens only because of the actions of the king. However, another look at the same scenario reveals that Talia's awakening is owed not to the king, but primarily to the children she mothers: Talia's spell is broken once Sun and Moon, having mistaken Talia's finger for her nipple, suck out the flaxseed caught under her fingernail, thereby causing the effects of their mother's curse to wear off. Bettelheim interprets this scenario as evidence that it is through motherhood that Talia gains her "selfhood," which, according to him, "comes only with having given life, and with nurturing the one whom one has brought into being: with the baby sucking from the mother's

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<sup>288</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

body.”<sup>289</sup> Although Butler claims that within the context of the mind/body dichotomy the female body is “considered to be the mute facticity of the feminine, awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject”<sup>290</sup>, in the context of motherhood, Talia’s body is no longer the passive entity waiting for a man to define it; rather, it becomes the creator of meaning: Talia gives birth to her children who in turn cause their mother’s own metaphorical rebirth. This suggests that while the king has a role in Talia’s pregnancy, his role in her realization of motherhood – that which leads to her awakening – is, after all, inconsequential.

One of the fairy tale elements most often criticized by feminist scholars is precisely the notion of female dependency on a male hero for salvation. As De Beauvoir states, the role of the woman is to wait while that of the man to seek. Contemporary fairy tale rewritings often subvert such patriarchal portrayals by finding alternative solutions. For example, in his 2014 adaptation of *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, Neil Gaiman challenges traditional gender roles by having Sleeping Beauty awakened because of the kiss of another woman.<sup>291</sup> Basile’s tale, although written centuries prior, subverts gender roles in a similar manner. Like in *The Sleeper and The Spindle*, women, as opposed to men, enable Talia’s liberation: it is only because of the actions of the two fairies that Talia awakens, as it is they who place the children “a le zizze de la mamma”<sup>292</sup> in the first place. Without this act, the children may never have mistaken Talia’s finger for her nipple and would have failed to suck out the flax. Talia’s awakening is therefore only rendered possible through the aid of her own maternal figures. Despite her father being the only parental presence at the start of the tale, Talia is not motherless after all, as the fairies thus fulfil the maternal role by acting as Talia’s fairy god-mothers. In *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, Pinkola Estés provides insight as to the origin and meaning of godmothers. She describes how the term “‘god-mother’ came to mean someone who made sure the child did not stray from the precepts of the

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<sup>289</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

<sup>290</sup> Judith Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>291</sup> Neil Gaiman, *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, New York: HarperCollins, 2015. Neil Gaiman’s *Sleeping Beauty* is awakened by a female character who resembles in many ways Snow White. It is thus that Gaiman additionally subverts traditional fairy tale gender roles not only by giving a female character an active role, but by giving an active role to a female character traditionally considered as passive as *Sleeping Beauty*.

<sup>292</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. 444. Translation: “at their mother’s teats”, p. 422.

Church”<sup>293</sup>. However, she states, “Much was lost in the transmigration”, as prior to this, they were known as “Goddess-mothers”, and they “constituted an essential female-to-female nutritional system that nourished the young mothers in particular, teaching them how to nourish the psyches and souls of their young in return”<sup>294</sup>. We see this *female-to-female nutritional system* in the support that the two fairies provide Talia, who in turn nourishes her own children. Talia’s own agency is therefore possible because of the help of her female protectors. In a lecture entitled “Vulnerability/Resistance” given in Belgrade on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Judith Butler proposed that we reconsider how we think about bodies so that we take stock of the way in which our relations to others and to our environment affect our identity as much as our individual actions. She states:

We cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body, and what its relation to that support – or lack of support – might be. In this way, the body is less an entity than a relation, and it cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living. [...] What I am suggesting is that it is not just that this or that body is bound up in a network of relations, but that the body, despite its clear boundaries, or perhaps precisely by virtue of those very boundaries, is defined by the relations that makes its own life and action possible.<sup>295</sup>

Such is the way in which we should consider Talia’s selfhood, which derives from the relations that create her support system as much as it does from her individual bodily agency.

Although the *female-to-female nutritional system* is most evidently reflected in the relationship between Talia, her fairy godmothers, and her children, it pervades more subtly in the multiple interpretations to which the symbol of the spindle lends itself. We have already discussed the sexual connotations of the spindle and the sexual implications of the piece of flax puncturing Talia’s body. However, while the spindle is

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<sup>293</sup> Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>295</sup> Judith Butler, “Vulnerability/Resistance”, Lecture, Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, Belgrade, Serbia, November 20, 2015, citation retrieved from Judith Butler, “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance”, Instituto *Franklin*, Madrid, June 2014, accessed November 25, 2015, <http://www.institutofranklin.net/sites/default/files/files/Rethinking%20Vulnerability%20and%20Resistance%20Judith%20Butler.pdf>.



undeniably phallic in nature, it is simultaneously a symbol of the Three Fates.<sup>296</sup> In Greek and Roman mythology, the Three Fates control the fate of every mortal by spinning, measuring, and cutting their thread of life. The spindle in Basile's tale symbolizes their presence, suggesting that Talia's thread of life is in the hands of the Fates. They are not only symbolically present in the tale; rather, they are embodied in the figure of the spinning woman who fulfils the role of the Fates by provoking Talia's death when she hands her the fatal instrument – the spindle – instead of cutting its thread. Since Talia's death is in the hands of the Fates, it stands to argue that it is also they who bring her back to life; the *female-to-female nutritional system* thus pervades in the interpretation of the spindle as a symbol of the Fates, as well. It is likewise identifiable in the spindle's significance as “a symbol of femininity”<sup>297</sup>: given that neither Talia's father nor her suitor could revive her, the tale suggests that the power to awaken Sleeping Beauty is not in the hands of men, but rather in those of women, be they the Fates or Talia's fairy godmothers. The spindle reflects this nurturing femininity: Von Franz, for one, describes “[t]he sowing of the flax and spinning and weaving a[s] the essence of feminine life with its fertility and sexual implications”<sup>298</sup>. She says, “In medieval Germany one speaks of ‘spindle kinship,’ just as one speaks of the ‘distaff side of the family’ in referring to relations on the mother's side”<sup>299</sup>. Furthermore, von Franz connects “the idea of spinning, weaving, and other complicated feminine activities [with] bringing together natural elements in a certain order” the same way that “every child is the coming together into definite patterns of the Mendelian inherited units”<sup>300</sup>. In this way, the spindle can be said to reflect Talia's adoption of traits passed down to her from earlier generations and how she in turn passes on these traits to her children, representing the cycle of the *female-to-female nutritional system*. Indeed, we see this image of inheritance as early as when Talia assumes the spindle from the older woman. Yet the weaving of loose threads into a tight-knit pattern also strengthens their endurance. It is thus that the spindle also symbolizes the safety net that

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<sup>296</sup> Grace Hogstad *op. cit.* has also made this connection with regards to the spindle, calling it “an instrument and an attribute of the fates, it symbolizes death”.

<sup>297</sup> Marie Louise von Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

the combined efforts of female figures weave in order to protect the young Talia, who, thanks to the *female-to-female nutritional system*, returns from death.

When feminist readings of the Italian Sleeping Beauty tale emphasize the passivity associated with Talia's catatonic state, they often overlook the feminine power behind Sleeping Beauty's awakening, contributing it instead to a masculine agent. However, as von Franz remarks, Sleeping Beauty also returns from death. Fay similarly perceives "renewal, rebirth, and resurrection"<sup>301</sup> at the heart of the tale. As we acknowledged earlier, even Talia's own name is associated with rebirth through its connection with the blooming in springtime. As the imagery of rebirth extends from the character's own name to the various maternal bonds formed throughout the tale, we are invited on multiple levels to recognize the feminine role behind Talia's awakening and thus in the recovery of her agency.

It is important to note that the notion that female selfhood strictly and exclusively derives from motherhood has been harshly criticized in feminist studies of Sleeping Beauty. Karen Rowe, for one, condemns Sleeping Beauty as a tale which "suggest[s] that culture's very survival depends upon a woman's acceptance of roles which relegate her to motherhood and domesticity"<sup>302</sup>. Fernández similarly asserts that it perpetuates the notion that "the creative capacity of the woman must begin and end with the biological function of reproduction"<sup>303</sup>. In other words, motherhood has been criticized insofar as it seems to perpetuate a patriarchal agenda. However, motherhood should not be understood as a bodily expression of patriarchal values. Instead, the tale's presentation of different kinds of maternal relationships, both within and outside the realm of reproduction, suggests that the role of motherhood is valuable beyond its purpose within patriarchal ideology. Basile's tale seems to suggest that motherhood is essential in that it comprises one of many forms of the *female-to-female nutritional*

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<sup>301</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

<sup>302</sup> Karen Rowe, *op. cit.*

<sup>303</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 36. Original: "la capacidad creativa de la mujer debe empezar y acabar con la función biológica de la reproducción". Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.* p. 50 particularly criticizes Bettelheim for his interpretation of motherhood as providing selfhood, stating that his "reductionist analysis of the woman" presents her as "an essentially procreating being". Original: "este análisis reduccionista de la mujer" ; "un ser esencialmente procreador".

*system*, that which constitutes the essential ingredient to Talia's liberation from passivity.

Despite the often univocal conclusions that feminist scholars have reached regarding Sleeping Beauty, the many layers of meaning beneath Basile's fairy tale permit, in the scope of the debate of gender politics, to view Talia as both a passive and active female figure.

### 2.2.2 Female Pleasure and Desire in Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant"

Similarly to that of Basile, Perrault's version of the Sleeping Beauty tale fosters an interpretation that takes stock of the complexity of female subjectivity. While in Basile's tale it is suggested that Talia recovers her agency once she awakens, Perrault's tale challenges Sleeping Beauty's inactivity altogether. The valorization of female beauty and passivity in "La Belle au bois dormant" has served as evidence for Sleeping Beauty's submission to patriarchal expectations of femininity. These expectations encompass the control of female sexual identity either through the subjugation of female sexual agency – as symbolized by the punitive slumber to which Sleeping Beauty succumbs following her engagement with the spindle – or the restriction of female sexuality to roles in which it serves a patriarchal aim, for example, reproduction. The objectification of the female body for the purposes of male gratification is evidenced as well in the many references to Sleeping Beauty's physical attractiveness throughout the text, including, as Fernández points out, in her own name.

However, although "La belle au bois dormant" lends itself to an interpretation that fosters female sexual objectification, it simultaneously invites a reading that endorses female sexual subjectivity. According to a recent study on sexuality published in the *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, one of the defining elements of sexual subjectivity is "entitlement to sexual desire and pleasure"<sup>304</sup>.

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<sup>304</sup> Marie-Aude Boislard P. and Melanie J. Zimmer-Gembeck, "Sexual Subjectivity, Relationship Status and Quality, and Same-sex Sexual Experience among Emerging Adult Females", in *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 1.1, December 2011, accessed November 26, 2015, available at <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/jedp/article/viewFile/12542/9574>.

Contrary to the conclusions of Duggan and Fernández who perceive in Perrault's tale the subjugation of female sexual agency, evidence suggests that Belle both experiences pleasure and expresses desire. Belle's sexuality is thus not limited to her body's instrumentality in male sexual gratification, rather it serves its own purpose. Instead of "awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject"<sup>305</sup>, Belle's body creates meaning for itself.

Like in "Sole, Luna e Talia", the French tale invites a reading that recognizes the co-presence of passivity and activity not only on a narrative level, but on a deeper level, that is, the symbolic one, as well. One might be surprised to discover that the mirror, the presence of which in Perrault's tale has long been overlooked in contrast to its continual reference with regards to Snow White, actually plays a significant role in the story of Sleeping Beauty by enabling an alternative reading of the tale. Following Sleeping Beauty's awakening, the first place she and the prince go is to dine in the "salon de miroirs"<sup>306</sup>. The mirror, in all its complexity, lends itself to a myriad of interpretations. On the one hand, "mirror-symbolism [is linked] with water as a reflector and with the Narcissus myth"<sup>307</sup>, and such is its function in the tale of Snow White, where it reflects the evil stepmother's own narcissism in her quest to be the fairest of them all. In "La Belle au bois dormant", one may be tempted to interpret it as a symbol of female passivity due to its lunar nature; as Cirlot claims, "evidence that the mirror is lunar is afforded by its reflecting and passive characteristics, for it receives images as the moon receives the light of the sun"<sup>308</sup>. Complementing the slumber motif, which has generally been recognized as Sleeping Beauty's most telling attribute of passivity, the mirror may also be symbolic of Sleeping Beauty's metaphoric death by serving as a symbol for the passage into the afterlife; as Cirlot indicates, the mirror can be seen as "the mythic form of a door through which the soul may free itself 'passing' to the other side: this is an idea reproduced by Lewis Carroll in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*"<sup>309</sup>. However, the mirror also invites a reading that challenges traditional conceptualizations of Sleeping Beauty as inactive. Like Sun and Moon, the mirror, by virtue of its connection to the

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<sup>305</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, *op. cit.* p. 50.

<sup>306</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Translation: "hall lined with mirrors", p. 89.

<sup>307</sup> J.E. Cirlot, "Mirror", *op. cit.*

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

echo, is representative of twins<sup>310</sup>, and therefore of two contrasting states. Considering its appearance at the precise moment in the tale following Belle's awakening, the mirror could be interpreted as the metaphoric door through which she passes not into death but back to consciousness and thus to an active life. Literally speaking, a mirror duplicates but reverses the object standing before it in its mirror image. If we consider the mirror as a reflector of the narrative itself, another meaning of the tale's elements is revealed. While in our first interpretation of Perrault's tale we discussed how Belle has been characterized as desireless, the mirror's reflection of the tale suggests that its mirror image, or rather, a reversed meaning, also exists, implying that Sleeping Beauty can also be seen as a female figure who exhibits sexual agency. Owing to the diametrical interpretations to which the symbols and motifs of Perrault's tale lend themselves, we will presently analyze how Sleeping Beauty emerges as a sexual subject where she previously appears as a sexual object.

Belle's experience of pleasure constitutes the first indication of female sexual subjectivity in Perrault's tale. The reigning interpretation of Sleeping Beauty's slumber is that it is a punishment imposed upon her by a patriarchal authority for her sexual transgression and desire. Its alternative interpretation is arguably the exact opposite; rather than the suppression of female sexual agency, Belle's slumber serves as a metaphor for its realization. Although few critics have missed the sexual undercurrents of the spindle, rarely has the sexual connotation of the catatonic state been addressed. And yet Sleeping Beauty's catatonic state need not stand symbolically for a state of passivity, but can rather be characterized as the culmination of rising female sexual desire. The similarities between the wicked fairy's death curse and the sleep curse into which it is repaired open up this alternative reading. According to Fay, "Sleep's immobility and passivity make it an apt metaphor for death."<sup>311</sup> However, the correlation between sleep and death in "La Belle au bois dormant" serves to indicate more than just their shared symbolism of Sleeping Beauty's passive nature. Rather, sleep's proximity to death suggests its consequent proximity to the third adjacent state of *the little death*. According to Georges Bataille in his book *Erotism: Death and*

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<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

*Sensuality*, “[T]here does remain a connection between death and sexual excitement”<sup>312</sup>. Bataille remarks how “the depression following upon the final spasm may give a foretaste of death”<sup>313</sup>, suggesting that the “brief loss or weakening of consciousness”<sup>314</sup> that an orgasm provokes – from whence the term *the little death* – is reflected in the loss of consciousness Belle experiences via her slumber. The erotic nature of Belle’s experience is further underscored by the erotic nature of the dreams that accompany her sleep. The text reads that “il y a apparence (l’histoire n’en dit pourtant rien) que la bonne fée, pendant un si long sommeil, lui avait procuré le plaisir des songes agréables.”<sup>315</sup> De la Rochère has already commented on the “erotic undertones”<sup>316</sup> of this line, suggesting that the allusion is to women’s “erotic fantasies”<sup>317</sup>.

A reinterpretation of Sleeping Beauty’s slumber as a little death suggests that the curse of death of the wicked fairy and its repair into sleep by the good fairy are not covertly patriarchal attempts to promote female purity. Instead they nullify the patriarchal value of the gifts of the first six fairies. Fay notes accordingly that “the death curse throws into doubt all of the previous talents bestowed on the princess, who may not live long enough to accomplish them fully.”<sup>318</sup> Sleeping Beauty’s slumber thereby loses its punitive connotation and becomes the mirror image of that which it was meant to punish: female sexual agency.

Belle’s entitlement to pleasure in Perrault’s tale is complemented by her expression of sexual desire. This viewpoint is rarely shared in feminist fairy tale criticism. Fernández and Duggan are two among the many scholars who perceive Perrault’s tale as a parable for policing female sexual identity. Fernández has stated that “negation of feminine desire is constant throughout all of the versions of Sleeping

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<sup>312</sup> Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>314</sup> *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “petite mort”, 2016, accessed November 27, 2015, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/petite-mort>.

<sup>315</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Translation: “it is likely (though history is silent on the matter) that during her long sleep the good fairy had seen to it that she enjoyed sweet dreams”, p. 89.

<sup>316</sup> Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>318</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

Beauty”<sup>319</sup>. Duggan has similarly claimed specifically with regards to Perrault’s tale that “‘La belle au bois dormant’ focus[es] on the dangers of female desire and the importance of a patriarchal law to keep these desires from wreaking havoc on the body politic. Male desire, on the other hand, is permissible”<sup>320</sup>.

Despite the conviction of these scholars, an alternative reading seems to be true: one can interpret the prince as expressing no desire upon seeing the princess whereas Belle’s desire is underscored on more than one occasion. Although the text indicates suggestively that the prince “se sentit tout de feu”<sup>321</sup> before embarking on his quest to rescue the sleeping princess, once he actually sees her, “Il s’approcha en tremblant”<sup>322</sup>, “il était plus embarrassé qu’elle”<sup>323</sup> “il l’assura qu’il l’aimait plus que lui-même”<sup>324</sup> – the painted picture is a far cry from that of a sexual predator. In fact, unlike Basile’s predatory king, Perrault’s prince never even touches the princess, not even to kiss her. As De la Rochère points out, “surprising though it may be, *there is no kiss* between the Prince and the Princess in Perrault’s *conte*”<sup>325</sup>. This detail has additional consequences on the active/male passive/female dichotomy that dominates feminist fairy tale criticism. Although the good fairy says that a prince will come and wake Sleeping Beauty, thus endorsing the notion of male heroism and female helplessness, in her book *About the Sleeping Beauty* Pamela Lyndon Travers notes that in reality the prince has very little to do with her awakening: “The story [...] contains the one hero who appears to have no hero’s task to perform. [...] All he has to do is to come at the right time.”<sup>326</sup> Despite Duggan’s conviction that “for Perrault women indeed incarnate the abject”<sup>327</sup>, implying the transparency of the French author’s patriarchal intentions, the discrepancy between the fairy’s declaration that the prince will come and awaken the princess (signifying traditional gender role expectations) and the prince’s actual futility in the

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<sup>319</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 33. Original: “la negación del deseo femenino es una constante en todas las versiones de ‘La bella durmiente’”.

<sup>320</sup> Anne Duggan, “Women Subdued”, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>321</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 37. Translation: “took fire”, p. 88.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39. Translation: “Trembling [...] he approached”, p. 89.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40. Translation: “she was the less tongue-tied”, p. 89.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39. Translation: “he told her that he loved her more than himself”, p. 89.

<sup>325</sup> Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>326</sup> Pamela Lyndon Travers, *About the Sleeping Beauty*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975, p. 58-59. By the same token, the prince has no role in rescuing Sleeping Beauty from the ogress, who instead throws herself into the vat of beasts.

<sup>327</sup> Anne Duggan, “Women Subdued”, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

matter (the subversion of said expectations) conversely hints at Perrault's conscious departure from a patriarchal framework. While the prince thus exhibits no agency (sexual or otherwise) of his own, Sleeping Beauty's sexual desire, on the other hand, is emphasized on multiple occasions. Perrault infuses his story with allusions to Belle's sexual desire, including her enthusiasm to engage with the spindle that provokes her little death: "Ah ! que cela est joli, reprit la princesse, comment faites-vous ? donnez-moi que je voie si j'en ferais bien autant."<sup>328</sup> On their wedding night the couple "dormirent peu, *la princesse* n'en avait pas grand besoin"<sup>329</sup>; the text thus specifically emphasizes the princess's desire on the wedding night as opposed to that of the prince. Heiner jokes to this regard, "After sleeping for 100 years, you might not be too sleepy either. A wedding night might also have the same sleepless effect."<sup>330</sup> Despite many scholars' conviction that Perrault's tale suppresses Sleeping Beauty's desire while endorsing that of the prince, textual indications suggest the opposite to be true.

As we discussed previously, Fay has argued that the ogress's death serves to symbolically ensure the punishment of Sleeping Beauty by virtue of their interchangeability, suggesting that any expression of sexual agency is ultimately negated. However, the symmetry between Belle's sexual experience and that of the ogress is recognizable in the fact that just as Sleeping Beauty engages with the phallic spindle of her own accord, so, too, does the ogress throw herself into a vat of phallic snakes, unlike the queen in Basile's tale who is thrown onto the fire against her will. The sexual connotation of both Belle's and the ogress's circumstances suggests that rather than the punishment of one female character's sexuality metaphorically signifying that of the other, the sexual agency of both is ensured. In this context it is difficult to avoid mentioning the ogress's monstrosity and its connotation regarding patriarchal views of female sexuality. However, Braidotti underscores that while "[t]he monstrosity of the female [...] on the one hand reinforces the patriarchal assumption that female sexuality is evil and abject, on the other hand, however, it also states the

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<sup>328</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 33. Translation: "'What fun!' the Princess said then, 'how do you do it? Give it to me and let me see if I can do it too.'", p. 86.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41. Our italics. Translation: "They slept little, for the Princess had little need of it", p. 93.

<sup>330</sup> Heidi Anne Heiner, "Annotations for Sleeping Beauty", *op. cit.*



immense powerfulness of the female subject.”<sup>331</sup> Perrault thus renders what appears as a symbol of female sexual deviance and its sublimation from one perspective into a representation of the triumph of female sexual agency from another.

Unlike Duggan or Fernández, De la Rochère has recognized that “La Belle au bois dormant” is not as patriarchal of a text as most feminist scholars have claimed, stating that it “contain[s] a genuine potential for women’s emancipation”<sup>332</sup> and “easily lends itself to a feminist reading that mocks the influence of sentimental stories that fool girls into marrying young”<sup>333</sup>. De la Rochère’s reading of the tale is supported by the moral at the end of the story, which appears to endorse women’s engagement in premarital sex. The text reads:

Attendre quelque temps pour avoir un époux,  
Riche, bien fait, galant et doux,  
La chose est assez naturelle ;  
Mais l’attendre cent ans, et toujours en dormant,  
On ne trouve plus de femelle,  
Qui dormît si tranquillement.  
La fable semble encor vouloir nous faire entendre,  
Que souvent de l’hymen les agréables nœuds,  
Pour être différés, n’en sont pas moins heureux,  
Et qu’on ne perd rien pour attendre.  
Mais le sexe, avec tant d’ardeur,  
Aspire à la foi conjugale,  
Que je n’ai pas la force ni le cœur,  
De lui prêcher cette morale.<sup>334</sup>

The ambiguity of the line “La fable *semble* encor vouloir nous faire entendre”<sup>335</sup> suggests that instead of endorsing women’s chastity before marriage the tale only *seems*

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<sup>331</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>332</sup> Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *op. cit.* p. 144.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.* p. 134.

<sup>334</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.* p. 46-47. Translation: “For girls to wait awhile, so they may wed/ A loving husband, handsome, rich, and kind:/ That’s natural enough, I’d say;/ But just the same, to stay in bed/ A hundred years asleep—you’ll never find/ Such patience in a girl today./ Another lesson may be meant:/ Lovers lose nothing if they wait./ And tie the knot of marriage late;/ They’ll not be any less content./ Young girls, though, yearn for married bliss/ So ardently, that for my part/ I cannot find it in my heart/ To preach a doctrine such as this”, p. 96-97.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47. Our italics. Translation: “Another lesson may be meant”, p. 96. In reproducing the rhyming aspect of the moral, the translator Christopher Betts sacrificed some literality. “La fable semble encor vouloir nous faire entendre” can also be translated to “The fable seems to tell us”.

to, affirming, as De la Rochère claims, that Perrault's "fairy tale was a more complex document than most critics of the story were suggesting"<sup>336</sup>. Fay claims that with this line "the author offers one meaning and then adds another [...] thus slyly revers[ing] his proposed lessons."<sup>337</sup>

The text's representation of sexual themes that diverge from the mores of Perrault's time suggests that a reading of "La Belle au bois dormant" from the perspective of gender politics in the author's era does not prove consistent with the reality of the text, as De la Rochère's assertion of its complexity also attests. Perrault's tale does not necessarily adapt itself "to the new ideology of the eighteenth-century European bourgeoisie, more strict in sexual matters and more preoccupied with sanctifying the family institution"<sup>338</sup>, as Fernández claims. Instead, a close reading of textual indications suggests that "La Belle au bois dormant" appears to endorse female sexual agency rather than condemn it: instead of representing "the negation of feminine desire", Belle's slumbering body becomes a symbol for its realization.

While in an initial reading we focused on the patriarchal connotations of Perrault's tale, a subsequent look reveals that the particularities inherent to "La Belle au bois dormant" invite an alternative interpretation. Just like the mirror and its reflection, the interpretations to which Perrault's tale lends itself offer two contrasting possibilities regarding female sexual agency.

### 2.2.3 Girlhood to Womanhood:

#### The Feminine Life Cycle in The Brothers Grimms' "Dornröschen"

Like "Sole, Luna e Talia" and "La Belle au bois dormant", the Grimms' "Dornröschen" rejects one-sided interpretations regarding female subjectivity. Drawing from documented knowledge regarding the German authors' patriarchal views, much feminist criticism tends to interpret their corpus of fairy tales as one which propagates female passivity and submissiveness. This is particularly true of their Sleeping Beauty

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<sup>336</sup> Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>337</sup> Carolyn Fay, *op. cit.*, p. 272's interpretation of the moral, however, is that Perrault's intended message is "women, marry *without* delay".

<sup>338</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 40. Original: "a la nueva ideología de la burguesía europea del siglo XVIII, más estricta en temas sexuales y preocupada por santificar la institución familiar."

tale, in which the kiss of a prince that awakens the slumbering princess serves to emphasize the rift between male heroism and female dependence. Such is the belief of Fernández, who has claimed that the Grimms' Sleeping Beauty thus reinforces the patriarchal message already present in the previous French and Italian versions. Despite the nearly unanimous conclusion in the feminist community that the Grimms' tale could only be a harmful model to young girls, in the same way that a reading of Perrault's tale divorced from the gender politics of the author's time indicates the presence of an active female figure, so, too, can the German Sleeping Beauty tale be read in terms of female agency regardless of the patriarchal values so widely attributed to the Brothers Grimm. The Grimms' Dornröschen becomes active once we recognize that the German tale can be read as an allegory for a girl's passage into womanhood rather than a tale about female oppression.

The clue initially prompting us to read "Dornröschen" from multiple perspectives is in the princess's name, the significance of which is moreover underscored by the fact that it appears in the title itself: Sleeping Beauty is no longer named Talia or referred to by her physical attribute of beauty (Belle), but is rather called Dornröschen, meaning a small, thorny rose, usually translated into English as Little Briar Rose. According to Cirlot, like the mirror in Perrault's tale and Sun and Moon in that of Basile, "The thorn on the rose-bush helps to emphasize the counterpoise or 'conjunction' between thesis and antithesis"<sup>339</sup>. On the one hand, this counterpoise may be considered as a symbol for the gendered hierarchy so often perceived in the German tale: as "the emblem of Venus"<sup>340</sup>, the rose can be designated as a symbol of femininity, while the penetrating nature of the thorn conversely suggests its phallic and thus masculine character. Reading the different aspects of the symbol of the rose and thorn in terms of femininity and masculinity might reinforce the active male/passive female dichotomy usually attributed to the tale: as a substitute for the spindle, the thorn can likewise represent the "masculine principle putting the feminine principle to sleep"<sup>341</sup>, that which Hogstad perceives as the spindle's meaning. Such is the case in the myth of Brunhild, the early Sleeping Beauty variant in which the valkyrie is put to sleep by a thorn rather than a spindle. However, like Basile's tale in which Sun and Moon need not

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<sup>339</sup> J.E. Cirlot, "Thorn", *op. cit.*

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, "Rose", *op. cit.*

<sup>341</sup> Grace Hogstad, *op. cit.*

be considered in terms of gender, the Brothers Grimms' tale problematizes a gendered reading of the rose and thorn, particularly since they both correspond to the female character given that they are in her name. Thus, just as Sun and Moon can be said to represent the active and passive principles within Talia herself, so, too, can the rose and the thorn be said to correspond to the two opposing principles within Dornröschen.

Dornröschen is empowered as an active female figure by a reading of the German tale as one of a girl's transition into womanhood rather than a parable of female submissiveness to patriarchal control. Such a reading is most famously offered by Bruno Bettelheim who argues that the Sleeping Beauty tale is not about gender politics, but rather about the passage from childhood to adulthood and the struggles one faces during this transition. To this end, Bettelheim interprets familiar symbols and motifs from the story in terms of stages in a child's development.

The tale's many references to menstruation constitute the first part of Bettelheim's argument that the tale represents Dornröschen's passage into womanhood. This is evidenced on a variety of levels, including in the number of wise women (of which there are no longer eight as in the number of fairies in Perrault's tale, but thirteen), the etymology of the word "curse", the princess's age, her inheritance of the "curse" from an older woman, and the suited reactions of her mother and father. Bettelheim elaborates his reading in the following way:

The thirteen fairies<sup>342</sup> in the Brothers Grimm's story are reminiscent of the thirteen lunar months into which the year was once, in ancient times, divided. While this symbolism may be lost on those not familiar with the lunar year, it is well known that menstruation typically occurs with the twenty-eight day frequency of lunar months, and not with the twelve months which our year is divided into. Thus, the number of twelve good fairies plus a thirteenth evil one indicates symbolically that the fatal "curse" refers to menstruation. [...] In common language, referring also to its Biblical origin, menstruation is often called the "curse"; and it is a female's – the fairy's – curse that causes the bleeding. Second, the age at which this curse is to become effective is about the age at which, in past times, menstruation most frequently set in. Finally, the bleeding comes about through an encounter with an old woman, not a man; and according to the Bible, the curse is inherited by woman from woman. [...] It is very much to the point that the king, the male, does not

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<sup>342</sup> Bettelheim speaks of fairies in the Grimms' tale because he is referring to an earlier edition. By the seventh edition they are changed to wise women.

understand the necessity of menstruation and tries to prevent his daughter from experiencing the fatal bleeding. The queen, in all versions of the story, seems unconcerned with the prediction of the angry fairy.<sup>343</sup>

In accordance with his interpretation of the curse as the onset of menstruation, Bettelheim does not subscribe to the idea that Dornröschen's slumber is a punishment in response to a transgression. Instead, he sees it as the result of being "[o]vercome by the experience of sudden bleeding"<sup>344</sup>. Bettelheim challenges the notion that an inanimate female body designates passivity by asserting that "what may seem like a period of deathlike passivity at the end of childhood is nothing but a time of quiet growth and preparation, from which the person will awaken mature, ready for sexual union."<sup>345</sup> To this effect, Bettelheim reminds us that in fairy tales, "turning inward, which in outer appearance looks like passivity [...] happens when internal mental processes of such importance go on within the person that he has no energy for outwardly directed action."<sup>346</sup> Bettelheim thus reinterprets Sleeping Beauty's catatonic state not as a punishment, but as an important step in her maturation process that entails intense internal activity. Although Bettelheim therefore theorizes that the "impenetrable wall of thorns" is a "protecti[on] against all suitors – i.e., premature sexual encounters", his interpretation does not coincide with the patriarchal connotation of that "protection", as in the Danaë myth, for example, in which it more closely resembles imprisonment. In other words, for Bettelheim the purpose of the thorny barrier is not to ensure female sexual purity by a patriarchal authority, but rather "a warning to child and parents that sexual arousal before mind and body are ready for it is very destructive."<sup>347</sup> Once this period of growth is over is when

[t]he wall of thorns suddenly turns into a wall of big, beautiful flowers, which opens to let the prince enter. The implied message is the same as in many other fairy tales: don't worry and don't try to hurry things – when the time is ripe, the impossible problem will be solved, as if all by itself.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 232-233.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*

Bettelheim therefore challenges the widespread feminist conclusions regarding familiar symbols and motifs to suggest that the tale is not about a gendered hierarchy but about a child's growing up. Reading "Dornröschen" as a story about a transitional process allows us to challenge the reified image of Sleeping Beauty as a passive figure in stasis; in the context of a transition, her mobility and thus activity is implied.

Bettelheim's reading of the tale as representative of Sleeping Beauty's maturation into adulthood is endorsed by numerous other symbols in the story. As a symbol of cyclicity, the spindle's spinning wheel can be said to correspond to Sleeping Beauty's life cycle, especially considering its connection to the Fates who oversee the life of every mortal. Symbols from the natural world as well as the animal kingdom – each representative of the life cycle – also seem to support the theory that "Dornröschen" is about a period of transformation, and most likely one of sexual maturation. The hedge of brier roses, which, sprout, grow, and eventually bloom, undergo a transformative process just like the princess who shares their name. That the cyclical processes of nature correlate to the feminine life cycle is furthermore suggested by Mother Nature's feminine characterization. We may also recall nature's feminine character from the myth of Persephone, in which Persephone's cyclical ascent from the Underworld is associated with the blooming of spring. However, although Bettelheim states that the bloomed hedge of roses stands for Sleeping Beauty's mental readiness for sexual union, the metamorphosis of the brier roses also mirrors the physical transformation Sleeping Beauty must undergo upon entering womanhood. In the context of sexual maturation, Sleeping Beauty's activity is not only psychical, rather her body also becomes the site of active transformation upon the onset of menstruation, with which floral imagery is still sometimes associated. Despite its inevitability, the creative capacity and maternal potential associated with menstruation renders Dornröschen's coming into womanhood an important act of bodily agency rather than a passive automatism. As Pinkola Estés writes,

[I]n the matriarchal cultures of ancient India, Egypt, parts of Asia, and Turkey [...]ne of the most important threshold rites regarded first menstruation. This rite celebrated the crossing from childhood into the

profound ability to bring forth life from one's own belly, to carry the attendant sexual power and all peripheral womanly powers.<sup>349</sup>

Life cycle symbolism is not only present in the natural imagery of the tale, but may likewise be recognized in the frog that announces Dornröschen's birth. Bettelheim suggests that the frog symbolizes fertility, arguing how "The frog's saying that the queen will give birth before a year is over puts the time of waiting close to the nine months of pregnancy. This, plus the queen's being in her bath, is reason to believe that conception took place on the occasion of the frog's visit to the queen."<sup>350</sup> In this light, the frog is directly linked to the start of the princess's life cycle. Elsewhere in *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim also states that "frogs may symbolize both the lowest, most primitive, and earliest state of our being, and the development away from it"<sup>351</sup>, as implied by their amphibious nature.<sup>352</sup> Furthermore, he points out that "in their own life cycle [they] move from a lower to a higher form"<sup>353</sup>. The frog, like the hedge of thorns, can thus be seen as representative of the various stages of development, whereby it becomes a symbol for Dornröschen's process of maturation. Unlike Basile or Perrault, the Brothers Grimm do not append a second-plotline incorporating a jealous female rival. Instead, their story ends with the princess's awakening. This means that the symbol with which the story begins, the frog, and that with which it ends, the blooming brier roses, frame the narrative, forming a canopy over the tale in which their symbolic meaning of maturation serves as a leitmotif.

Bettelheim argues that sexual maturation is a theme common to all Sleeping Beauty versions. Certainly, at the start of each version, Sleeping Beauty's fate is sealed upon her birth either by a prophecy or a curse, suggesting its inevitability much like that of the stages of one's life cycle. Nevertheless, the interpretation of Sleeping Beauty as a story about a child's maturation is more applicable to the Grimms' text than to those of their predecessors. First of all, that the wise woman's curse carries a precise expiration date of one hundred years is fundamental, since the motif of predestined time corresponds to our knowledge that a certain amount of time must pass for different

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<sup>349</sup> Clarisa Pinkola Estés, *op. cit.*, p. 252-252.

<sup>350</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>352</sup> J.E. Cirlot, "Frog", *op. cit.* likewise makes reference to this.

<sup>353</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

stages in a life cycle to occur. Conversely, we may notice that there is no indication of a predestined time of awakening in “Sole, Luna e Talia”, “Frayre de Joy et Sor de Plaser”, or *Perceforest*, and it is precisely in each of these versions that a rape occurs. Furthermore, the blooming hedge of roses, symbolic of Sleeping Beauty’s completed maturation, is unique to the Grimm’s version. Although Perrault’s tale incorporates a hedge of thorns that grows around the princess’s castle, it never blooms. Another distinguishing factor that facilitates a reading of “Dornröschen” as a tale of sexual maturation is that the Brothers Grimm place particular significance on Dornröschen’s status as a child, as opposed to Basile and Perrault. In “Sole, Luna e Talia”, Talia’s encounter with the piece of flax occurs once she is already “grannecella”<sup>354</sup>, that is, once she is more or less grown up. The lack of precision with which Basile references her age also suggests that it is not a fundamental factor with respect to the sexual content of the tale. Whereas Perrault’s princess has her encounter with the spindle vaguely around the age of fifteen or sixteen,<sup>355</sup> suggesting that her age is thus arguably closer to that of Dornröschen, the French author’s lack of precision suggests that, like for Basile, age is not a fundamental factor. Moreover, Perrault’s text abounds in sexual innuendo, suggesting that the princess’s sexual maturation has already taken place. This is further endorsed by the message of the moral referring to the sexual activity of unmarried women. Conversely, the Brothers Grimm are precise in defining the age of their Sleeping Beauty; Fernández points out, “In the Grimms’ version, it is specified that the curse comes to pass on the day of the princess’s fifteenth birthday”<sup>356</sup>. Even in naming their Sleeping Beauty the Brothers Grimm foreground her young nature by adding the German diminutive suffix *-chen* to her name. To this effect, Bettelheim remarks, “The diminutive form of ‘rose’ in the German name stresses the girl’s immaturity”<sup>357</sup>. The Grimms’ setting of a predestined time, the blooming hedge of roses, the precise indication of the girl’s age, and the suffix in her name all suggest that the German tale

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<sup>354</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. Translation: “more or less grown up”. Our translation. In this case, we did not use Nancy Canepa’s translation, “a big girl”, since, in our opinion, it does not adequately render that Talia is no longer so young.

<sup>355</sup> “Au bout de quinze ou seize ans”, Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 33. Translation: ““Fifteen or sixteen years went by”, p. 84.

<sup>356</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.* p. 42. Original: “En Grimm se especifica que la maldición se cumple el día del decimoquinto cumpleaños de la princesa”.

<sup>357</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 233.



lends itself more easily to an interpretation of a child about to undergo her passage into adulthood than previous Sleeping Beauty versions.

In contrast to Fernández's assertion that the prince's kiss reinforces his role in Sleeping Beauty's awakening thereby strengthening the rift between male heroism and female helplessness, in the context of a tale about sexual maturation based on a predestined time, interpreting the kiss as an act of salvation would be incongruent. The motif of a predestined timeframe suggests that Dornröschen would wake up in that moment whether a prince kissed her or not. Moreover, unlike in Perrault's version where the good fairy prophesies that a prince will wake up the sleeping Belle, the Grimms' wise women make no such prediction, further underscoring the irrelevance of his presence with regards to her awakening. To this effect, von Franz claims that the prince "is merely the lucky one who comes on the day when the hundred years expire, so there is no question of merit"<sup>358</sup>, suggesting that both his unharmed passing through the wall of thorns as well as the princess's awakening upon his arrival are incidental.

Although his status as a rescuer can thus be discredited, the prince still plays a fundamental role in interpreting "Dornröschen" as a story about Sleeping Beauty's natural life cycle rather than female oppression by a patriarchal society. Much feminist criticism suggesting the patriarchal nature of the Sleeping Beauty tales lies in the disparity between male activity and female passivity implied by Sleeping Beauty's catatonic state. As Dworkin claims, "Catatonia is the good woman's most winning quality. Sleeping Beauty slept for 100 years, after pricking her finger on a spindle. [...The prince] fell in love with her while she was asleep, or was it because she was asleep?"<sup>359</sup> Even if the princess's slumber is interpreted as a natural stage in her development, the trouble remains that the male character goes through no analogous period of immobility, whence the unequal representation of the sexes. This means that the introduction of a male sleeper to the story would change the dynamic of gender representation, since the argument of patriarchal oppression would be moot in a tale where a period of passivity is inherent not only to a female character but to a male one as well. To this end, Bettelheim has argued that Sleeping Beauty represents the process of maturation for boys as much as girls. He states:

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<sup>358</sup> Marie Louise von Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>359</sup> Andrea Dworkin, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Even when a girl is depicted as turning inward in her struggle to become herself, and a boy as aggressively dealing with the external world, these two *together* symbolize the two ways in which one has to gain selfhood: through learning to understand and master the inner as well as the outer world. In this sense the male and female heroes are again projections onto two different figures of two (artificially) separated aspects of one and the same process which *everybody* has to undergo in growing up. While some literal-minded parents do not realize it, children know that, whatever the sex of the hero, the story pertains to their own problems.<sup>360</sup>

Bettelheim therefore dismisses claims of a gender hierarchy in the tale by asserting that the princess's process is equally applicable to a male child and will be equally internalized by a male reader since there is nothing to preclude that a child, regardless of sex, will intuitively associate him or herself with both female and male protagonists. To illustrate his point, he provides an example of how while "in 'The Sleeping Beauty' it is the prince who observes the sleeping girl, [...] in 'Cupid and Psyche' and the many tales derived from it, it is Psyche who apprehends Cupid in his sleep"<sup>361</sup>. However, while we agree with Bettelheim's conclusion, we do not agree with his premise. For one, the idea that the story of Sleeping Beauty speaks just as much to the male life cycle falters with the tale's reference to menstruation. Bettelheim only vaguely alludes to the inconsistency, suggesting that the overwhelming experience of menstruation applies to "the young man too, in a different manner"<sup>362</sup>. As Vanessa Joosen points out, scholars have also criticized Bettelheim's "generalizations about children's responses to fairy tales (disregarding varieties linked to sex, age, social and historical background)"<sup>363</sup>. Furthermore, the tale itself indicates that the sex of Sleeping Beauty is unequivocally female and, in fact, Bettelheim must look to the myth of Cupid and Psyche, rather than within "Dornröschen" itself, to argue that an inversion of roles is implied.<sup>364</sup> Confusingly, even Bettelheim ultimately seems to contradict his own study; contrary to his initial assertion that the fairy tale represents the experiences of both boys and girls,

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<sup>360</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>363</sup> Vanessa Joosen, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

<sup>364</sup> Carolina Fernández Rodríguez, *op. cit.*, p. 47-48 also criticizes Bettelheim's recourse to Cupid and Psyche in order to make an argument about Sleeping Beauty.

in the end of his analysis he conversely suggests that “these stories enumerate experiences which pertain *only to the female*; she must undergo them all before she reaches the summit of femininity.”<sup>365</sup> For these reasons, we suggest that the key to a reading of “Dornröschen” as a story of the process of maturation for *both* male and female children – that which would suggest gender equality rather than a gender hierarchy – is neither in another story nor in the male reader’s interpretation of the experience of Sleeping Beauty as pertaining to his own problems, but rather in the text itself. Contrary to Basile or Perrault, the Grimms introduce a unique detail in their version of Sleeping Beauty that suggests that the prince goes through an analogous experience; like the princess, so, too, does he go through an extended period of sleep only to awaken when the time is ripe.

Once the princess’s castle is surrounded by an impenetrable wall, various princes come trying to get through and reach her:

However, this was impossible because the thorns clung together tightly as though they had hands, and the young men got stuck there. Indeed, they could not pry themselves loose and died miserable deaths.<sup>366</sup>

This is a change introduced by the Brothers Grimm, as there is no indication of male characters succumbing to death in the two other classical versions.<sup>367</sup> Just as Sleeping Beauty’s death curse is altered into a curse of sleep by the good fairy, so, too, does von Franz interpret the death of the male suitors in terms of slumber, characterizing the scenario as “a kind of infection of sleep”<sup>368</sup>. The implication is that sleep applies to everyone, male and female, whereby the patriarchal connotation of the slumber as a punishment for female transgression loses credibility. Although there is a large number of male sleepers as opposed to one Sleeping Beauty, the imbalance is rectified if we consider that in the case of the princes, the multiple serves as a metaphor for the individual. Just as the two kings in Basile’s tale can be seen as substitutes for each other owing to their shared king title and the similar way in which they abandon Talia in the

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<sup>365</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 235. Our italics.

<sup>366</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *op. cit.*, l. 4076-4079.

<sup>367</sup> Jack Zipes, *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales*, p. 493 suggests that the perilous wall of thorns is an allusion to the analogous wall of flames through which Siegfried must penetrate in the myth of Brunhild.

<sup>368</sup> Marie Louise von Franz, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

castle, in the Brothers Grimms' tale, by virtue of the shared title of prince and their shared intentions of reaching the slumbering princess, we may assume that the last prince for whom the hedge of thorns opens is the substitute for all those who perished before him. Since the prince is a substitute for his slumbering predecessors, it thus stands to argue that he, too, is awakened where previously he was asleep. Just as the hundred-year wait has expired for the princess, the prince has also passed this "time of quiet growth and preparation, from which the person will awaken mature, ready for sexual union."<sup>369</sup> To this effect, Bettelheim suggests that the kiss is not a symbol of male heroism, but rather one that suggests the awakening of the princess and the prince to each other once they have both reached maturity: "The harmonious meeting of prince and princess, their awakening to each other, is a symbol of what maturity implies: not just harmony within oneself, but also with the other."<sup>370</sup> Since the tale provides us with an example of male sleep and awakening on a textual level, it reaffirms what Bettelheim has argued all along: that "Dornröschen" is a story about the obstacles that *both* male and female children pass in their development.

While one interpretation of "Dornröschen" supports a passive and submissive female model, a second perspective suggests that the tale's representation of familiar symbols and motifs in the context of sexual maturation problematizes the concept of an active/male passive/female dichotomy. While Sleeping Beauty's comatose and paralyzed body has been the site of much feminist criticism, in the context of a story about a child's transition into adulthood, Dornröschen's body becomes the site of both internal and external active transformation rather than passive submission. Despite the patriarchal beliefs of the German authors on which many critics rely in determining the ideological framework of their corpus, their Sleeping Beauty tale lends itself to a reading that recognizes the presence of a female figure stepping into a life of adulthood.

Second-wave feminist methodology, rooted in identifying disparities between men and women, continues to pervade fairy tale scholarship today. With respect to Sleeping Beauty, the majority of feminist fairy tale criticism still condemns the various versions of the tale for promoting female passivity and submission. Sleeping Beauty's

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<sup>369</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

inanimate body is at the centre of this argument, reducing her to the status of *woman as object*. Feminist fairy tale scholars often rely on historical factors to aid them in such interpretations, pointing out similarities between Sleeping Beauty and the misogynistic content of earlier oral and literary variants, or citing documentation of authorial intent and gender politics in the author's era as evidence of the patriarchal nature of the texts. For example, Fernández calls attention to the fact that Sleeping Beauty's dependence on a male rescuer for animation can be traced back to the myth of Persephone; according to the author of *La Bella durmiente a través de la historia*, Persephone must rely on a masculine agent, Zeus, in order to be released from the Underworld just as Sleeping Beauty must wait for the arrival of her male rescuer. Tatar similarly attributes the sexual purity of female characters in the Grimms' tales to the authors' discomfort with the concept of premarital sex. Birkalan-Gedik reiterates that the editing techniques of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm contributed to the creation of "the very images of female characters that came under fire from feminist scholarship." Zipes also points out how the sexual attitudes of the Baroque period are reflected in Basile's tale, suggesting that there is symmetry between the rape of Talia and the exploitation of sleeping women considered common practice in Basile's era.

Despite the nearly univocal conclusions reached by fairy tale scholars regarding the gender politics in the Sleeping Beauty tales, in interpreting any subject matter one must recognize that there is no one way to approach a subject from a feminist perspective. To this effect, Butler has stated, "The feminist 'we' is always and only a phantasmatic construction"<sup>371</sup>. The variety of interpretations to which the three Sleeping Beauty versions lend themselves attests to that. The fact that the tales invite such polarized conclusions reveals that the message of Sleeping Beauty is not so evident or univocal as many feminist scholars would suggest. Rather, as Bettelheim asserts, "Fairy tales do not render such one-sided pictures."<sup>372</sup> The reality of Basile's, Perrault's, and the Brothers Grimms' texts is that although historical factors may facilitate a gender-biased reading, the text itself also advocates female agency and subjectivity regardless of the implications of extra-textual components.

In our reading of the three classical Sleeping Beauty versions, we applied one of

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<sup>371</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>372</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

the key tenets of third-wave feminism – that is, the rejection of absolute judgments – and acknowledged the complexity of female identity in these stories rather than endorsing a single viewpoint. Under the binary opposition model, women’s experiences are homogenized under umbrella conclusions and differences of experience are disregarded. In contrast, the third-wave theory of subjectivity promotes the recognition of the individuality of each woman, rather than universalistic notions of woman’s common subjugated status. This focus on individuality recognizes not only that a generalization of all women is inaccurate and unscientific, but it also recognizes the different ways in which the agency of women can be displayed. In our reading, we investigated the unique ways in which each story presents an active female figure. Thus, in “Sole, Luna e Talia”, Talia owes her reanimation not to a male rescuer, but to the *female-to-female nutritional system* of which she herself becomes part in becoming a mother. Perrault’s Belle, on the other hand, exhibits sexual agency through both her expression of desire and entitlement to pleasure, characteristics which inform her status as a sexual subject. Finally, the Grimms’ Dornröschen becomes active by virtue of the tale’s significance as an allegory for a girl’s passage into womanhood rather than one about policing female sexual identity. A close reading of the three classical tales recognizes the individual character of each Sleeping Beauty. Such a reading takes stock of the fact that Sleeping Beauty’s body becomes a site for the creation of meaning for itself – whether through motherhood, the expression of desire and pleasure, or a process of maturation – rather than the ultimate symbol of female passivity or acquiescence to male desire. It is pertinent to underscore that the three distinct ways in which Sleeping Beauty expresses bodily agency are all experiences that pertain to the female body, emphasizing Sleeping Beauty’s status as a symbol for female subjectivity specifically. As Braidotti states, “References to female sexuality, to motherhood, [...] to the flow of blood [...] are unmistakably female.”<sup>373</sup>

Studying the nuances of each classical version was rendered a priority not only so that Sleeping Beauty could emerge as a complex feminine subject rather than the passive feminine object that most feminists claim her to be, but also because it familiarizes us with the multiplicity of manifestations and meanings of symbols and motifs in the Sleeping Beauty Model, that which helped us select a contemporary

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<sup>373</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, op. cit., p. 153.

corpus of Sleeping Beauty hypertexts. As we mentioned in our introduction, the Sleeping Beauty Model is composed of six elements: *Fate*, *The Spindle*, *A Long and Unnatural Sleep*, *Enclosure*, *Awakening* and *Prince Charming*. We arrived at these six elements because they are present in each classical version.<sup>374</sup> The knowledge of not only how these symbols and motifs transform between the Italian, French, and German versions of the tale but also of how their meaning can vary within a single classical work is important because it helps us identify the source and meaning of individual elements in contemporary Sleeping Beauty hypertexts. For example, we have seen that the six elements can manifest differently between the three classical versions:

1. *Fate*, the power that predetermines Sleeping Beauty's future, manifests in the form of wise men and soothsayers (Basile), fairies (Perrault), or wise women (Grimm) depending on the version.
2. The *Spindle* sometimes provokes Sleeping Beauty's slumber through the prick of the needle (Perrault, Grimm) and sometimes through the embedment of a piece of flax under her fingernail (Basile).
3. *A Long and Unnatural Sleep* can have an expiration date of one hundred years (Perrault, Grimm) or have no such limits (Basile). Its causes are unnatural since it manifests magically because of a *Spindle*.
4. While Talia is *Enclosed* within a locked castle, Belle and Dornröschen are encircled by a hedge of thorns. That of Dornröschen eventually blooms into a beautiful hedge of flowers.
5. Sleeping Beauty sometimes *Awakens* once her children suck out the piece of flax under her fingernail (Basile), other times during the presence of *Prince Charming* (Perrault, Grimm).
6. *Prince Charming* can be a king (Basile) or a prince (Perrault, Grimm). He could have arrived at Sleeping Beauty's castle by accident (Basile), or intentionally (Perrault, Grimm). Once he finds Sleeping Beauty, he either kneels beside her

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<sup>374</sup> The second part of the Italian and French versions in which a jealous female rival puts Sleeping Beauty and her children in danger does not correspond to the Sleeping Beauty Model. Not only does it likely constitute a separate narrative, as suggested by numerous critics (Maria Tatar 2002, Carolyn Fay 2008, Bruno Bettelheim 2010), but it also does not appear in the version that the Brothers Grimm present.

(Perrault), kisses her (Grimm), or has sex with her (Basile).

Not only does the manifestation of each element vary from version to version, but the interpretations to which each element lends itself vary, as well. For example:

1. *Fate*: In Basile's tale, the fact that wise men predict Talia's future could be indicative of a male authority sanctioning female behaviour. Conversely, in the same version, the three *Fates* aid in the formation of the *female-to-female nutritional system*, that which contradicts the patriarchal authority in the text.
2. Throughout the classical texts, the *Spindle's* meaning varies from a phallic symbol of patriarchal oppression, to a symbol of femininity, to a symbol of the three Fates, to one of female sexual expression, to one of menstruation.
3. The *Long and Unnatural Sleep* can be interpreted as a state of female passivity from one perspective, as an expression of female sexual desire and pleasure from another, or as the onset of sexual maturation from a third.
4. The *Enclosure* could be interpreted both as a kind of prison that discourages female sexual agency, or as a protective barrier against male sexual advances. In the form of a blooming hedge of roses, it is also a symbol for female sexual maturation.
5. Sleeping Beauty's *Awakening* could result from the intervention of *Prince Charming*, or the *female-to-female nutritional system*. It can also be interpreted outside the context of salvation as a metaphor for a girl's transition into womanhood.
6. While we may credit *Prince Charming* with Sleeping Beauty's awakening, we have also discussed how his role as the hero who rescues the damsel in distress can be seen as inconsequential.

These are only some of the interpretative possibilities we discussed throughout Part II. Acknowledging the many different manifestations and meanings of the elements in Sleeping Beauty helps us identify her in later works. After analyzing the three classical versions of the tale, we identified contemporary Sleeping Beauty hypertexts based on the fact that they, too, reproduce in one way or another each of these elements, as we



will see in Part III. Just as the six elements can take on distinct forms between the classical versions of the tale, so, too, will we witness how they may sometimes change further in contemporary hypertexts. In other words, we will see how contemporary hypertexts sometimes modify in some way these six elements while still recognizably relying on them, a process which Gérard Genette calls *transformation*. We will also notice how contemporary Sleeping Beauty hypertexts tend to be hybridizations of the three classical versions.<sup>375</sup>

Once we have identified Sleeping Beauty in contemporary hypertexts, we will examine how the substitution of magic with medical science and technology affects female subjectivity in these works. In the 1990s, feminist scholars began to investigate the relationship between science, technology, and the body. They recognized that we cannot talk about subjectivities in our contemporary age without talking about the complex and contradictory influence of science and technology in the matter. While some warned against the risk that science and technology could further polarize the binary model of gender, others conceived them as powerful instruments in the elimination of discriminatory dichotomies like male/female, active/passive, mind/body. Donna Haraway has called these diverse interactions between science, technology and our bodies the *cyborg*. Today, the unprecedented historical figure of the cyborg is reflected in the image of the contemporary Sleeping Beauty; in twentieth-and twenty-first century literature and cinema, Sleeping Beauty is no longer a fairy tale princess, but a patient in a medical context. The diverse kinds of interactions between science, technology, and the female body that we encounter in contemporary Sleeping Beauty hypertexts invite us to address how scientific and technological advances have influenced female subjectivity.

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<sup>375</sup> A recent conference on Sleeping Beauty adaptations in Clermont-Ferrand, France took note in their online program of the “hybridizations” of the different classical versions that occur in contemporary reproductions. *Séductions et Métamorphoses de « La Belle au Bois Dormant »*, Clermont-Ferrand, France, November 27-28, 2014, accessed on December 1, 2015, <http://celis.univ-bpclermont.fr/spip.php?article1056>.



**PART III**  
**WAKING UP TO A NEW ERA:**  
**THE INFLUENCE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ON FEMALE**  
**SUBJECTIVITY IN CONTEMPORARY SLEEPING BEAUTY HYPERTEXTS**



### 3.1 From Magical to Medical: Identifying the Contemporary Sleeping Beauty

Since the 1980s, third-wave feminism has rejected the notion of absolute judgments that ignores the individual experiences of women and instead sees women as universally subordinate subjects. Philosophers like Rosi Braidotti and Judith Butler envisage such univocal conceptions of identity as out of step with the transformations we are undergoing in the contemporary age. Unlike second-wave methodology which is rooted in affirming sexual difference and identifying the many social and political arenas in which women are inferior to men, the third wave seeks to further eliminate discriminatory binary oppositions like male/female or active/passive. Third-wave feminists theorize the subject in terms of multiplicity, whereby the complexity of each individual subject, as opposed to women's common subjugated status, can be recognized. In challenging the binary opposition model, the new theory of subjectivity proposed in the late twentieth century provides scholars with the necessary tools to interpret, as Braidotti calls us, "the kind of hybrid mix we are in the process of becoming."<sup>376</sup>

By the 1990s, feminist scholars realized that we cannot talk about subjectivities in our contemporary age without investigating two fundamental catalysts in our hybridization: science and technology. While melting the boundaries between male/female, active/passive, and mind/body, science and technology also confuse the limits between human and machine. In her famous Cyborg Manifesto, Donna Haraway proposes the *cyborg* – "a hybrid of machine and organism"<sup>377</sup> – as a metaphor for the myriad ways in which science and technology are infiltrating our lives. According to Haraway, the cyborg has immense emancipating potential that derives from its status as an emerging identity. It is a relatively new subject in academic discourse and, as such, it has not yet fallen in the folds of a binary opposition model. Owing to the cyborg's hybrid nature, Haraway perceives it in terms of its ability to destabilize dominant binaries. Since the cyborg has yet to be coded with meaning, Haraway invites feminists

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<sup>376</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>377</sup> Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", *op. cit.*, p. 149.

to take advantage of the opportunity and ensure it becomes a metaphor for female empowerment. To this effect, she states: “The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code.”<sup>378</sup>

Understanding the cyborg as both a physical reality as well as a metaphor is crucial for recognizing the extent of its presence in our contemporary world. Taken literally, the cyborg is a product of the physical fusion of human and machine, embodied, for example, in the image of the young woman taking a chemically engineered birth-control pill. However, the cyborg is also embodied in the virtual personas we create for ourselves on social media. It is even a product of scientific discourse: it is the conceptualization of an individual of a particular race, class, gender, health status, or other subset based on the political appropriation or bias of scientific studies on that subset.

By focusing on the many intersections between science, technology and the body, feminist critics opened up a path for a theory that recognizes the emancipating potential of scientific and technological advances, but also of the many risks they pose with regards to gender equality. Susan Bordo, for one, warns how science and technology may be assisting the further polarization of gender through procedures like plastic surgery which perpetuate the conceptualization of the female body as one which needs to be corrected in a culture that already places excessive value on the physical appearance of women. Braidotti cites the world of pornography in cyber-space as another preoccupying advent that advocates violence against women. On the other side of the debate, feminist scholars have lauded science and technology for the benefits they offer with respect to gender equality. Many feminists endorse techniques like artificial insemination or products like the birth control pill precisely because they afford women more autonomy over their reproductive health and hence over their bodies. In dialogue with Gender Studies, science and technology have provided feminist scholars with a new way to conceptualize the female body.

Out of the vast array of scientific and technological disciplines, none is more conducive to the study of the influence of science and technology on female subjectivity than the medical field. The diverse effects of medical technology, medical

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<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

professionals, and medical discourse on the patient provide three distinct perspectives from which to explore the complex and contradictory effects of science and technology on the body.

Contemporary Sleeping Beauty hypertexts provide the ideal platform on which to engage in such a study. In twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature and cinema, Sleeping Beauty is no longer a fairy tale princess put under a magic curse, but a patient susceptible to the technology, staff, and discourse of medicine. Owing to her comatose and inanimate state, Sleeping Beauty has for centuries epitomized the notion *woman as body* emphasizing the passivity and objectification of the female form that such a notion entails. If the cyborg is a metaphor for the many diverse interactions between science, technology and our bodies, and if Sleeping Beauty emphasizes the role of the female body in questions of subjectivity, then the historical figure of the cyborg embodied by the contemporary Sleeping Beauty is the ideal channel through which to investigate the effect of science and technology on female subjectivity.

In her new medical context, the figure of the Sleeping Beauty offers three distinct means through which to address the relationship between science, technology, and the female body, each of which we will evaluate individually. First, in our investigation of the role of medical technology in questions of female subjectivity, we will focus on the most literal manifestations of the cyborg, evaluating how the fusion of body and machine through devices, vaccines, and procedures enables or subverts bodily acts of agency. As the decision-makers behind the implementation of medical technology and the caretakers of the ill, medical professionals exert another crucial influence on the female patient's body. Our second subject of analysis will thus be the relationship between the patient and the medical figure, including doctors, nurses, and technicians, and its effect on female subjectivity. In feminist inquiries into the history of science, one of most important issues scholars address is the relative absence of women from the scientific domain and the consequent masculinisation of science. As Evelyn Fox Keller points out,

[S]cience has been produced by a particular subset of the human race – that is, almost entirely by white, middle-class men – but also [...] it has evolved under the formative influence of a particular ideal of

masculinity.<sup>379</sup>

The masculinisation of science thus produced a scientific discourse that supported a masculine ideology. Åsberg reminds us of the consequences of such a homogenous perspective in medical discourse, drawing attention to the ongoing problem of the representation of the female body as inferior to that of the man:

Medical discourse also is thoroughly investigated by feminists. Such studies range from prizing apart the former notions of hysteria and nymphomania to critically evaluating contemporary ideas on PMS, post-natal depression, and anorexia. One of the most important conclusions of these studies is that the entire discourse on medicine, down to the letter of scientific articles on cells, has imagined the female body as more susceptible to pathologies and ailments than the male body.<sup>380</sup>

Traditional medical discourse, to be distinguished from the attitude of an individual medical figure towards a patient, thus often provides a narrow perspective on female identity. This is why the third area we will investigate is the limits of traditional medical discourse with regards to representing the female experience of the body and the role of creative discourse from the patient's perspective in subverting or reinforcing her subjectivity. Mental health, which remains one of the most gender biased diagnostic categories, will be the specific subject of focus of this third area of investigation.

In affirmation of their hypertextual relationship with the classical Sleeping Beauty tales, each of the six works in our contemporary corpus reproduces the six elements of the Sleeping Beauty Model, only in a medical context. Each conventional fairy tale element – *Fate*, *The Spindle*, *A Long and Unnatural Sleep*, *Enclosure*, *Awakening*, *Prince Charming* – finds its contemporary medical equivalent(s).

Before individually addressing the three distinct ways in which science and technology impact the female body in our corpus, we will provide summaries of each work in order to:

1. Introduce the works on which we will further elaborate throughout the course of Part III;

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<sup>379</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, op. cit., p. 6-7.

<sup>380</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, op. cit., p. 30.



2. Identify elements of the Sleeping Beauty Model within these works so as to validate their status as Sleeping Beauty hypertexts;
3. Contextualize each work in the wider discussion on the effects of science and technology on female subjectivity.

“La bella addormentata nel frigo”, 1966, Primo Levi

In Primo Levi’s short dramatic piece “La bella addormentata nel frigo”, published in 1966 in a collection entitled *Storie Naturali* (*Natural Stories*), Patricia is cryogenically preserved so that she can witness important historical events centuries in the future. Through a process which Gérard Genette calls *simple transformation*, the action of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale is transposed to another epoch – the year 2115. Unlike the classical Sleeping Beauty, Levi’s Patricia is not subjected to her *Long and Unnatural Sleep* via the curse of a malevolent fairy, but through a state of cryogenically-induced hibernation in which she has been for 140 years. Levi’s tale recalls the element of unavoidable *Fate* intrinsic to the classical versions by virtue of its absence: this Sleeping Beauty enters her slumber of her own free will; she was the first volunteer when the program pioneered. The hibernation technique which Patricia undergoes calls for her to be injected with antifreeze so that she is not killed by the extreme temperature of her cryogenic chamber, that is, the refrigerator to which Levi refers in the title. The injection thus substitutes by scientific means the good fairy’s magical alteration of the death curse into one of sleep, ensuring that Patricia will fall into a slumber as opposed to succumbing to a death. In this futuristic retelling of the Sleeping Beauty tale, Levi replaces the sleep-inducing *Spindle* from the classical story with a compressor that puts Patricia into hibernation when activated. Rather than being locked in a castle or surrounded by a hedge of thorns, Patricia is *Enclosed* in a cryogenic chamber. She is *Awakened* by her guardians, Peter and Lotte Thörl, a few times a year on specific occasions. These include her birthday (“Il programma, dunque, prevedeva un risveglio di qualche ora tutti gli anni, al 19 dicembre, giorno del suo compleanno”<sup>381</sup>), important historical events (“spedizioni planetarie, delitti e processi

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<sup>381</sup> Primo Levi, “La bella addormentata nel frigo”, *Tutti I racconti*, ed. Marco Belpoliti, Torino, Einaudi, 2005, p. 91. Translation: “The program, therefore, provided for an awakening lasting a

celebri, matrimoni di sovrani o di divi dello schermo, incontri internazionali di baseball, cataclismi tellurici e simili: di tutto ciò insomma che meriti di essere visto e tramandato al lontano futuro.”<sup>382</sup>), check-ups (“due volte all’anno per i controlli medici”<sup>383</sup>), and power outages (“Inoltre, naturalmente, ogni volta che manca la corrente”<sup>384</sup>).

The story takes place in Berlin on the night of Patricia’s defrosting when her guardians invite guests to bear witness to Patricia’s reanimation. Throughout the course of the narrative, we learn that Peter, who plays the role of both Patricia’s guardian and her refrigerator technician, had inherited Patricia from a famous scientist ancestor who had been president of the commission that launched the hibernation program. Although he hides it from his guests, it is revealed that Peter defrosts Patricia periodically outside of the schedule in order to rape her, reminding us of how Basile’s king takes advantage of the sleeping Talia. Differently than Talia, however, Levi’s Sleeping Beauty is not only conscious and thus aware of the physical violation that takes place, but she also devises a plan to escape. Patricia pretends to be in love with one of the party guests, Baldur, thus tricking him into freeing her by promising to run away with him. As soon as he helps her, she reveals it was only a ploy. Just as Travers and von Franz recognize the inconsequential role of Perrault’s and the Grimms’ *Prince Charming* in Sleeping Beauty’s liberation, so, too, does Baldur only seem to have a token hero role in Levi’s play. As Lucie Benchouiha notes in her article “The Perversion of a Fairy Tale: Primo Levi’s ‘La Bella addormentata nel frigo’”, “Patricia’s rescuer [does not...] fit the category of hero, since he has not had to overcome adversity or prove himself in any way worthy of his role. [...] It is Patricia herself who instructs him on how to free her.”<sup>385</sup>

By choosing to write in the genre of science fiction, Levi is evoking a relationship to the supernatural inherent to the fairy tale. In his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970), Tzvetan Todorov explains the connection between the

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few hours each year, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, the day of her birthday”. This and all subsequent translations of Primo Levi’s “La bella addormentata nel frigo” are ours.

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “planetary expeditions, famous crimes and trials, weddings of sovereigns or movie stars, international baseball matches, telluric cataclysms and the like; really anything that merited being seen and passed on to the far future.”

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “twice a year for medical check-ups”.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “Also, naturally, any time there is a power outage”.

<sup>385</sup> Lucie Benchouiha, “The Perversion of a Fairy Tale: Primo Levi’s ‘La Bella addormentata nel frigo’”, in *The Modern Language Review*, 100.2, April 2005, p. 358-359.

fairy tale and science fiction by emphasizing how both genres obey the same laws with regards to the supernatural. Todorov states:

[T]he supernatural events in fairy tales provoke no surprise: neither a hundred years' sleep, [...] nor the magical gifts of the fairies (to cite only a few elements in Perrault's tales).<sup>386</sup>

Contemporary science fiction, when it does not slip into allegory, obeys the same mechanism: these narratives, starting from irrational premises, link the "facts" they contain in a perfectly logical manner.<sup>387</sup>

The relationship between Levi's story and the fairy tale is thus evidenced as soon as we learn of the genre in which the author has chosen to write. It seems, however, that Levi is making apparent the relationship between magic and science fiction only to subvert it. Like many of his contemporaries including Dino Buzzati and Italo Calvino, Levi explores the relationship between science and literature in his writing – a subject that had been gaining popularity since the 1950s.<sup>388</sup> Levi, a chemist by profession with an interest in the morality of science, seems to substitute fairy tale magic with science fiction not to emphasize his story's estrangement from reality, but instead to underscore its immediacy and relevance to our world. In fact, Todorov points out that that is one of the principal functions of science fiction: "The narrative movement consists in obliging us to see how close these apparently marvelous elements are to us, to what degree they are present in our life."<sup>389</sup> In *Memory and Mastery: Primo Levi as Writer and Witness*, Roberta Kremer confirms that Levi's use of science fiction serves to address the ethics of *contemporary* science. She states that for Levi, "science in the future tense is a strategy employed to experience and explore the limits of science as a discipline, testing its moral fiber along the way."<sup>390</sup> Levi even underscores the relationship between the futuristic science in his tale and his contemporary world by the fact that the hibernation technique that Patricia undergoes has its roots in 1970 – only four years after the

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<sup>386</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975, p. 54.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.* p. 56-57.

<sup>388</sup> Lucie Benchouiha, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

<sup>389</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *op. cit.*, p. 172. Original: "Le mouvement du récit consiste à nous obliger à voir combien ces éléments en apparence merveilleux nous sont en fait proches, jusqu'à quel point il sont présents dans notre vie."

<sup>390</sup> Roberta Kremer, *Memory and Mastery: Primo Levi as Writer and Witness*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 61.

publication of Levi's collection:

[L]a tecnica dell'ibernazione fu messa a punto verso la metà del XX secolo, essenzialmente a scopo clinico e chirurgico. Ma solo nel 1970 si arrivò a congelamenti veramente innocui e indolori, e quindi adatti a conservare a lungo gli organismi superiori. [...A]ppariva possibile «spedire» un uomo nel futuro.<sup>391</sup>

Levi thus bridges the gap between the futuristic science in his tale and the scientific possibilities of the twentieth century, implying that the consequences suffered by his futuristic characters are directly related to us. In the context of Levi's general concern for the question of the morality of science, the Sleeping Beauty figure at the centre of his narrative invites a more focused investigation of the impact of science specifically on the female body. In our study of "La bella addormentata nel frigo", we will thus analyze the relationship between science, technology, and female bodily agency to determine whether medical technology and medical staff encourage or deter Patricia from occupying a subject-position.

"The Lady of the House of Love", 1979, Angela Carter

Fairy tales and fairy tale themes gained increasing popularity from the middle of the twentieth century onward when scholars and creative writers alike entered what Donald Haase has named the most recent fairy tale "vogue." Levi's 1966 story "La Bella addormentata nel frigo" falls on the cusp of the rise in fairy tale interest. By the 1970s, feminist scholars had also turned their attention to the fairy tale. The Lurie-Lieberman debate sparked widespread concern regarding the role of fairy tales in female acculturation, with the majority of academics condemning the genre for promoting harmful representations of women. Critical feminist investigations of fairy tales went hand in hand with their creative production. Feminist authors turned the fairy tale into a political arena for raising important issues regarding traditional gender roles.

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<sup>391</sup> Primo Levi, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Translation: "[T]he hibernation technique was fine tuned around the middle of the twentieth century, essentially for clinical and surgical purposes. But only in 1970 did freezings become truly innocuous and painless, and thus suitable for conserving superior organisms long-term. [...] It seemed possible to 'send' a man into the future."

Among the most famous feminist fairy tale authors is the English writer Angela Carter.

During her career, Carter's interest in fairy tale themes pervaded both her critical and creative writing, including scripts she penned for radio and television. In 1979 she published a collection of fairy tales entitled *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* in which she revisits some of the most famous classical tales, providing a fresh perspective on female subjectivity and women's desire.<sup>392</sup> *Sleeping Beauty* is at the centre of one of Carter's short stories from this collection entitled "The Lady of the House of Love".

In "The Lady of the House of Love", Carter presents *Sleeping Beauty* against a gothic backdrop. The Countess, the protagonist and *Sleeping Beauty* figure of the tale, resides in Romania prior to World War I. Like Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*, so, too, is the Countess *Enclosed* behind "a huge, spiked wall that incarcerates her in the castle"<sup>393</sup> above an abandoned village. She sits in her room on a velvet chair under a canopy, recalling the place and position in which Talia's father leaves his daughter upon her death. While Carter thus establishes a relationship with the *Sleeping Beauty* tradition through a reproduction of its imagery, her *Sleeping Beauty* also constitutes a significant departure from the classical fairy tale princess. The Countess's environment is a decadent reflection of the original: unlike the regal velvet of Talia's chair, the chair on which the Countess sits is "covered in *moth-ravaged* burgundy velvet"<sup>394</sup>. She is in a room of "stained and peeling walls"<sup>395</sup>. Substituting the brocade canopy under which Talia is positioned, in Carter's tale the Countess sits under "canopies [that...] industrious spiders have woven [...] in the corners of this ornate and rotting place"<sup>396</sup>. It is as though the Countess herself is also decadent echo of her classical form: she is a vampire, eternally trapped in a state between life and death – a spin on the *Long and Unnatural Sleep* inherent to the classical fairy tale. She is also a somnambulist – a *Sleeping Beauty* who cannot fall asleep and instead lies idly in her coffin. As a vampire, the Countess cannot control her voracious feeding; a silent crone who takes care of her buries the bones of the men whom she devours when they pass by her castle, recalling the failed suitors that perish on the hedge of thorns in the Grimms' version of the tale.

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<sup>392</sup> Jessica Tiffin, "Angela Carter (1940-1992)", *The Greenwood Encyclopedia*, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>393</sup> Angela Carter, "The Lady of the House of Love", *The Bloody Chamber*, New York: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 95.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

The Countess's sharpened fangs – “teeth as fine and white as spikes of spun sugar [...] sharpened on centuries of corpses”<sup>397</sup> – introduce a twist on the classical *Spindle*: as a vampire, Sleeping Beauty's fangs penetrate the skin as opposed to a spindle. The Countess thus also disrupts the gender power dynamics of Basile's rape scene, substituting the originally female victim of violence with a male one. Carter alludes to the flip when stating, “The bridegroom bleeds on my *inverted* marriage bed.”<sup>398</sup> The hunting metaphor from “Sole, Luna e Talia” – whereby the king captures Talia with his falcon while on a hunting expedition – pervades in Carter's tale as well, only with the roles reversed: the hunter is no longer the king, but Sleeping Beauty, a factor which Carter emphasizes by accentuating the Countess's animal-like predatory nature: “the Countess will sniff the air and howl. She drops, now, on all fours. Crouching, quivering, she catches the scent of her prey.”<sup>399</sup> Despite the inversion of power dynamics in Carter's tale, the Countess considers herself a victim of her state; she wishes she could control her urges that instead control her. Carter's use of the vampire figure emphasizes this Sleeping Beauty's contradictory nature. In her article “Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter”, Sarah Sceats notes how vampires evade one-sided interpretations by “confus[ing] the roles of victim and predator. Combining dependence and rapaciousness, the vampire is an embodied oxymoron.”<sup>400</sup> Every night, the Countess turns over Tarot cards hoping to uncover a different *Fate* from the one she has been dealt. One day, she turns over the card *Les Amoureux*, predicting the imminent arrival of her *Prince Charming* just as Perrault's fairy predicts the arrival of Belle's prince. Shortly thereafter, a British soldier rides his bicycle by the castle and is invited inside by the crone. Carter reminds us of his traditional purpose through an intertextual nod to the classical fairy tale: she writes, “A single kiss woke up the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood”<sup>401</sup>, thereby setting up the reader's expectations that the soldier will be the Countess's rescuer. The narrator, accordingly, identifies him as “a hero”<sup>402</sup>. Indeed, the soldier is intent on saving the Countess, and believes he can fix her

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<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105. Our italics.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>400</sup> Sarah Sceats, “Oral Sex: Vampiric Transgression and the Writing of Angela Carter”, in *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 20.1, Spring 2001, p. 107-108.

<sup>401</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

many defects through a series of medical interventions:

We shall take her to Zurich, to a clinic; she will be treated for nervous hysteria. Then to an eye specialist, for her photophobia, and to a dentist to put her teeth into better shape. [...] We shall turn her into the lovely girl she is [...].<sup>403</sup>

Before he has the chance, the Countess cuts her finger on a piece of glass, it, too, reminiscent of the *Spindle*. The soldier, true to form, kisses her finger. However, in Carter's version, *Prince Charming's Awakening* of Sleeping Beauty acquires a distinct metaphoric layer: once again the original model is overturned when the kiss kills her, allowing her, at last, to go to sleep.

While in the eyes of the soldier the Countess suffers from hysteria, textual evidence – from her physical appearance to her behavioural traits – suggests that he has misdiagnosed her. The Countess's symptoms, ranging from her skeletal frame to her disordered mind to her uncontrollable feeding, suggest that she more likely suffers from an eating disorder. Through the superficial diagnosis on the part of the masculine observer, Carter raises the issue of the misrepresentation of female identity from a medical and typically masculine viewpoint, and offers a female perspective – the Countess's – in its place. Carter thereby seems to acknowledge the discrepancy between the agency of the female patient's body and its conceptualization in traditional medical discourse. By offering an alternative perspective on the experience of mental illness, we will see in the last chapter how "The Lady of the House of Love" highlights the critical role of the patient's creative discourse in the question of female subjectivity.

*A Kind of Alaska*, 1982, Harold Pinter

While Carter raises important issues regarding the representation of female identity through the fictional character of the vampire, British playwright Harold Pinter takes the opposite route: his *Sleeping Beauty* hypertext is based on historical fact. On awarding Pinter the Nobel Prize in Literature, the Swedish Academy cited him as "The

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<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.* p. 107.

foremost representative of British drama in the second half of the twentieth century.”<sup>404</sup> In *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, Peter Raby calls Pinter, “by purely statistical reckoning, one of the most widely performed and best-known dramatists in the contemporary world.”<sup>405</sup> Although most famous for his playwriting, Pinter was a poet, an author of novels and essays, a director, an actor, and a screenwriter.<sup>406</sup> His career spanned from the 1940s until his death in 2008. In his 1982 play *A Kind of Alaska*, Pinter blurs the boundaries between fairy tale fiction and historical fact when he presents a real-life Sleeping Beauty.<sup>407</sup>

Pinter’s play is based on Oliver Sacks’ 1973 study *Awakenings*, as indicated in the introduction to *A Kind of Alaska*. Sacks was a neurologist who treated patients of *encephalitis lethargica*, an epidemic illness better known as *sleeping sickness* that emerged in Europe in the winter of 1916-1917. Over a period of ten years the illness claimed nearly five million victims of whom approximately a third died. Most survivors became increasingly ill, falling into states of catatonia, unable to move or speak.<sup>408</sup> In his book, Sacks recounts the experience of patients to whom he administered L-DOPA (laevodihydroxyphenylalanine)<sup>409</sup>, the miracle drug that awakened victims of *sleeping sickness*, bringing them out of their catatonic states. Among his recorded observations, Sacks recognizes the fairy tale-like quality of the disease when he refers to some of his patients as Sleeping Beauties.<sup>410</sup>

In *A Kind of Alaska*, Pinter draws on Sacks’ study to tell the story of Deborah, a victim of *encephalitis lethargica*. Deborah is the modern-day equivalent of Sleeping Beauty, a young woman who fell victim to the *Curse*<sup>411</sup> of *sleeping sickness* as a child

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<sup>404</sup> *Harold Pinter: Plays 4*, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, back cover.

<sup>405</sup> Peter Raby, “Introduction”, *The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter*, Second Edition, ed. Peter Raby, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> Ewald Mengel, “‘Yes! In the Sea of Life Enisled’: Harold Pinter’s *Other Places*”, in *Pinter at 70: A Casebook*, ed. Lois Gordon, New York & London: Routledge, 2001, p. 162 points out, “*A Kind of Alaska* may be compared to a modern version of *Sleeping Beauty*.”

<sup>408</sup> Harold Pinter, *A Kind of Alaska*, *Harold Pinter: Plays 4*, London: Faber and Faber, 1993, p. 151.

<sup>409</sup> Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings*, Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1999, l. 170, Kindle edition.

<sup>410</sup> Oliver Sacks, *op. cit.*, refers to a Miss R. and a Mrs. T., each of whom he characterizes as a Sleeping Beauty. Miss R.: “But she was a Sleeping Beauty whose ‘awakening’ was unbearable to her, and who will never be awoken again” (l. 1958); Mrs. T.: “The Sleeping Beauty had assuredly awoken, but as yet in a manner completely regressive and nostalgic” (l. 3392).

<sup>411</sup> This is the way that *Fate* typically manifests in classical Sleeping Beauty tales.



and has been in her *Long and Unnatural Sleep* for twenty-nine years. The play is set on the day she *Awakens*: Dr. Hornby administers the L-DOPA vaccine that releases Deborah from her catatonic state. As though Deborah herself had been told by the good fairy that a prince will come and rescue her, Deborah asks her doctor upon waking up, “And you are my *Prince Charming*. Aren’t you?”<sup>412</sup> During her sleep, Deborah was not *Enclosed* behind a hedge of thorns, rather, like Talia whose body was positioned by her father, Deborah, too, had been a prisoner of her own body, paralyzed by the illness. To this effect, Deborah, as though momentarily reliving the onset of her disease, remarks how she feels to be “in prison”<sup>413</sup> and describes the gradual escalation of her bodily sense of confinement:

Let me out. Stop it. Let me out. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Shutting the walls on me. Shutting them down on me. So tight, so tight. Something panting, something panting. Can’t see. Oh, the light is going. The light is going. They’re shutting up shop. They’re closing my face. Chains and padlocks. Bolting me up. [...] Ah. Eyes stuck. Only see the shadow of the top of my nose. Shadow of the tip of my nose. Eyes stuck.<sup>414</sup>

As Ewald Mengel points out in his article “‘Yes! In the Sea of Life Enisled’: Harold Pinter’s *Other Places*”, “Her feeling that the walls are closing in on her[...] is characteristic of how patients subjectively experience their illness.”<sup>415</sup> When Dr. Hornby releases her with an injection of L-DOPA, on the one hand Pinter urges us to explore the significance of a medicinal *Spindle* that no longer puts Sleeping Beauty to sleep, but instead wakes her up. On the other, this is not the first time Sleeping Beauty has been awakened through an act of penetration, in this case by a metaphorically phallic object, as though the vaccine could be a metaphor for the actions of its administrator. And, as though reliving Talia’s experience of sexual violence with the king, Deborah accuses her doctor of abusing her:

You stole me... in the night. [...] You’ve had your way with me. You made me touch you. You stripped me. [...] You are a devil. My lust was my own. I kept it by me. You took it from me. Once open never closed. Never closed again. Never closed always open. For eternity. Terrible.

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<sup>412</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.*, p. 168. Our italics.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>415</sup> Ewald Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

You have ruined me.<sup>416</sup>

Although it seems that Deborah is speaking directly to Dr. Hornby, the latter accusation actually lends itself to contradictory readings that both condemn and absolve the doctor. We will address these various interpretations in the following chapters as we investigate not only the effects of medical technology on the female body through an analysis of the L-DOPA vaccine, but also the impact of the doctor-patient relationship on female subjectivity.

*Hable con ella*, 2002, Pedro Almodóvar

Increased literary interest in *Sleeping Beauty* was paired with the film industry's heightened focus on the fairy tale princess. The Spanish, French, and Italian filmmakers whose films bear a hypertextual relationship to the classical *Sleeping Beauty* take the term *multiplicity* to another level. As though wanting to portray tangibly the many interpretations to which *Sleeping Beauty* lends herself, they each present multiple *Sleeping Beauties* with divergent *Fates*.

In their article “Approaching Almodóvar: Thirty Years of Reinvention”, Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki describe Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar in contradictory terms:

Pedro Almodóvar is something of a paradox—scintillatingly so. Celebrated and denigrated by critics as serious and superficial, political and apolitical, moral and immoral, feminist and misogynist, experimental and sentimental, universal and provincial, Almodóvar has charted a path from the countercultural margins of his native Spain to an international mainstream [...].<sup>417</sup>

Almodóvar's evasion of one-sided interpretations endows his films with a hybrid character that invites opposing viewpoints. His representation of two *Sleeping Beauties* in the film *Hable con ella* (2002), which he wrote and directed, offers multiple perspectives from which to investigate the effects of medical technology and medical

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<sup>416</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.*, p. 160-161.

<sup>417</sup> Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki, “Approaching Almodóvar: Thirty Years of Reinvention”, in *All About Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema*, eds. Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, p. 1.

professionals on female subjectivity.

*Hable con ella* is about two women, Lydia and Alicia, who fall into a coma following two separate incidents and are thereafter cared for in a hospital by two men, Marco and Benigno. As noted by Rebecca Naughten in her article “Comatose women in ‘El bosque’: Sleeping beauty and other literary motifs in Pedro Almodóvar’s *Hable con ella*”, “*Hable con ella* itself can be read in terms of a modern-day fairytale.”<sup>418</sup> She confirms that of the various literary allusions present in the film, “the strongest link is to Sleeping Beauty.”<sup>419</sup> Owing to the often manifest and overt hypertextual relationship between *Hable con ella* and Sleeping Beauty, Almodóvar anticipates what will happen in his film based on our knowledge of the classical Sleeping Beauty fairy tale. The director this casts himself in the role of Basile’s soothsayer, prophesising Sleeping Beauty’s *Fate* through the audience’s expectations. Through the *Sliding Doors* effect he creates by splitting the figure of Sleeping Beauty over two women, Almodóvar both upholds and betrays these expectations, presenting us with one Sleeping Beauty that awakens and one who does not.



FIGURE 3. Clockwise from the top left: Benigno (Javier Cámara), Marco (Darío Grandinetti), Lydia (Rosario Flores), Alicia (Leonor Watling) in *Hable con ella*, dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 2004.

<sup>418</sup> Rebecca Naughten, “Comatose women in ‘El bosque’: Sleeping beauty and other literary motifs in Pedro Almodóvar’s *Hable con ella*”, *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* 3.2, 2006, p. 77.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

Lydia and Alicia are the two Sleeping Beauties in “The Wood”, the Perraultian name of the clinic in which they spend their *Long and Unnatural Sleep*. In the film it seems as though Lydia begins the Sleeping Beauty Model that Alicia ultimately brings to term. Lydia (Rosario Flores) is a matador by profession who becomes comatose after she is punctured by the horns of a bull during a match, recalling the episode in which Perrault’s and the Grimms’ Sleeping Beauty pierces her finger on a *Spindle* after specific prohibition from the king. Like that of Sleeping Beauty, Lydia’s *Fate* had been sealed from birth: “lidia” in Spanish means bullfight. Her love interest Marco (Darío Grandinetti) comments that by naming her thus, her father predetermined her future, just as that of Perrault’s Sleeping Beauty had done by failing to invite the wicked fairy to his daughter’s celebration:

MARCO  
¿Quién le puso Lydia?  
LYDIA  
Mi padre.  
MARCO  
Era como predestinarla desde que nació.<sup>420</sup>

Just as the classical Sleeping Beauty is warned against seeking out the spindle lest danger befall her, so, too, does Lydia fail to heed warnings to abandon bullfighting: like the classical fairy tale princess, Lydia disregards her interdiction. As a result, she succumbs to a punitive sleep; her coma is induced during her stereotypically-male profession, as though she were being punished for transgressing her sexual role in becoming a matador, a profession typically occupied by men. Even Lydia’s physical appearance during a bullfight contradicts traditional notions of femininity: the matador costume camouflages her curves, a tight bun hides her long curly hair, and the long sword she wields serves as her phallic substitute. In her article “Whose Talk Is It? Almodóvar and the Fairy Tale in *Talk to Her*”, Adriana Novoa has noted Lydia’s difficulty with regards to asserting her position in a man’s world, claiming that Lydia “is dark, strong, direct, and masculine, fighting for her acceptance in a macho milieu

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<sup>420</sup> *Hable con ella*, dir. Pedro Almodóvar, El Deseo S.A, Film, 2002. Translation: “MARCO: Who named you Lydia?

LYDIA: My father.

MARCO: It’s as though he sealed your fate when you were born.” This and all subsequent translations of Almodóvar’s *Hable con ella* are ours.

that hates her.”<sup>421</sup> Only once she is comatose is she naturalized into the role of the traditional Sleeping Beauty. In the hospital, Marco visits her regularly while she sleeps. Naughten describes him as the *Prince Charming* of the story:

Marco is presented as the [...] natural prince in the fairytale of *Hable con ella*: he comes from a land far away (Argentina); his many journeys have been chronicled as in days of old (he writes travel books); he kills the beast that the brave Lydia cannot abide (a snake in her kitchen); and the narrative reveals him to be a rescuer of women.<sup>422</sup>

However, Marco never fulfils his fairy tale duty of *Awakening* Sleeping Beauty. Although Lydia is kept alive by mechanical ventilation – Almodóvar’s scientific substitute for the good fairy who repairs Sleeping Beauty’s death curse into one of sleep – its function is limited; Lydia’s doctor confirms to Marco that she is in a persistent vegetative state (PVS), asserting that “científicamente” there is no hope that she will reawaken because “su cerebro está apagado.”<sup>423</sup> Lydia dies in her sleep, thus abandoning the Sleeping Beauty Model.

Alicia (Leonor Watling), on the other hand, is a more traditional Sleeping Beauty whom Almodóvar himself has described in an interview as “‘la Bella Durmiente de la clínica El Bosque’”<sup>424</sup>. As a graceful, beautiful dancer, Alicia embodies many of the gifts that the fairies bestow on Perrault’s Sleeping Beauty upon her birth. Moreover, Novoa notes that the coma into which Alicia falls “is synonymous with the mysterious spells cast on beautiful, kind women in such stories as ‘Sleeping Beauty’[...]”<sup>425</sup>. Rather than behind a hedge of thorns, Almodóvar’s Sleeping Beauty is *Enclosed* in a hospital. Following her traffic accident, she is looked after by nurses who manage her feeding tubes, bathe her, and perform any other function to ensure that she is well-cared for. The inhabitants of Alicia’s castle do not fall into an enchanted slumber with her like in the French and German tales; as hospital staff, they remain awake to take care of her while she sleeps. However, through the hospital staff, Almodóvar also seems to raise

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<sup>421</sup> Adriana Novoa, “Whose Talk Is It? Almodóvar and the Fairy Tale in *Talk to Her*”, *Marvels & Tales*, 19.2, 2005, p. 240.

<sup>422</sup> Rebecca Naughten, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>423</sup> *Hable con ella*, *op. cit.* Translation: “scientifically”; “her brain is switched off”.

<sup>424</sup> *Hola.com*, “Almodóvar”, March 8, 2002, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.hola.com/cine/2002030832937/cine/almodovar/almodovar/>. Our translation: “The Sleeping Beauty in the clinic ‘The Wood’”.

<sup>425</sup> Adriana Novoa, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

the issue of how abuse of power on the part of medical professionals can negatively impact the patient. Like Basile's king, Nurse Benigno (Javier Cámara) appropriates Alicia's comatose body: he turns her into his private doll, applying makeup to her face and dressing her as he pleases. Benigno also seems to be the modern-day incarnation of Basile's *Prince Charming* owing to the fact that he falls in love with the sleeping Alicia and rapes her while she is unconscious. The shift from page to screen of this Sleeping Beauty story endows Alicia's rape with a visual quality and, therefore, a more direct impact on the audience absent from the original fairy tale. Almodóvar's choice of medium thus invites a more in-depth investigation of the relationship between cinematic technology and the male gaze, allowing us to address the consequences of the camera on the objectification of the female body. Just as Talia is awakened by the birth of her children, so, too, does Alicia *Awaken* after giving birth to her seducer's child – only this time, it is stillborn. Unlike Basile's king, Benigno has meanwhile committed suicide after being discovered and imprisoned for his crime, thereby arguably succumbing to the punishment that Talia's victimizer evaded. These digressions from the classical fairy tale plotline ensure that Alicia does not discover the truth of what happened to her. Novoa perceives that this impacts her negatively, claiming, "Within the scope of the film, there is no inquiry into her right to know what has happened, into her autonomy as a whole person."<sup>426</sup> Naughten, on the other hand, suggests that Alicia's ignorance of the truth allows her to "escap[e] the trauma of her rape."<sup>427</sup> Indeed, following her awakening, Alicia begins rehabilitation and thus starts regaining the physical capacities she had had as a dancer prior to her coma. Her facial expression betrays no knowledge of the traumatic experience, suggesting that Alicia is thus absolved from suffering the consequences of her violation. Benigno's parallel suicide furthermore suggests that any future interaction with her victimizer has likewise been prevented, thus allowing Alicia the possibility of a *happily ever after*.

In addition to providing two contemporary takes on the classical Sleeping Beauty story, the cleaving plot device by which Almodóvar splits the Sleeping Beauty figure over two women offers two channels through which to investigate how two aspects of medicine – its technology and its practitioners – influence female

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<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>427</sup> Rebecca Naughten, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

subjectivity.

*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, 2004, Michel Gondry

Like Almodóvar, French director Michel Gondry presents two versions of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale through two different Sleeping Beauties in the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.<sup>428</sup> In her article “The Clock Strikes Twelve”, Katherine Clark characterizes *Eternal Sunshine* (2004) as “A clear-cut fairytale romance with a modern twist”<sup>429</sup>. Modern-day and futuristic equivalents of the elements from the Sleeping Beauty Model surface throughout the science fiction narrative.

The film is about a fictional clinic named Lacuna that offers its clients a neurological procedure to erase the memories of their former partner. Lacuna means “a blank space or a missing part”<sup>430</sup>, like that which the clinic leaves in the mind of their patients upon erasing their memory. The operation consists of creating a brain map and systematically removing from the patient’s mind any traces of their ex with a memory-erasing machine. A head-piece connects via cables the patient’s brain to a computer operated by one of Lacuna’s technicians who zaps the unwanted memories in the neurological images on the screen. Dr. Howard Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson), Lacuna’s head physician, characterizes the operation as “technically speaking [...] brain damage”<sup>431</sup>. While the procedure itself lasts only one night, in the morning, years of the patient’s life have been erased, as though they have metaphorically undergone Sleeping Beauty’s *Long and Unnatural Sleep*, only retrospectively. All that remains of the patient’s memories of their former partner is a cassette on which they had previously recorded why they wanted the surgery. Visually, the tape that weaves around the cassette’s spools recalls the thread of the *Spindle*’s spinning wheel from the classical fairy tale, symbolizing the Fates who control each mortal’s thread of life. In *Eternal*

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<sup>428</sup> The idea for the film was first put forward by a friend of Gondry’s, the French conceptual artist Pierre Bismuth. The screenplay was written by American screenwriter Charlie Kaufman. Christopher Grau, “Introduction”, in *Philosophers on Film: Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, ed. Christopher Grau, London and New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 1-2.

<sup>429</sup> Katherine Clark, “The Clock Strikes Twelve”, *NYU Expository Writing Program*, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://ewp.cas.nyu.edu/docs/IO/37488/clarkclock08.pdf>, p. 143.

<sup>430</sup> Merriam-Webster, s.v. “Lacuna”, 2015, accessed on February 18, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lacuna>.

<sup>431</sup> *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michel Gondry, Focus Features. Film, 2004.

*Sunshine*, however, the *Fate* of each patient is in their own hands: the cassette is a testimony to their individual decision for entering into the enchanted slumber of amnesia. Despite the positive potential of a science that eliminates heartache, *Eternal Sunshine* takes stock of the darker consequences of scientific progress. Lacuna appears to be exploiting their clients' vulnerability for their own profit without further investigating if their blanket diagnosis of heartache is only masking other underlying issues that are thus not being addressed. Furthermore, not only is the memory-erasing procedure referred to as an injury to the brain, but it likewise appears to turn patients into unwitting victims of their own actions, lacking the freedom to make informed decisions. Unlike in the classical Sleeping Beauty fairy tale, in *Eternal Sunshine* patients are not *Enclosed* in a castle or behind thorny hedges, rather their memory is imprisoned in the hard plastic cover of the cassette. Although Lacuna offers the procedure to patients of both genders, in *Eternal Sunshine* the consequences of medical intervention on the female body are farther-reaching. Like that of the unconscious Talia, the procedure renders the bodies of Clementine (Kate Winslet) and Mary (Kirsten Dunst), the film's two Sleeping Beauties, vulnerable to victimization.



FIGURE 4. Clementine (Kate Winslet) and Joel (Jim Carrey) in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michel Gondry, 2004.

As a heavy drinker with a short temper, Clementine is an atypical Sleeping Beauty. She claims that her boyfriend Joel (Jim Carrey) makes her feel caged and bored so she decides to erase him from her memory on a whim. Her tendency to act without forethought is emphasized in an imagined dialogue in Joel's mind about why she erased



him: “You know me,” she tells him, “I’m impulsive.”<sup>432</sup> Instead of breaking the spell of Sleeping Beauty’s enchanted slumber, this *Prince Charming* gets the procedure done too out of spite.<sup>433</sup> Joel informs Clementine of this in a conversation with her in his mind during the intervention:

JOEL

You erased me. That’s why I’m here. That’s why I’m doing this in the first place.<sup>434</sup>

Like in the tale of the Brothers Grimm, *Eternal Sunshine* presents both male and female sleepers. However, it is the female patient’s body that becomes susceptible to victimization. Patrick (Elijah Wood), one of Lacuna’s technicians, had fallen in love with Clementine while erasing her memory. Just as Talia’s catatonic state permits Basile’s king to victimize her sexually, so Patrick takes advantage of Clementine’s amnesia for his personal gain: he seduces her using gifts, letters, and nicknames she had, unbeknownst to her, already received from Joel. Dr. Howard Mierzwiak similarly capitalizes on Mary’s memory loss following her operation. Mary is the receptionist at Lacuna who continuously praises Howard and the company he founded. However, Mary is unaware that her positive opinion is informed by amnesia: she does not remember that she had previously had an affair with her married boss, and that Howard had coerced her into having the procedure done after Hollis (Deirdre O’Connell), his wife, found out. Mary only discovers the truth once Hollis tells her:

HOLLIS

Don’t be a monster, Howard, tell the girl.

MARY

Tell me what?

HOLLIS

Oh you poor kid. You can have him. You did.<sup>435</sup>

Following this encounter, Mary rushes to the Lacuna office to find her file, the existence of which she was previously unaware. While she plays back the recording of

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<sup>432</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>433</sup> Katherine Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 143 notes Joel’s lack of courage, exclaiming, “Joel is far from valiant and brave. Instead, we are given an exceedingly dull, immensely standard, mediocre-man.”

<sup>434</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

her testimony, we hear her try to resist:

MARY  
Oh Howard, I can't do this.  
HOWARD  
We agreed it's for the best, Mary.  
MARY  
Yeah I know. Oh God.<sup>436</sup>



FIGURE 5. Mary (Kirsten Dunst) working at Lacuna Inc. in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michel Gondry, 2004.

Although Howard informs Mary once she finds out the truth that she had wanted to get the procedure done, the inflection in Mary's voice on the tape, a mixture of sadness and fear, as well as the fact that she expresses she would like to change her mind, reaffirms that the decision to undergo the procedure was not her own. Her discovery of the cassette recolours her previous opinion of Lacuna, confirming that her praise of the company and of Howard were based on a lie. Mary's regained awareness prompts her to return to all of Lacuna's previous patients, including Joel and Clementine, their respective files so that they can learn the truth. Just like in Basile's tale, *the female-to-female-nutritional system* seems to pervade: upon *Awakening* to the truth, Mary *Awakens* Clementine from her metaphorical slumber, as well.

The richness of the narrative allows us to analyze the influence of science and technology on female subjectivity from three distinct perspectives. First, in our

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<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

investigation of medical technology, we will analyze how the contradictory effects of the memory-erasing machine enable or subvert the female patient's capability of enacting bodily agency. Next, through a closer look at Patrick and Howard, we will examine the influence of the doctor/patient and technician/patient relationship on the female body. The third element we will study is the extent to which creative discourse on the part of the patient succeeds in illustrating the female experience of mental illness differently than the one-sided representation offered by traditional medical discourse. Although it is never expressly stated, Clementine's at times volatile behaviour and impulsivity suggest an underlying mental condition. As we will further discuss in the last chapter, bipolar disorder appears to be a possible explanation for Clementine's behaviour. Nevertheless, the exact nature of her relationship with mental illness remains ambiguous owing to the disregard for accurate diagnosis on the part of the medical authority in the film: Lacuna ignores the individual problems of each patient by diagnosing every client with heartache (which becomes a diagnostic category in the film owing to the fact that the company surgically treats it). This attitude invalidates the true nature of Clementine's relationship with mental illness, in turn preventing Clementine herself from exploring the roots of her problems. In our investigation of *Eternal Sunshine* we will thus address the extent to which Clementine succeeds in giving a personal testimony that counters this narrow representation, thus validating her subjective experience and contradicting Lacuna's one-sided misrepresentation.

*Bella Addormentata*, 2012, Marco Bellocchio

Italian director Marco Bellocchio's career spans from the 1960s to the present day, and includes a corpus that is often imbued with the political. In his film *Bella Addormentata* (2012) which he directed and co-wrote,<sup>437</sup> Bellocchio presents viewers with multiple Sleeping Beauties against the backdrop of a widely publicized euthanasia case. Like *A Kind of Alaska*, *Bella Addormentata* is rooted in a historical event, as it was inspired by the real-life story of a young Italian woman named Eluana Englaro who

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<sup>437</sup> Marco Bellocchio co-authored the screenplay with Veronica Raimo and Stefano Rulli. "*Bella Addormentata*: Full Cast and Crew", *International Movie DataBase*, 2016, accessed February 18, 2016, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2184227/fullcredits?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_wr#writers](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2184227/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_wr#writers).

fell into a coma after a car accident in 1992. She caused controversy in Italy surrounding the morality of euthanasia when her personal case divided the country on the subject.

Considering the historical event that served as the film's inspiration, we are primarily invited to view Eluana Englaro herself as the modern-day Sleeping Beauty; she is, after all, a woman in a *Long and Unnatural Sleep* kept alive only because of feeding tubes. There isn't one *Prince Charming* outside of her castle, but hundreds: anti-euthanasia protestors stand outside of her clinic in Udine demanding to keep her alive. Unlike the classical fairy tale princess, Eluana is not *Enclosed* behind a protective hedge that shields her from the intrusion of outsiders, like in Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant" or the Grimms' "Dornröschen"; instead of being hidden away, she is completely exposed by the media, appearing as the focus of the news in the wake of a senate vote on the subject of euthanasia.

Euthanasia is the common thread between the different stories weaved throughout the film. Senator Uliano Beffardi (Toni Servillo) contemplates voting in opposition to a bill prohibiting euthanasia while his daughter, Maria (Alba Rohrwacher), having lost her mother to a terminal illness, protests against the medical suspension of life in front of Eluana's clinic. Another family is divided on the subject of whether or not to euthanize their comatose daughter and sister Rosa (Carlotta Cimagora) – an intertextual reference to Sleeping Beauty's German alias, Little Briar Rose – who sleeps beneath an icon of the Virgin Mary hung up by her pious mother, nicknamed Divina Madre (Isabelle Huppert). Like Almodóvar's Lydia, Rosa is kept alive by the modern-day good fairy: mechanical ventilation keeps her body functioning despite the death curse looming over her.

In juxtaposition to the story of comatose patients who, like the classical Sleeping Beauty, have no choice in their *Fate*, Bellocchio introduces us to a drug addict named Rossa (Maya Sansa) who puts herself to sleep with a modern-day *Spindle* – a syringe of heroin. In the first shot of the film, the camera frames her sleeping body as the film's title appears on the screen, alerting us to the relationship between the words *Bella Addormentata* and the character beside whom they appear. However, it seems to be an inverse relationship; the troubled Rossa appears to embody the mirror image of traditional conceptualizations of Sleeping Beauty. Bellocchio underscores this

polarizing effect in his choice of character names: Rossa is the darker variant of Rosa, the angelic slumbering beauty who sleeps under religious iconography. In contrast to the angelic Rosa, like a reverse Sleeping Beauty, Rossa awakens on a church pew and promptly pricks her own finger with a knife. Bellocchio's perversion of the fairy tale spindle scene emphasizes Rossa's dark nature and foreshadows her suicide attempt: when she is caught trying to steal methadone from the hospital she uses the knife to cut her wrists. On another occasion, she attempts to jump out of a hospital window. Each time, she is rescued by Dr. Pallido (Pier Giorgio Bellocchio) who refuses to let her die, thwarting every suicide attempt. He keeps watch over her in the hospital as she sleeps so that she does not escape, thereby *Enclosing* her in her room not so as to protect her from outsiders – like the hedge of thorns in the classical tale – but to protect her from herself. As though she had resigned herself to Talia's fate and in keeping with her self-destructive behaviour, she asks Dr. Pallido in vulgar jargon if he wants to have sex with her, reassuring him it would not be difficult (“Vuoi farti una scopata? Adesso è facile.”<sup>438</sup>). Rossa thus alludes to the unpleasant and likely non-consensual nature of her previous sexual experiences. The doctor, however, challenges her expectations by refusing – he is not Basile's king. In the last scene of the film, Dr. Pallido falls asleep while keeping guard and Rossa has a chance to commit suicide but chooses not to. Despite Rossa's initial aversion to Dr. Pallido's interference (“Non posso fare quello che mi pare perché poi arriva sempre uno stronzo come te che mi deve salvare”<sup>439</sup>), Enrico Bergianti has interpreted this act as Rossa's acceptance of Dr. Pallido's help and thus as her metaphorical *Awakening*, due to which, we could add, Dr. Pallido appears to have the role of *Prince Charming*:

Once she reaches the window, she reconsiders and returns to bed, but not before removing the shoes off Pallido, who has dozed off on the chair. This gesture marks Rossa's acceptance of the treatment that Pallido wants to offer her, helping her to overcome her addiction. A hopeful ending: Sleeping Beauty has accepted the doctor's invitation and she is

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<sup>438</sup> *Bella Addormentata*, dir. Marco Bellocchio, Cattleyo, Film, 2012. Translation: “You want to have a fuck? Now it's easy.” This and all subsequent translations of Bellocchio's *Bella Addormentata* are ours.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “I can't do what I want because an asshole like you always has to come save me.”

as though reawakened.<sup>440</sup>



FIGURE 6. Rossa (Maya Sansa) and Dr. Pallido (Pier Giorgio Bellocchio) in the hospital in *Bella Addormentata*, dir. Marco Bellocchio, 2012.

Despite the doctor's role in ensuring Rossa's survival, inviting us to observe the positive effects of the doctor-patient relationship, the question remains whether Rossa is able to occupy a subject-position. In traditional medical discourse, female addiction is underrepresented, fostering stigma towards women with substance abuse issues in both cultural and medical contexts, a notion on which we will further elaborate in the last chapter. On the one hand, Rossa's actions and statements could be interpreted as a personal and political response to her struggle with addiction, thereby representing the creative discourse of the patient that counters the often-biased representation of female mental illness in traditional medical discourse. On the other hand, we will acknowledge the superficial nature of Rossa's representation of her experience, that which suggests that she might fail to create a discourse that speaks about addiction in a meaningful way. We will thus explore the question of whether she can affirm her subjecthood or whether she will remain the object of external representation.

As a patient in a medical context, the contemporary Sleeping Beauty invites us to investigate the complex and contradictory effects of science and technology on

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<sup>440</sup> Enrico Bergianti, "Quando il cinema racconta il fine vita: *Bella addormentata* di Marco Bellocchio fra arte, scienza e media", Master's thesis, SISSA, Trieste, 2013, p. 12. Our translation. Original: "Una volta raggiunta la finestra, però, ci ripensa e ritorna a letto, non prima di aver tolto le scarpe a Pallido assopito sulla sedia, in un gesto che segna come l'accettazione di Rossa alle cure che Pallido vorrà offrirle, aiutandola a superare la sua tossicodipendenza. Un finale di speranza: la bella addormentata ha accettato l'invito del medico e si è come risvegliata."

female subjectivity through three distinct channels. The vaccines, devices, and procedures that appear throughout the contemporary corpus provide us with an opportunity to look at the different ways in which medical technology influences the agency of the female patient. This includes vaccines such as the antifreeze Patricia receives prior to hibernation in “La belle addormentata nel frigo” and the injection of L-DOPA that brings Deborah back to life in *A Kind of Alaska*. It also comprises devices including Patricia’s refrigerator, the memory-erasing machine in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and the life support machines and feeding tubes in *Hable con ella* and *Bella Addormentata*. Procedures such as Patricia’s hibernation technique and the memory removal procedure that Clementine and Mary undergo constitute the third category of medical technology we will evaluate. Medical professionals such as the technician Peter (who operates Patricia’s refrigerator), Dr. Hornby, Nurse Benigno, Dr. Mierzwiak, the memory-erasing technician Patrick, and Dr. Pallido also affect female subjectivity in distinct ways by virtue of their unique attitudes towards their patients. Lastly, the different viewpoints on the subject of mental illness throughout our contemporary corpus invite us to discuss how traditional medical discourse constructs an image of the patient differently than the creative discourse of the patient herself, whereby the two viewpoints encourage distinct conceptualizations of female subjectivity. We will thus closely investigate how the alternative perspectives that the Countess, Clementine, and Rossa provide of their experience with mental illness influence their capability of occupying a subject-position.

### 3.2 Medical Technology and the Body: The Impact of Vaccines, Devices, and Procedures on Female Agency

With the expansion of feminist scholarship into the relationship between science, technology, and the body in the early 1990s, academics began to look at both the positive and negative influences that scientific and technological progress was having on women's lives. While some lauded science and technology for their emancipating potential – for example, through technologies that afforded women more autonomy over their reproductive health – on the other side of the spectrum others feared that procedures like cosmetic surgery only fuelled the further polarization of gender and hence impeded women's progress towards equality and emancipation from gender stereotypes. In this climate, Haraway's cyborg emerged as a metaphor for the influence of science and technology on women's bodies. This chapter will focus on the literal manifestation of the cyborg, that is, the physical convergence of science and technology with the female body through medical intervention in the form of vaccines, devices, and procedures.

According to Haraway, the blurring of the boundaries between human and machine offers an unprecedented opportunity for women's emancipation. She claims that in eliminating the border between body and technology, the cyborg challenges many other discriminatory dichotomies that see women positioned as *Other*, allowing instead for a female subject to emerge. In contemporary *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts, the effects of medical technology on the female body permit us to evaluate Haraway's argument. In analyzing the effects of vaccines, devices, and procedures on female agency, we will investigate to what extent medical technology accommodates the emergence of female subjectivity as Haraway argues, and, conversely, to what extent it proves ineffectual and even endorses female objectification and passivity. As a more in-depth look into each text and film in our corpus will reveal, applied science and technology rarely invite one-sided conclusions. Instead, our study of *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts from a third-wave methodological perspective will acknowledge the multiplicity of interpretations to which the application of medical technology on the



female body lends itself, affirming, as Åsberg claims, that “[i]t is no use to either demonize science or simply celebrate it”<sup>441</sup>, but rather to be cautious of how we use it.

From one perspective, Almodóvar, Bellocchio, Pinter, and Levi invite us to look at the positive potential of medical technology through the representation of the beneficial effects of vaccines, devices, and procedures on Sleeping Beauty’s body. One of the main criticisms feminist scholars voice regarding the classical Sleeping Beauty is that her comatose body renders her powerless. In contemporary hypertexts, each author and filmmaker employs medical technology to overturn this misconception. In the works of Almodóvar and Bellocchio, medical technology empowers Sleeping Beauty’s inanimate body, thereby challenging the fallacy that stasis equals inactivity. In Pinter’s play, on the other hand, medical technology invokes Sleeping Beauty’s reanimation, that which brings an end to her paralysis and muteness. In Levi’s play, technology both empowers Patricia’s hibernating body, and enables her to escape her victimizer. By disputing traditional conceptualizations of the female body as inactive, the cyborg identity of the Sleeping Beauties in these works adheres to Haraway’s feminist vision: it shatters the boundary not only between organism and machine, but passivity and activity as well.

In *Hable con ella* and *Bella Addormentata*, the protective capacity of the cyborg body contradicts traditional conceptualizations of the comatose female body as powerless. The medical technology presented in the Spanish and Italian films interrupts the voyeuristic male gaze invited by the technology of cinema, therefore shielding the female subject from objectification.

In their inanimate states, Eluana and Rosa (*Bella Addormentata*) and Alicia and Lydia (*Hable con ella*) are incapable of volition or communication. This leaves them vulnerable to appropriation; someone else moves for them and speaks for them. *Bella Addormentata* is centred on this very problematic, as both Eluana and Rosa are incapable of voicing their opinion regarding whether to be euthanized or not. Eluana, unable to represent her own will given her comatose condition, is spoken for on the one hand by her father and doctors who advocate life suspension, and on the other by Catholic protestors who oppose medical termination of life. Rosa, too, is caught in the

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<sup>441</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

crossfire over the termination of her life over which her brother and mother cannot agree. *Hable con ella* also represents the comatose female body as one vulnerable to appropriation because of its inability to speak or move. While the title *Talk to Her* presumably derives from Benigno's and Marco's conversations with the sleeping Alicia and Lydia, it also gains an ironic connotation as it reminds us that neither Alicia nor Lydia are able to talk back. Marco reminds us of this when he reprimands Benigno for wanting to marry Alicia, telling him it is wrong because "Alicia no puede decir con ninguna parte de su cuerpo, 'Sí, quiero.'"<sup>442</sup> While Almodóvar thus underscores the voiceless nature of the comatose women, through the relationship between Alicia and Benigno he takes the consequences of immobility to particularly disturbing heights. Benigno manipulates Alicia's body as though she were his doll. As an aesthetician, he gives her haircuts and applies her make-up. As her nurse, he gives her massages presumably so that her muscles do not atrophy from lack of movement. However, the sexual nature of the way he rubs her legs, emphasized by a close-up shot of his hands on Alicia's inner thigh, suggests that his intentions are not entirely medical. This is confirmed shortly after when he rapes her. Rebecca Naughten has noted Alicia's defencelessness to Benigno's actions owing to her comatose state. She claims:

In the case of *Hable con ella*, the representation of women who are comatose, voiceless and lacking in control over their own bodies, is at first glance problematic, not least because it is men who are predominantly shown as 'manipulating' their bodies in these circumstances.<sup>443</sup>

In the context of silenced and immobile bodies, medical technology challenges the objectification of the female body by interrupting the voyeuristic male gaze incited by the medium of cinema. In her book *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987), Teresa de Lauretis claims that "gender [...] both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of various social technologies, such as cinema"<sup>444</sup>. In other words, cinema affects the way that gender is represented,

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<sup>442</sup> *Hable con ella*, *op. cit.* Translation: "Alicia cannot say 'I do' with any part of her body."

<sup>443</sup> Rebecca Naughten, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>444</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 2.

that which renders it “a technology of gender”<sup>445</sup>. Onscreen, cinema reduces the female body to an object of viewing both for the fictional characters in the diegetic world as well as the spectators in the audience. Such is the contention of Laura Mulvey who, with her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975), popularized discussions in feminist film theory of how the dynamics of the gaze play a role in female sexual objectification. Mulvey states:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.<sup>446</sup>

The inanimate bodies of female characters in *Hable con ella* attest to Mulvey’s argument. Noting that one can see “this feature of ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ [...] in operation in *Hable con ella*”<sup>447</sup>, Naughten states that in Almodóvar’s film, “[t]here are a number of sequences where female characters have their naked bodies effectively put on display for the viewer whilst they are in an unconscious state”<sup>448</sup>. The displayed female body is not an uncommon image in our corpus: in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, the camera frames the lower half of Mary’s body while she dances high in her underwear on top of Joel’s bed during his procedure, as if to underscore Lacuna’s unprofessionalism. In *Bella Addormentata*, Rossa’s underwear is revealed during a struggle with Dr. Pallido when he prevents her from jumping out of the window. An image of the naked or partially naked female body always sneaks in under the pretense of plot progression. Such is the case when the camera captures from a bird’s eye angle Alicia’s naked body on the hospital bed as Nurse Benigno massages her. The angle of the shot provides a full view of her breasts as though to emphasize that her body is prostrated for the viewer’s pleasure. The moment after being injured in a bullfight,

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<sup>445</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>446</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, New York: Oxford UP, 1999, p. 837.

<sup>447</sup> Rebecca Naughten, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

Lydia is similarly subjected to the male gaze: from Lydia's point of view, we see six men crowding around to look down at her unconscious form. A camera appears among the eyes and flashes as a journalist photographs her, eternalizing her state of unconsciousness by turning her into an immovable photograph, thus foreshadowing her imminent death. However, like in the case of Alicia, the diegetic camera also reminds us of our own spectatorship from the other side of the screen. According to Mulvey, "Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, *and* as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium"<sup>449</sup>. Lydia is no longer the masculinised warrior in her comatose state, but like Alicia, she has become feminized in being prostrated onscreen for both the characters and the viewer. As we have seen in our analysis of the classical Sleeping Beauty tales, the literary manifestation of the male gaze also has consequences with regards to female objectification. We may recall how in Perrault's tale the prince decides to rescue Sleeping Beauty after learning that she is attractive ("une princesse, la plus belle qu'on eût su voir"<sup>450</sup>), or how in Basile's tale the king rapes Talia because her beauty enflames him ("pigliato de caudo de chelle bellezze"<sup>451</sup>). However, the medium of cinema arguably further compromises female subjectivity as it solicits not only the gaze of the story's characters, but also those of the spectators, whereby, as Mulvey argues, the female body becomes the displayed object on two levels.

While Mulvey tells us that woman is subjected to the male gaze, she argues that man is invulnerable to it: "According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification"<sup>452</sup>. Mulvey thus claims that the man invites no such gaze from the woman. Like that of the Cheshire Cat, it is as though his body symbolically disappears to the eyes of the female viewer. This factor places centre stage the notion that objectification of the female body is inextricably linked to the fact that it is specifically a female body. A question arises: what happens when the represented body is cyborg? As a hybrid of organism and technology, the body is no longer only female, but also

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<sup>449</sup> Laura Mulvey, *op. cit.*, p. 838. Our italics.

<sup>450</sup> Charles Perrault, *op. cit.*, p. 37. Translation: "a Princess, who was the most beautiful in the world", p. 88.

<sup>451</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.*, p. 444. Translation: "her beauty had enflamed him", p. 423.

<sup>452</sup> Laura Mulvey, *op. cit.*, p. 838.

machine. This hybrid state lifts from Lydia and Rosa, the two Sleeping Beauties with onscreen mechanical appendices, “the burden of sexual objectification”, as Mulvey calls it. Åsberg has pointed out that the representation of the cyborg in popular cinema has not always helped to blur gender boundaries:

[T]he cyborg of contemporary popular culture often is depicted as the highly gendered incarnation of either the sexy femme-bot or the hard-boiled masculine terminator [...] in films such as *Terminator*, *Bionic Woman*, *Robocop*, *The Matrix* and *Ghost in the Shell*.<sup>453</sup>

However, this is not the case in *Hable con ella* or *Bella Addormentata*. Unlike in films such as *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997) in which femme-bots shoot ammunition from their nipples, or *Ex Machina* (2015) in which the mechanical body of the robot replicates the shape and curves of a naked woman, the technological apparatuses in Almodóvar’s and Bellocchio’s films do not focus or enhance sexual attributes of the female body. Lydia’s and Rosa’s tracheal intubation in fact has the opposite effect – it desexualizes them and thus interrupts the fantasy of perpetual female willingness to satisfy male desire. As Mulvey states, in the context of cinematic voyeurism, “The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly.”<sup>454</sup> Rosa’s and Lydia’s cyborg bodies interrupt this fantasy, thereby dissipating the voyeuristic gaze or, to use Mulvey’s terminology, breaking “the spell of fascination”<sup>455</sup>. Medical technology in *Hable con ella* and *Bella Addormentata* thus challenges the misconception that Sleeping Beauty’s comatose body is defenceless by protecting the female body from the objectifying voyeuristic gaze.

Through the representation of the cyborg body as a protective measure against sexual objectification, Almodóvar and Bellocchio employ science and technology to challenge the misconception that Sleeping Beauty’s inanimate body is simultaneously inactive. While in *A Kind of Alaska* Pinter also rejects the notion of absolute incapacity during stasis, he employs medical technology not to fortify the female body during its dormant state, but to bring Deborah out of hers. Deborah has been a victim of *sleeping*

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<sup>453</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>454</sup> Laura Mulvey, *op. cit.*, p. 837.

<sup>455</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by King Vidor’s *Duel in the Sun* (1946)”, in *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 122.

*sickness* for twenty-nine years, unable to move or communicate independently until the invention of the L-DOPA vaccine. She describes losing her bodily volition at the onset of her illness as though chains, closing walls, and bodily rigidity simultaneously prevented her from moving:

DEBORAH

Shutting the walls on me. Shutting them down on me. [...] They're shutting up shop. They're closing my face. Chains and padlocks. Bolting me up. [...] Ah. Eyes stuck. Only see the shadow of the top of my nose. Shadow of the top of my nose. Eyes stuck.<sup>456</sup>

She further elaborates on her limited mobility by describing her experience as “dancing in very narrow spaces. Kept stubbing my toes and bumping my head.”<sup>457</sup> When she asks Dr. Hornby what she looked like while she was sick, he confirms, “You were quite still. Fixed”<sup>458</sup>, and “like a corpse”<sup>459</sup>. Her sister Pauline concurs that it was as though her body were petrified:

PAULINE

Then Daddy tried to take the vase from you. He could not ... wrench it from your hands. He could not... move you from the spot. Like...marble.<sup>460</sup>

While incapable of bodily volition, Deborah was also unable to communicate. She acknowledges retrospectively:

DEBORAH

People bend over me, speak to me. I want to say hullo, to have a chat, to make some inquiries. But you can't do that [...].<sup>461</sup>

Her voicelessness during her illness is underscored by Pinter's use of the stage direction *Silence*. Upon directing one of Pinter's plays, Peter Hall commented on the significance of Pinter's use of varied silences, explaining the difference between the pause, the ellipsis and the silence. Hall states that while a pause is “a gap, which retrospectively

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<sup>456</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.* 180.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189.

gets filled in” and an ellipsis “is a very tiny hesitation”, a silence is “a dead stop.”<sup>462</sup> It is perhaps not incidental that in a play about a state of complete muteness Pinter often employs the quietest of the three silences when he refers to Deborah’s illness, as if to indicate through the absence of audio in the theatre Deborah’s own inability to create sound:

HORNBY

You have been asleep for twenty-nine years.  
*Silence.*<sup>463</sup>

DEBORAH

Nothing has happened to me. I’ve been nowhere.  
*Silence.*<sup>464</sup>

DEBORAH

You can’t imagine how still it is. So silent I hear my eyes move.  
*Silence.*<sup>465</sup>

While Pinter’s use of the *Silence* stage direction reiterates the suspension of Deborah’s vocal capacity, considering that silence is characterized in terms of absence, as it is the absence of sound, it is also likely a metaphor for Deborah’s own absence during her illness. Deborah herself acknowledges, “I’ve been nowhere”<sup>466</sup> and Hornby confirms, “[Y]ou have been nowhere, absent, indifferent.”<sup>467</sup> To this effect, Hornby describes her mind as located in “a kind of Alaska”, as if to suggest by invoking an image of a barren and empty territory what *nowhere* – or “no man’s land”<sup>468</sup>, to use Michael Billington’s expression – might look like:

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<sup>462</sup> Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler, “Peter Hall interviewed by Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler in *Theatre Quarterly*, No. 16, 1974”, in *Pinter in the Theatre*, ed. Ian Smith, London: Nick Hern, 2005, p. 144, quoted in Maurice Charney, “Pinter’s Fractured Discourse in *The Homecoming*”, in *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*, 21.2-3, 2011/2012, p. 241-255, accessed November 18, 2016, available at <http://www.connotations.uni-tuebingen.de/charney02123.htm>.

<sup>463</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>468</sup> Michael Billington, *Harold Pinter*, London: Faber and Faber, 2009, p. 481, describes *A Kind of Alaska* as a play that explores “the no man’s land between life and death”.

HORNBY

[...] Your mind has not been damaged. It was merely suspended, it took up a temporary habitation... in a kind of Alaska.<sup>469</sup>

While Pinter appears to reinforce Deborah's metaphorical habitation in a land of *nowhere* through her inability to move or communicate, he also rejects the concept of absolute passivity. Referring to Deborah's mind, Dr. Hornby asks, "But it was not entirely static, was it? You ventured into quite remote...utterly foreign... territories. You kept on the move."<sup>470</sup> Pinter thus contradicts Deborah's immobility through a metaphor of nomadism. Mengel also acknowledges Deborah's internal activity. He claims that the description of her as "dancing in very narrow spaces [...]" is indicative of an active consciousness behind a seemingly inactive and lifeless front."<sup>471</sup> Like Almodóvar and Bellocchio, Pinter challenges univocal conceptualizations of the female body in stasis.

Nevertheless, it is only with the invention of L-DOPA that Deborah reacquires her physical ability to move and speak: L-DOPA provides a cure for an illness that would otherwise be untreatable. As Dr. Hornby confirms, he was unable to wake Deborah prior to the existence of L-DOPA:

HORNBY

You fell asleep and no one could wake you.<sup>472</sup>

HORNBY

You will ask why I did not inject you twenty-nine years ago. I'll tell you. I did not possess the appropriate fluid.<sup>473</sup>

Deborah thus regains her bodily volition and ability to communicate only with the appropriate technology. While previously unable to move autonomously, Pinter's stage directions indicate that Deborah has regained the ability not only to move of her own volition but even to dance without "stubbing [her] toes and bumping [her] head": ("*She sits up*"<sup>474</sup>, "*She sits at the table*"<sup>475</sup>, "*She stands*", "*begins to walk*", "*She dances, by*

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<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>471</sup> Ewald Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>472</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.* p. 170.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.



herself, in slow motion.”<sup>476</sup>). At the same time she also recovers her speech. Unlike Basile’s Talia whose words are always filtered through the omniscient narrator, Deborah speaks her own words to which the capitalized name above each of her lines attests. Her regained autonomy of expression allows her to face her illness head on rather than silently acquiesce to it. Although it seems like she is speaking to Dr. Hornby when she states “You stole me...in the night. [...] You’ve had your way with me”<sup>477</sup>, considering Deborah’s negative descriptions of her illness throughout the play (she likens it to being “in prison”<sup>478</sup> and to “Chains and padlocks. Bolting me up”<sup>479</sup>) we are invited to interpret this particular accusation as, in fact, another monologue to her illness, which certainly “had [its] way with [her]” without her consent. It is as though she is telling the sleeping sickness how violated she felt when it invaded her body without her permission (“You shouldn’t have touched me like that”<sup>480</sup>) just as the king in Basile’s tale had done to Talia. Unlike Talia whose voice is always paraphrased by the narrator and who thus never speaks out against her abuser, Deborah is afforded a voice with which she is able to do so. In contrast to the *Silence* that characterizes Deborah’s absence during her illness, her voice affirms her presence. Thanks to the “[l]ovely injection”<sup>481</sup>, as she calls the L-DOPA vaccine, Deborah regains both her autonomy of movement and autonomy of expression.

In “La bella addormentata nel frigo”, medical technology both challenges the conceptualization of the inanimate female body as powerless, like in *Hable con ella* and *Bella Addormentata*, and restores the incapacitated female body its agency, like in *A Kind of Alaska*. The antifreeze injections, the cryogenic chamber, and the hibernation technique exert a positive influence on Patricia first by safeguarding her bodily survival while she is in cryostasis, a term referring to the preservation of living organisms in below-freezing temperatures. However, Patricia’s cyborg identity also enables her to recover her bodily agency so that she can escape after she is sexually abused by her guardian.

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<sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160-161.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

The first significance of Levi's fictional science is that it enables Patricia to survive hibernation. By accessing the technological potential of her cyborg body, Patricia acquires the ability to defend herself both from the hostile environment of her cryogenic chamber as well as from the degenerative effects of aging, thus tapping into defence mechanisms unavailable to the exclusively human body. The hibernation technique allows Patricia to effectively travel in time and witness important historical events centuries into the future. Levi's characters laud the procedure as an unprecedented success in the scientific field. Patricia's guardian, Peter, explains that when the hibernation procedure was perfected in 1970 it was a dream come true: "Un sogno diveniva così realtà: appariva possibile «spedire» un uomo nel futuro."<sup>482</sup> Baldur concurs, referring to Patricia's experience as enviable:

#### BALDUR

Ma quale mirabile esperienza! Passare a volo dove gli altri strisciano, poter comparare di persona costumi, eventi, eroi a distanza di decenni, di secoli! Quale storico non proverebbe invidia?<sup>483</sup>

Levi thus characterizes the hibernation technique in positive terms as a pioneer method that breaks new frontiers in our understanding of history. While presenting science and technology as beneficial tools with regards to the universal progress of humankind, Levi also offers us a lens through which to perceive their influence on the human body.

On the one hand, the science and technology behind Patricia's voyage into the future endow Patricia's body with the superhuman ability to effectively stop the process of aging, whereby Patricia becomes impermeable to the effects of human time. The antifreeze injections constitute one of the elements that contribute to Patricia's extended life cycle. As Ilse, one of the guests at Patricia's awakening, explains, they prevent her blood from freezing in the cold environment of the refrigerator:

#### ILSE

Mi hanno detto che anche lei sarebbe già morta, se a suo tempo, quando la faccenda è cominciata, non le avessero fatto delle iniezioni di ...

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<sup>482</sup> Primo Levi, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Translation: "A dream was thus becoming reality: it seemed possible to 'send' a man into the future."

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97. Translation: "BALDUR: What an incredible experience! To go flying to where others crawl, to be able to compare in person customs, events, heroes at a distance of decades, of centuries! What historian wouldn't be envious?"

coso... an-ti-con-ge-lante. Sí, sí, proprio quello che si mette in inverno nei radiatori delle auto. Del resto è logico: se no, il sangue gelerebbe.<sup>484</sup>

While the injections prepare her for hibernation, it is the refrigerator itself that conserves Patricia's body, protecting it by scientific means from the lethal effects of aging just as magic preserves Sleeping Beauty's youth during her one-hundred year slumber. As Peter informs his guests, Patricia is much older than she looks:

PETER

Patricia ha 163 anni, di cui 23 di vita normale, e 140 di ibernazione.<sup>485</sup>

To this effect, Levi's characters continuously acknowledge how youthful Patricia has remained ("lei è così giovane e così bella!"<sup>486</sup>; "sembra così giovane, eppure dicono che è ... antica."<sup>487</sup>; "Ha una pelle da neonata: [...] è effetto del supercongelamento"<sup>488</sup>). Levi seems to further underscore that Patricia's aging has come to a pause by symbolically representing her internal clock as stopped during hibernation. Only once the defrosting process begins, the stage directions indicate that a metronome starts to beat, as though it were Patricia's own heart coming back to life ("Si sente battere un metronomo"<sup>489</sup>; "Silenzio. Il metronomo continua a battere."<sup>490</sup>).

Through a technology that allows Patricia to witness the future and stop the process of aging, Levi touches upon two recurring themes in the history of literature: time travel and eternal youth. However, neither appears to be the epicentre of Levi's focus. Rather, they are the decorative subthemes to a wider issue. The author, a chemist with a professional and political interest in the morality of science, foregrounds the question of the relationship between science and ethics throughout the *Storie Naturali* collection. He often addresses the ethics of science through a focus on the effects of

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<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. Translation: "ILSE: They told me that even she would already be dead if, in her time, when the matter began, they hadn't given her the injections of ...whatchamacallit...an-ti-freeze. Yeah, yeah, precisely the thing you put in the winter in car radiators. After all it's logical: otherwise the blood would freeze."

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90. Translation: "PETER: Patricia is 163 years old, 23 of which were normal life, and 140 of hibernation."

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97. Translation: "she's so young and so beautiful!"

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90. Translation: "she seems so young, and yet they say she's...ancient."

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. Translation: "She has the skin of a newborn: [...] it's because of the superfreeze."

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88. Translation: "The beat of a metronome is heard".

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. Translation: "Silence. The metronome continues beating."

science on the human body. For example, in the short story “Versamina”, he addresses the ethical implications of a drug that alters the body’s perception of pain into one of pleasure. In “La bella addormentata nel frigo”, the Sleeping Beauty protagonist at the heart of the narrative allows not only for an investigation of the effects of science on the human body, but also for a study of how science impacts the female body in particular.

By deferring the boundary between life and death, the scientific modifications to which Patricia’s body is subjected render her not unlike the original cyborg that NASA scientists envisioned for space exploration. In their 1960 article “Cyborgs and Space”, NASA scientists Nathan Kline and Manfred Clynes debut the term *cyborg* when describing how the benefits of scientific intervention on the human body would allow man to break new frontiers in space travel. As summarized by Åsberg, in Kline and Clynes’s cyborg vision,

[t]he body could be modified to endure the hostile environment of outer space with the help of, for instance, self-regulatory devices such as adrenaline pumps inserted directly in the heart, exoskeleton space suits, and even long-term genetic engineering to augment the oxygen and breathing capacity of humans.<sup>491</sup>

Patricia appears to be the realization of Kline and Clynes’s cyborg vision, travelling through the hostile environment of time like the would-be astronauts travel through outer space. The bodily modifications resulting from Patricia’s antifreeze injections enable her to endure the extreme temperatures of her cryogenic container. In turn, her container acts similarly to Kline and Clynes’s space suit, protecting Patricia from degeneration precipitated by time. Through scientific modification, Patricia harnesses the technological agency of the cyborg to protect herself.

The intervention of medical technology on Patricia is not only relevant insofar as its effects signal a strengthening of the human body in general, but also particularly of the female body. The hypertextual relationship between “La bella addormentata nel frigo” and the classical Sleeping Beauty tales contextualizes Levi’s narrative within a wider discussion on female subjectivity and how it is represented. This renders pertinent Levi’s choice of a specifically female protagonist in stasis. On the one hand, in her cryogenic state, Patricia is paralyzed like the inanimate Sleeping Beauty. As a figure

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<sup>491</sup> Cecilia Åsberg, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

frozen in ice, Patricia's body has effectively been shut down, tempting us to conclude that she is incapable of performing acts of agency. This interpretation of Patricia conforms to the majority of feminist readings of the classical Sleeping Beauty: in cryostasis, Patricia is vulnerable to the will of her operator just as the classical Sleeping Beauty is vulnerable to the whims of wicked fairies and sexually-aggressive suitors. In this sense, Patricia emerges as a guinea pig of an experiment over which she has little to no control, suggesting that the medical technology to which she is submitted has a negative effect on her agency. While we will shortly address in further detail the negative impact of medical technology in Levi's play, our investigation of classical Sleeping Beauty versions taught us that agency is not always outwardly perceptible. In the classical tales, Sleeping Beauty's comatose state veiled the gradual creation of life through pregnancy (Basile), the realization of sexual desire (Perrault), and the transition into womanhood (the Brothers Grimm). Like that of the classical Sleeping Beauty, so, too, is Patricia's body the creator of meaning: in providing a defence against the degenerative effects of time and subzero temperature, Patricia is in a state of constant action despite her outward paralysis.

While Patricia's transformation from woman to cyborg endows her with the protective power to defend herself against hostile temperatures and the degenerative effects of time, her cyborg identity also enables her to regain her agency after her guardian rapes her. During the course of the narrative we learn that Peter has been defrosting Patricia periodically outside of the scheduled awakenings for his own sexual satisfaction. Patricia's inability to protest in her recently defrosted state renders her a victim of Peter's desire. Although victimized, Patricia is not helpless: she is able to escape by harnessing the technological potential of her cyborg identity. Owing to the intervention of medical technology, Patricia has become a cross between human and machine not only in the physical sense but psychologically as well. As if to imply that the cyborg has permeated Patricia's behaviour, Levi underscores the computer-like attributes of Patricia's actions. In an information packet that comes with Patricia, she is described as having "un carattere imperturbabile e risoluto, una emotività limitata"<sup>492</sup>. Levi appears to further symbolize Patricia's restricted emotionality through the

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<sup>492</sup> Primo Levi, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Translation: "an imperturbable and resolute character, a limited emotionality".

symbolic mechanization of her heart – the organ associated with emotion – via its metaphoric representation by the metronome. Not only does Patricia’s characterization as rational challenge the traditional dichotomous designation of women to the realm of emotion and men to that of reason<sup>493</sup>, but it is Patricia’s very embrace of what is not only traditionally masculine but also machine-like rationality that enables her to escape. Owing to her analytical character, Patricia chooses not to denounce Peter to the guests once she is defrosted and capable of speaking. Instead, it is as though, like a machine, she has calculated the optimal resolution when she waits for a more favourable opportunity. Once she is alone with Baldur, one of the guests who has fallen in love with her, Patricia deceptively tells him she desires him so that he would not only set her free, but believe it was his own idea:

BALDUR

Patricia! (*Altra pausa*). Mi prenda con lei.

PATRICIA

[...] Certo, sarebbe carino avere un compagno di viaggio come lei, così vivo, così appassionato, così ricco di temperamento...Ma non è fidanzato, lei?

BALDUR

Fidanzato? Lo ero.

PATRICIA

Fino a quando?

BALDUR

Fino a mezz’ora fa; ma ora ho incontrato lei, e tutto è cambiato.

PATRICIA

Lei è un lusingatore, un uomo pericoloso. (*La voce di Patricia cambia bruscamente, non è più lamentosa e languida, ma netta, energica, tagliente*) Ad ogni modo, se le cose stanno come lei mi dice, ne potrebbe nascere una combinazione interessante.

BALDUR

Patricia! Perché indugiare? Partiamo: fugga con me. Non nel futuro: nell’oggi.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, op. cit., p. 6-7 discusses this stereotype: “The most immediate issue for a feminist perspective on the natural sciences is the deeply rooted popular mythology that casts objectivity, reason, and mind as male, and subjectivity, feeling, and nature as female. In this division of emotional and intellectual labor, women have been the guarantors and protectors of the personal, the emotional, the particular, whereas science – the province par excellence of the impersonal, the rational, and the general – has been the preserve of men.”

<sup>494</sup> Primo Levi, op. cit., p. 98. Translation: “BALDUR: Patricia! (*Another pause*). Take me with you.

Patricia thus tricks Baldur into coming back for her in the middle of the night to defrost her and take her away, all the while hiding from him her true intentions. Like the programming language of a computer that is discernible only to the programmer, Patricia speaks in a code that Baldur is unable to fully understand. She not only speaks in code, but writes it, too: when Baldur asks to read her diary, she responds: “[N]essuno può leggerlo: è in cifra”<sup>495</sup>. As soon as Baldur comes back for her in the night, she reveals it was only a ploy so that she could escape:

PATRICIA

Giovanotto, non mi giudichi male. Mi pare che qui sia giunto il momento di una spiegazione. Lei mi deve capire: in qualche modo dovevo pur uscirne.

BALDUR

... e si trattava solo di questo? Di uscirne?

PATRICIA

Solo di questo.<sup>496</sup>

Levi ensures that any negative opinion we may have of Patricia because of her deceiving personality dissipates by characterizing Baldur as an adulterer. As a result, Patricia remains a protagonist in our eyes, not least because, in contrast to traditional conceptualizations of Sleeping Beauty, her cyborg identity enables her to act as her own rescuer. The technological potential with which medical technology infuses Patricia’s body permeates her behaviour, as well, allowing her to escape her oppressor. Although Patricia reflects Kline and Clynes’s cyborg vision of the superhuman, by challenging

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PATRICIA: [...] Sure, it would be nice to have a travelling companion like you, so lively, so passionate, with so much character... But aren’t you in a relationship?

BALDUR: In a relationship? I was.

PATRICIA: Until when?

BALDUR: Until a half hour ago; but now I might you, and everything has changed.

PATRICIA: You’re a flatterer, a dangerous man. (*Patricia’s voice changes abruptly, she is no longer complaining and languorous, but clear, energetic, and sharp*) In any case, if things are as you tell me, this could make for an interesting combination.

BALDUR: Patricia! Why hesitate? Let us leave: escape with me. Not into the future, into the present.”

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97. Translation: “Nobody can read it; it’s in code”.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101. Translation: “PATRICIA: Young man, do not misjudge me. It seems to me that the moment for an explanation has arrived. You must understand me: in some way I had to get out.

BALDUR: ...and it was just about that? About getting out?

PATRICIA: Just that.”

the traditional conceptualization of the female body as passive, science and technology render Patricia the embodiment of Haraway's feminist conceptualization of the cyborg, as well.

According to Haraway, as "instruments for enforcing meanings"<sup>497</sup> science and technology have the potential to rewrite traditional conceptualizations of gender. By affording women access to technological resources, the cyborg body dissipates the original boundary that designated male as active and female as passive. In Almodóvar's, Bellocchio's, Pinter's, and Levi's contemporary *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts, medical technology contributes to the creation of Haraway's cyborg vision by reinforcing the image of an active female body.

Owing to its potentially negative consequences, however, medical technology likewise threatens the emancipating potential of Haraway's cyborg figuration. As an investigation into *A Kind of Alaska*, *Bella Addormentata*, "La bella addormentata nel frigo", and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* will reveal, medical technology can sometimes prove ineffective and even further polarize traditional and sexist notions of femininity and masculinity.

Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska* raises questions regarding the limits of modern science with regards to reinforcing female subjectivity. In *Awakenings*, Oliver Sacks ultimately concedes that L-DOPA is an insufficient remedy for *encephalitis lethargica*, observing the adverse effects it would, sooner or later, have on his patients. Mrs. R, a patient to whom Sacks refers as *Sleeping Beauty*, correspondingly fails to benefit from the treatment. Sacks reflects, "But she is a *Sleeping Beauty* whose 'awakening' was unbearable to her, and who will never be awoken again."<sup>498</sup> In *A Kind of Alaska*, Pinter makes no such reference to L-DOPA's expiration date, referring to it exclusively in terms of "the remarkable drug"<sup>499</sup> in the introductory note to his play. Indeed, in *A Kind of Alaska*, the vaccine functions as a beneficial tool that aids Deborah in regaining her ability to move and talk, which ultimately allows her to confront her illness. However, although the vaccine restores Deborah's autonomy of motion and autonomy of expression, Pinter leaves open-ended the question of whether the female patient is able

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<sup>497</sup> Donna Haraway, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>498</sup> Oliver Sacks, *op. cit.*, l. 1950.

<sup>499</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.*, p. 151.



to occupy a subject-position. In the classical Sleeping Beauty tales, Talia, Belle, and Dornröschen engage in acts of bodily agency through motherhood, sexual expression, and sexual maturation respectively, all three acts that pertain to the female experience. Owing to her illness, Deborah is unable to perform any of the three female acts of agency, a complication that the L-DOPA vaccine cannot remedy, thus casting doubt on Deborah's ability to regain her subjectivity.

Whereas the Grimms' Sleeping Beauty completes her transformation from childhood to adulthood, owing to her illness Deborah's maturation is stunted: she is a girl in a woman's body. Although she perceives that her sister Pauline's body has changed ("Well, you've changed. A great deal. You've aged ... substantially. What happened to you?"<sup>500</sup>; "My God! You've grown breasts!"<sup>501</sup>; "But where did you get those breasts?"<sup>502</sup>), Deborah does not seem to acknowledge that twenty-nine years have gone by and that her own body has developed over the years, as well. Instead, she believes herself to still be a girl, presuming that Pauline looks older because some "sudden shock" aged her "overnight"<sup>503</sup>. When asked about her own age, Deborah responds, "I am twelve. No. I am sixteen. I am seven. *Pause*. I don't know. Yes. I know. I am fourteen. I am fifteen. I'm lovely fifteen."<sup>504</sup> While unable to decide on her exact age, Deborah's guesses are always in the realm of girlhood. Mengel notes the discrepancy between Deborah's physical reality and the age in her head:

It becomes clear that, in her mind, she is still living in the world of her childhood in the world as it was before she fell ill. She remembers the games she played with her father, recalls her mother, her sisters Pauline and Estelle, and her friend Jack, and believes herself to be fifteen or sixteen years old. Her language is partly that of a young girl, and in her memories she mixes earlier and later stages of her childhood. It seems that, for her, time came to a standstill years ago.<sup>505</sup>

In our analysis of "Dornröschen", we discussed how sexual maturation is as much psychological as it is physical. To this effect, the bloomed hedge of roses in the fairy tale represents both the physical transformation of the female body via menstruation

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<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>505</sup> Ewald Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

and, as proposed by Bettelheim, Sleeping Beauty's mental readiness for sexual union. The discrepancy between Deborah's bodily age and her mental age casts doubt on whether she can complete her passage from girlhood to womanhood if her mind cannot catch up to her body. Unlike Perrault's Belle, if Deborah has not reached sexual maturity, her stunted development inevitably compromises her ability to express sexual pleasure and desire and thus sexual agency, as well. This is evidenced by her references in the present tense to games she used to play with her friends, as though she were still in the mindset of a child to whom boys were of no sexual interest: "There's a boy named Peter. We play with his trains, we play...Cowboys and Indians...I'm a tomboy. I knock him about."<sup>506</sup> Deborah's ability to become a mother like Talia and create meaning with her body through childbirth is similarly threatened. Through Deborah's discourse we learn that she used to have a friend named Jack with whom she would like to start a family. She instructs Hornby, "Find Jack. I'll say yes. We'll have kids. I'll bake apples. I'm ready for it."<sup>507</sup> Although we are inclined to interpret Deborah's discourse in terms of a child playing house (considering that her idea of marriage and motherhood is predicated on baking apples), she brings to our attention the fact that her options for starting a family are limited. There is no more Jack ("Where's Jack?"<sup>508</sup>) – in fact, as Deborah remarks to Hornby, "There's not another man in sight."<sup>509</sup> The fact that her illness has occupied the majority of her childbearing years makes us question whether Deborah is still even physically capable of conceiving. Her declaration that she would like to start a family because "now I've got all the world before me. All life before me. All my life before me"<sup>510</sup> resounds with a note of irony.

As we emphasized at the end of Part II, it is relevant that the three distinct ways in which the classical Sleeping Beauties express bodily agency are all experiences that pertain to the female body. As Braidotti notes, "References to female sexuality, to motherhood, [...] to the flow of blood [...] are unmistakably female."<sup>511</sup> Although the L-DOPA vaccine is able to restore to Deborah's body its autonomy of motion and communication, it appears unable to bring back any of the elements which render it a

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<sup>506</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>511</sup> Rosi Braodotti, *Metamorphoses*, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

female body, thus casting doubt on Deborah's ability to become a female subject.

While Pinter thus raises the question of the limits of medical technology, Bellocchio introduces the concept of medical technology as potentially inimical. Although breathing and feeding tubes serve to endow the patient's body with the technological resources necessary to circumvent bodily death while the patient is in a coma, Bellocchio invites us to consider if medical technology could become more detrimental than beneficial to female agency if life support is continued even after the patient has entered into a persistent vegetative state. In *Hable con ella* the issue is never broached. Offscreen, medical technology ensures Alicia's survival during her comatose state so that she is able to fully recover once she wakes up. Following her awakening, Alicia begins rehabilitation and thus starts regaining the physical capacities she had had as a dancer prior to her accident, underscoring that medical intervention during her coma ensured her full recovery. Even though Lydia is unable to recover like Alicia, the film does not follow her life during the eight months she is kept on life support after her brain death so that the detrimental effects of extended medical care on a vegetative patient is a non-issue in the framework of *Hable con ella*. In *Bella Addormentata*, on the other hand, the downside of medical technology is one of the main issues of the film. Bellocchio frames his story in the context of a debate on euthanasia, which, insofar as it is defined as the termination of medical care, can be characterized as the anti-medical technology. Eluana is at the centre of this debate between the pros and cons of medical technology. She is medically kept alive by feeding tubes for seventeen years despite scientific evidence that she will never come out of her coma. While it is never discussed if Rosa has entered into a persistent vegetative state, Eluana's doctor confirms that Eluana has been brain dead since her accident: "[...] Eluana è morta diciassette anni fa."<sup>512</sup> Once it is established that Eluana is in PVS and that she will not wake up, medical technology becomes at best ineffectual and at worst detrimental to her subjectivity.

Once Eluana is brain dead, her continued life support serves no other purpose than to further her existence as the object of viewing and the object of discourse, that which Pierre Bourdieu designates as traditional attributes of the dominated female body. To reiterate a quote of his from Part I:

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<sup>512</sup> *Bella Addormentata*, op. cit.

Everything in the genesis of the female habitus and in the social conditions of its actualization combines to make the female experience of the body the limiting case of the universal experience of the body-for-others, constantly exposed to the objectification performed by the gaze and the discourse of others.<sup>513</sup>

Despite the role of medical technology in defending the female body from the voyeuristic gaze as argued above, as the repeated focus of global print, broadcast, and digital media, to which Bellocchio's film itself attests, Eluana's mass representation speaks to her visualization on a global scale without her consent. Unlike Perrault's or the Brothers Grimms' Sleeping Beauties who sleep behind a protective hedge, Eluana is therefore not shielded from the gaze of others but exposed to it. As the centre of the debate between euthanasia advocates and anti-euthanasia protesters, Eluana is also the object of the discourse of others, not only as a fictional character in Bellocchio's film but as a historical figure as well. The mechanical ventilation that keeps her body alive thus also renders it less and less her own body. Despite ensuring her survival, medical technology also turns Eluana into "the body-for-others", thereby reaffirming the traditional polarization between masculinity and femininity rather than Haraway's emancipated cyborg figuration.

Medical technology has a role in female objectification in Levi's "La bella addormentata nel frigo", as well. Patricia undergoes a hibernation procedure that, while protecting her in one respect by shielding her from the degenerative effects of time and subzero temperatures, renders her an instrument for appropriation by Lotte, Peter, and their guests in another. While Patricia's cyborg identity endows her with the behavioural qualities that enable her to escape, the physical effects of medical technology also subject her to the very same circumstances that threaten her agency in the first place. Levi foreshadows Patricia's vulnerability to appropriation during the hibernation procedure by describing her as though she were physically an object. We may recall that Patricia is injected with the same substance used in a car, whereby the antifreeze keeps her body running as it might an engine ("an-ti-con-ge-lante. Sí, sí,

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<sup>513</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

proprio quello che si mette in inverno nei radiatori delle auto”<sup>514</sup>). Prior to undergoing the hibernation procedure, she is also subjected to a medical examination described as though her organs were parts of a motor vehicle being submitted for quality control: “Possedeva tutti i requisiti, cuore, polmoni, reni ecc. in perfetto ordine”<sup>515</sup>. Like mechanics tuning up a car, twice a year physiologists take her out of her refrigerator to perform a series of invasive tests to confirm Patricia’s state of health:

#### PETER

[...] Sono i fisiologi del Centro Studi: regolari come gli esattori delle tasse, due volte all’anno piombano qui con tutto il loro armamentario, la scongelano, la rigirano da tutte le parti, radioscopie, test psicologici, elettrocardiogrammi, esami del sangue...<sup>516</sup>

Like any retail appliance, Patricia comes with her own information packet, her “libretto personale, che sta nel frigo con lei”<sup>517</sup>. As though Patricia herself were the refrigerator in which she is kept, Peter, Lotte, and their guests treat her as a commodity that serves the buyer. Lotte introduces Patricia to the audience by describing her as a source of entertainment for herself and her companions, comparable to artwork, performing animals, or hallucinogenic drugs:

#### LOTTE

[...] C’è chi ha dei bei quadri antichi, Renoir, Picasso, Caravaggio; c’è chi ha un urango condizionato, o un cane o un gatto vivo, c’è chi dispone di un mobile bar con gli stupefacenti più aggiornati, ma noi abbiamo Patricia...<sup>518</sup>

Ilse appears to share Lotte’s perception of Patricia as a novelty item for their amusement. She refers to Patricia on various occasions as though she were a valuable

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<sup>514</sup> Primo Levi, *op. cit.*, p. 89. Translation: “an-ti-freeze. Yeah, yeah, precisely the thing you put in the winter in car radiators.”

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90. Translation: “She possessed all of the requirements, heart, lungs, kidneys, etc., in perfect condition”.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93. Translation: “The physiologists from the Study Centre: regular like tax collectors, two times a year they show up here with all of their equipment, they defreeze her, they turn her this way and that, radioscopies, psychological tests, electrocardiograms, blood tests...”

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90. Translation: “personal booklet, that’s in the fridge with her”.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86. Translation: “There are those with beautiful antique paintings, Renoir, Picasso, Caravaggio; there are those with trained oranges, or a live dog or cat, there are those who have a mobile bar with the most up-to-date drugs, but we have Patricia...”

piece of art: (“È bellissima, mi hanno detto: è vero?”<sup>519</sup>; “Volevo sapere quanti anni ha: sembra così giovane, eppure dicono che è ... antica.”<sup>520</sup>; “Ah! È incantevole! Sembra finta... Ed è...voglio dire, è proprio dell’epoca?”<sup>521</sup>). Along with Ilse, Peter and Robert discuss Patricia as though she were an animal put on display for their entertainment:

PETER

Il momento del risveglio è il più interessante: è così graziosa quando apre gli occhi!”<sup>522</sup>

ILSE

(*sottovoce*) Si può guardare dallo spioncino del frigo?

PETER

(*c.s.*) Certamente, ma non faccia rumore. [...U]na emozione improvvisa potrebbe esserle dannosa.<sup>523</sup>

ROBERT

Uno splendore. L’ho vista l’anno scorso da vicino[...].<sup>524</sup>

Benchouiha has noted how the attitudes of the guardians and the guests towards Patricia contribute to a dynamic that mirrors that of visitors at a zoo. She states:

Patricia is not only reduced “allo stato di un pezzo di ghiaccio”<sup>525</sup> by the cryogenic experiment itself, but also by those around her, who view and treat her less humanely, rather as if she were a fascinating talking novelty in a zoo [...].<sup>526</sup>

Contrary to Haraway’s emancipated cyborg figuration, the author’s choice of language seems to emphasize the metaphoric connection between Patricia and technological apparatuses not in order to accentuate Patricia’s technological agency, but rather to underscore her status as an instrument to be appropriated. In her Cyborg Manifesto,

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. Translation: “They told me she’s beautiful: is it true?”

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90. Translation: “I wanted to know how old she is: she seems so young, and yet they say she’s...ancient.”

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “Ah! She’s enchanting! She seems fake...And she’s...I mean, she’s really from that period?”

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87. Translation: “The moment of the reawakening is the most interesting: she’s so lovely when she opens her eyes!”

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90. Translation: “ILSE: (*quietly*) Can we look through the peephole of the fridge? PETER: (*like above*) Certainly, but don’t make noise. [...U]nexpected excitement could be detrimental to her.”

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89. Translation: “A beauty. I saw her last year up close”.

<sup>525</sup> Lucie Benchouiha, *op. cit.*, p. 362. Our translation: “to the state of a piece of ice”.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*

Haraway acknowledges the instrumentalization of the female body as a potential consequence of technological advancement. More specifically, she perceives a close relationship between “instrumentality” and “sexuality” whereby the blurring of boundaries between organism and technology invites the perception of the female body “as a kind of private satisfaction- and utility-maximizing machine”<sup>527</sup>. The relationship between Patricia and her guardian most clearly illustrates this hierarchical sexual dynamic. Peter defrosts Patricia outside of the schedule to use her as his personal sex toy. While we will elaborate in more detail in the next chapter on how the relationship between Patricia and her refrigerator’s technician impacts female subjectivity, the role of the cryogenic chamber in Patricia’s instrumentalization must not be overlooked. Patricia herself testifies how the hibernation technique prevented her from physically defending herself or voicing her objections to Peter’s sexual advances by maintaining her body temperature too low:

#### PATRICIA

[...] Le visite di lui, di notte. A trentatré gradi, appena tiepida, che non potevo difendermi in nessun modo. E siccome io stavo zitta, per forza! lui magari si immaginava...<sup>528</sup>

By facilitating Patricia’s metaphorical transformation into an object that satisfies male desire, as well as by rendering her a novelty for the amusement of guests, the hibernation technique contributes to her objectification. Like Bellocchio, Levi thus appears to highlight how despite its initially positive purpose, medical technology has the potential to negatively impact female subjectivity by turning the female body into “the body-for-others”.

Although *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* introduces the memory erasing procedure under the guise of a miracle cure, like Levi, Gondry invites us to be cautious in our judgment of technological advances. The procedure is initially presented as a desired solution to unrequited love – with a simple zap from the machine’s laser all painful memories of your former partner will be deleted. By rendering the procedure a form of neurosurgery, Gondry appears to equate unpleasant memories to brain tumours,

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<sup>527</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>528</sup> Primo Levi, *op. cit.*, p. 101. Translation: “His visits, at night. At thirty-three degrees, barely lukewarm, I was unable to defend myself in any way. And since I stayed silent, of course! He probably thought...”

suggesting that their eradication is desired. Such a conclusion can also be reached due to the resemblance of the memory removal equipment to a video game: technicians zap the unwanted memories as they appear on the computer screen as though they were villains. Whether *Eternal Sunshine* invites us to perceive painful memories as cancerous cells or virtual antagonists, we are initially seduced by the potential of the technology that erases them. We are enticed by the idea of a life without heartache. Lacuna's extensive clientele assures us that we are not wrong: just prior to Valentine's Day the Lacuna waiting room is full ("February is very busy for us because of Valentine's Day."<sup>529</sup>). Mary, the secretary, is heard advising an eager client over the phone that she must reduce her number of procedures, thereby confirming just how popular the clinic is ("No, I'm sorry, Mrs. Henry. You can't have the procedure done three times in one month."<sup>530</sup>). Mary herself continuously praises Howard and Lacuna for the possibility of a new beginning they offer:

#### MARY

It's amazing, isn't it? What Howard gives to the world, to let people begin again. It's beautiful. You look at a baby and it's so pure and so free and so clean and adults are like this mess of sadness and phobias and Howard just makes it all go away.<sup>531</sup>

She invokes Friedrich Nietzsche ("Blessed are the forgetful, for they get the best even of their blunders"<sup>532</sup>) and Alexander Pope ("How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!/ The world forgetting, by the world forgot./ Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!/ Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd"<sup>533</sup>) as advocates of blissful forgetfulness as evidence of the procedure's benefits.

Despite the promising nature of such a technology and the positive light in which it is initially presented, *Eternal Sunshine* invites us to consider its adverse effects. In his article "*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and the Morality of Memory", Christopher Grau notes that "the general sense one gets from the film is that the memory removal technology exhibited in the movie does not, in fact, allow for the

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<sup>529</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>532</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "217", *Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886, quoted in *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>533</sup> Alexander Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard", *The Works of Mr Alexander Pope*, 1717, quoted in *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*



‘eternal sunshine’ referenced in the title.”<sup>534</sup> Instead, Grau perceives the procedure “as a tempting but misguided and dangerous tool.”<sup>535</sup> Dr. Howard Mierzwiak, the clinic’s head physician, underscores the procedure’s threatening quality when he refers to it as a form of “brain damage”<sup>536</sup>. Lacuna’s manifestly outdated equipment further symbolizes the regressive nature of the procedure. As Jonathan Sircy notes in a review of the film,

The doctors in the film use cassette tapes, the best Dell Laptops 1995 had to offer, and a jumble of wires and analog-looking voltage monitors. In every other respect, the film looks like it is set in 2004, yet the brain-scan headpiece looks like it came out of an 80s Five Boroughs hair salon. The procedure’s medical advancement jars against the equipment used to accomplish it.<sup>537</sup>

While we can see the consequences of the regressive technology on Joel, who regrets his decision to erase Clementine mid-way through the process having realized that he will lose the happy memories of her along with the sad ones, the consequences suffered by Clementine and Mary are more extensive. The film primarily addresses the technology’s potential to instrumentalize the female body through Clementine’s relationship with Patrick, who capitalizes on Clementine’s amnesia to seduce her. Howard similarly coerces Mary into having the procedure done in order to sweep their affair under the rug. While we will further investigate the influence of the doctor-patient/technician-patient relationships on female subjectivity in the next chapter, it is pertinent to highlight here that for both *Sleeping Beauties* the memory removal procedure renders them vulnerable to exploitation.

Owing to the procedure, Clementine and Mary become incapable of creating new meaning and thus of performing acts of agency. The removal of memory effectively inhibits the patient’s ability to learn from her experiences, dooming her to repeat the same mistakes. Grau has commented on this handicap induced by the film’s technology:

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<sup>534</sup> Christopher Grau, “‘Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind’ and the Morality of Memory”, in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64.1, p. 119.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.* p. 127.

<sup>536</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>537</sup> Jonathan Sircy, “Eat Your Vegetables: ‘Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind’”, *Christ and Pop Culture*, Janary 5, 2012, accessed January 3, 2016, <http://christandpopculture.com/eat-your-vegetables-eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind/>.

One might plausibly argue that painful memories stay with us for good reason: they allow us to learn valuable lessons from the past and thus be better prepared for the future. This is no doubt often the case, and in a situation in which it appears that the removal of memory would limit the person in this way (by denying him or her useful information), such a procedure would probably not be for the best [...].<sup>538</sup>

Since Clementine's amnesia denies her useful information – the information that she is repeating with Patrick the experiences she has already had with Joel – she invites Patrick up to the frozen Charles river where, unbeknownst to her, she and Joel used to go. Owing to her memory loss, Clementine believes a story in her mind that is not the same as the truth, much like Pinter's Deborah who awakens after twenty-nine years believing herself to still be a little girl. Lying on a frozen, barren river with a distorted perception of reality, it is almost as though Clementine is in *a kind of Alaska*, as well. Owing to the procedure, Mary, too, is unaware that she is repeating the same acts that initially led to her exploitation by Dr. Mierzwiak. As a result of forgetting her affair, Mary kisses Howard and confesses her love to him ("I've loved you for a very long time"<sup>539</sup>) ignorant of the fact that she is not doing so for the first time. In the context of the mind/body dichotomy, De Beauvoir and Butler state that the female object is assigned meaning by the male subject. Mary's amnesia prevents her from making informed decisions, thus rendering her actions devoid of agency. Since her actions are within the framework of amnesia provoked by Howard, Mary's body thus performs the meaning decided by Howard, and thereby becomes trapped within the mind/body dichotomy. Clementine, too, is trapped in a game of which Patrick decides the rules. Unlike Talia's, Belle's, and Dornröschen's ability to create meaning through motherhood, sexual agency, and sexual maturation respectively, in their amnesiac states Clementine and Mary cannot create their own meaning. As Braidotti affirms, memory is fundamental both to the active reinvention of the self<sup>540</sup> and to the creation of ways in which to represent the self.<sup>541</sup> In losing their memory, Mary and Clementine become incapable of both as they concede their autonomy of the self to others. It is only once Mary finds out the truth that her actions gain significance: she distances herself from

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<sup>538</sup> Christopher Grau, *op. cit.*, p. 120-121.

<sup>539</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>540</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, *op. cit.*, p. 167 and p. 192.

<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Howard by quitting the company and she restores to Lacuna's former patients their respective files, thereby reaffirming her agency and extending the same opportunity to Clementine. The women's ability to perform acts of bodily agency only once the effects of the memory removal procedure are nullified reaffirms the technology's negative impact on female subjectivity.

While the procedure thus negatively influences the female patient directly, it does so indirectly, as well. A strong metaphorical connection between Joel's memories of Clementine and Clementine herself suggests that the memory-erasing technology jeopardizes Clementine's subjectivity not only by erasing her memories, but also by erasing those of Joel. Prior to the procedure, Dr. Mierzwiak instructs Joel to remove from his life any items that remind him of Clementine, thereby beginning the memory-erasing process:

HOWARD

The first thing we need you to do, Mr. Barish, is to go home and collect everything you own that has some association with Clementine. Anything. And we'll use these items to create a map of Clementine in your brain, ok? So we'll need photos, clothing, gifts, books she may have bought you, CDs you may have bought together, journal entries. We want to empty your home, we want to empty your life of Clementine.<sup>542</sup>

The fact that Dr. Mierzwiak employs the metaphor of removing Clementine to describe the removal of items associated with Clementine (he instructs Joel to "empty [his] life of Clementine") underscores that the removal of items associated with Clementine equals the removal of Clementine herself. This linguistic device prompts us to conclude that a subsequent image of Joel with a garbage bag full of Clementine-related things indicates that Joel is symbolically throwing out Clementine. The same thing happens when technicians track down and erase each of Joel's memories of her. While Joel is undergoing the procedure, viewers experience his memories with him as they are being erased. As the machine tracks down each Clementine-related memory, Clementine's body disappears from the screen. We are thus invited to consider the negative impact of the memory removal technology on female bodily agency by the fact that, in one respect, the technology eliminates the female body altogether, rendering moot the subject of agency if there is no body to enact it. Although only the Clementine in Joel's

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<sup>542</sup> *Eternal Sunshine, op. cit.*

mind is physically disappearing, the hindrance of the imagined Clementine's agency is symbolic of how Joel's actions in fact contribute to the hindrance of the real Clementine's agency, as well. Joel's decision to erase Clementine means that he will not be the *Prince Charming* to awaken her, thereby reducing her chances of learning the truth, that which would allow her to regain her capacity to create new meaning, as we discuss above. The film symbolically alludes to the fact that the experience of the imagined Clementine affects the real Clementine by the fact that the real Clementine appears to feel the imagined Clementine's disappearance. As technicians erase the imagined Clementine from Joel's mind, the real Clementine complains:

CLEMENTINE

I'm lost, I'm scared. I feel like I'm disappearing. My skin's coming off!<sup>543</sup>

The real Clementine thus suffers the consequences of the imagined Clementine's erasure by feeling as though she, too, were being erased. Clementine's physical and metaphorical disappearance reaffirms the traditional mind/body dichotomy whereby man assigns the female body meaning: Clementine has meaning as long as Joel remembers her; once he forgets her, Clementine disappears. Although *Eternal Sunshine* introduces the memory-erasing procedure as a form of technological progress, by promoting traditional conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity the technology appears to be more regressive than progressive.

In our study of "La bella addormentata nel frigo", *A Kind of Alaska*, *Hable con ella*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and *Bella Addormentata*, we discussed both the positive and negative impact of medical technology on female subjectivity. On the one hand, medical technology has the potential to challenge traditional conceptualizations of the female body in stasis as an inactive body. In *Hable con ella* and *Bella Addormentata*, the physical cross between organism and machine protects Lydia and Rosa from the objectifying male gaze incited by the voyeuristic nature of cinema. In Levi's play, medical intervention fortifies Patricia's body against the degenerative effects of time and hostile temperatures. Medical technology also enables

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<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*

the female body to overcome states of passivity. In *A Kind of Alaska*, Pinter invites us to consider the positive impact of medical technology considering that it is the L-DOPA vaccine that allows Deborah to regain her ability to both move and speak and thus, ultimately, confront her illness. In “La bella addormentata nel frigo” Patricia escapes her abuser by integrating into her behaviour the technological potential of the cyborg.

While presenting us with the positive potential of medical technology, the authors and filmmakers in our corpus simultaneously invite us to consider how the various forms of science and technology in their works can prove limited in their ability to encourage female subjectivity and even contribute to the perpetuation of the notion of the female body as “the body-for-others”. In *A Kind of Alaska*, while the L-DOPA vaccine restores to Deborah her autonomy of motion and expression, it leaves a temporal rift between her mental and physical age, thereby proving ineffective with regards to enabling Deborah to create meaning with her body through acts that pertain to the female experience. Despite its potential to protect the body from death, Eluana’s life support reaffirms her status as the object of viewing and discourse of others. Patricia’s hibernation technique contributes to her objectification by rendering her a source of amusement for guests and sexual predators alike. The memory removal procedure subjects Mary and Clementine to exploitation by Dr. Mierzwiak and Patrick. Clementine’s agency is further jeopardized by Joel’s memory-erasure which reaffirms her position within the traditional mind/body dichotomy.

It should be noted that acknowledging the negative impact of medical technology on female subjectivity in these works does not mean that either we or the authors and filmmakers in our corpus are suggesting we should reject scientific and technological advancements altogether. Rather, as Braidotti claims, science and technology can both facilitate and impede our goals towards gender equality depending on how we use them. The works in our corpus that represent their harmful potential only bring to our attention what can happen if we use them poorly.

As the decision-makers behind patient care, medical figures have just as large of an impact on female subjectivity as the medical technology they implement. In the next chapter, we will therefore examine the doctors, nurses, and technicians in our corpus to determine how the relationship between the medical figure and the patient can impact the female body.

### 3.3 The Medical Figure and the Patient: Examining Fairy Tale Gender Roles in the Contemporary Medical Context

One of the areas of medicine that has the most potential to reinforce or subvert traditional conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity is the relationship between the medical figure and the patient. In our corpus, the medical figure manifests as the doctor (Dr. Hornby, Dr. Mierzwiak, Dr. Pallido), the nurse (Nurse Benigno), and the technician (Peter, Patrick). It is not incidental that in each work the medical figure is male and the patient is female. This gender dynamic mirrors Fox Keller's observation that men have monopolized the domain of science.<sup>544</sup> Such a disbalance attests to the double standard for men and women in the medical field, but it also reaffirms the traditional gendered distribution of roles in the classical fairy tale: as a medical figure, the man is still cast in the typical role of the rescuer while as a patient, the woman needs to be rescued.

Despite traditional gender typecasting, the way in which each medical figure navigates between maintaining professional integrity and abusing his authoritative status is the crucial determinant for the representation of female subjectivity in these works. As though they were contemporary embodiments of Basile's king, Peter ("La bella addormentata nel frigo"), Nurse Benigno (*Hable con ella*), Dr. Mierzwiak, and Patrick (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) take sexual advantage of their female patients thereby perpetuating the instrumentalization of the female body inherent to "Sole, Luna e Talia". By maintaining a professional demeanour, Dr. Pallido, on the other hand, removes Rossa from the trajectory of the objectifying gaze in *Bella Addormentata*. Consequently, he renders gender insignificant in the context of their doctor-patient (or rescuer-rescued) relationship, prompting us to challenge our inclination as critics to read *Sleeping Beauty* from traditional fairy tale gender roles and dynamics. In *A Kind of Alaska*, the sexual victimizer and the ethical physician are melted into one in the figure of Dr. Hornby. Dr. Hornby thus influences the patient

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<sup>544</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, op. cit., p. 7 states, "[S]cience – the province par excellence of the impersonal, the rational, and the general – has been the preserve of men."

Deborah in two distinct ways, resultantly blurring the boundaries between the Deborah who regains her bodily agency with the help of her doctor's treatment and the Deborah who is rendered an object of her doctor's desire.

In Levi's "La bella addormentata nel frigo", Peter abuses his authority as the technician of Patricia's cryogenic chamber to reduce Patricia to the status of a sexual object. Lotte is the first to alert readers of the sexual nature of the relationship between Patricia and her husband:

LOTTE

[...] Ma le piacciono gli uomini, ed in specie i mariti altrui. [...] E lei piace agli uomini, alla sua venerabile età: questo è il peggio. [...] E poi, e poi... non sono mai riuscita ad avere delle prove, a coglierli sul fatto, ma siete proprio sicuri, voi, che tra il «tutore» e la ragazza tutto si sia sempre svolto alla luce del sole? In altre parole, (*con forza*) che tutti gli scongelamenti siano stati regolarmente registrati sul libretto personale? Io no. Io non ne sono sicura.<sup>545</sup>

Unbeknownst to Lotte, the sexual relationship is not consensual. Patricia herself confirms this when she informs Baldur that Peter's sexual abuse constitutes one of the main reasons she decides to abandon the hibernation project and escape:

PATRICIA

Giovanotto, non mi giudichi male. [...] Lei mi deve capire: in qualche modo dovevo pur uscirne.

BALDUR

... e si trattava solo di questo? Di uscirne?

PATRICIA

Solo di questo. Di uscire dal frigo e di uscire da casa Thörl. [...] Sono veramente stanca: gelo e sgelò, gelo e sgelò, a lungo andare è faticoso. Poi c'è dell'altro.

BALDUR

Altro?

PATRICIA

Altro, sí. Le visite di lui, di notte. A trentatré gradi, appena tiepida, che non potevo difendermi in nessun modo. E siccome io stavo zitta, per

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<sup>545</sup> Primo Levi, *op. cit.* p. 96. Translation: "LOTTE: But she likes men, and especially other people's husbands. [...] And men like her, at her venerable age: that's the worst part of it. [...] And then, and then...I've never been able to get proof, to catch them in the act, but are you really sure that between the 'tutor' and the girl everything always happened out in the open? In other words, (*powerfully*) that all of the defreezings were regularly registered in the personal booklet? I'm not. I'm not sure of it."

forza! lui magari si immaginava...<sup>546</sup>

In her barely defrosted state, Patricia is unable to defend herself from Peter's unwanted advances or voice her objections. As the operator of Patricia's cryogenic chamber, Peter takes advantage of his knowledge of the body's reaction to specific temperature settings to ensure that Patricia is physically incapable of thwarting his sexual advances. Levi foreshadows that Peter will use his familiarity with the refrigerator's instruction manual to his advantage when Robert announces the potential consequences on Patricia if the instructions for the refrigerator were to be followed incorrectly:

ILSE

(*sottovoce*) Soffre durante lo scongelamento?

PETER

(*c.s.*) No, di regola, no. Ma appunto, bisogna fare le cose bene, seguire esattamente le prescrizioni. Anche durante il soggiorno in frigo, è indispensabile che la temperatura sia mantenuta costante entro limiti molto stretti.

ROBERT

Certo: basta qualche grado più giù, che addio, ho letto che si coagula non so cosa nei centri nervosi, e allora non si svegliano più, o si svegliano scemi e smemorati; qualche grado più su e riprendono coscienza, e allora soffrono tremendamente. Pensi che orrore, signorina: sentirsi tutti congelati, mani, piedi, sangue, cuore, cervello; e non poter muovere un dito, non poter battere le palpebre, non poter mettere fuori un suono per chiedere soccorso!<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101. Translation: "PATRICIA: Young man, do not misjudge me. It seems to me that the moment for an explanation has arrived. You must understand me: in some way I had to get out.

BALDUR: ...and it was just about that? About getting out?

PATRICIA: Just that. To get out of the fridge and to get out of the house of Thörl. [...] I'm truly tired: freeze, defreeze, freeze, defreeze, in the long run it's tiring. Then there's the other stuff.

BALDUR: Other?

PATRICIA: Other, yes. His visits, at night. At thirty-three degrees, barely lukewarm, I was unable to defend myself in any way. And since I stayed silent, of course! He probably thought..."

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88. Translation: "ILSE: (*quietly*) Does she suffer during the defreezing?

PETER: (*like above*) No, as a rule, no. But, exactly, things must be done well, regulations followed precisely. Even during her stay in the fridge, it is essential that the temperature be kept steady between very narrow limits.

ROBERT: Of course: just a few degrees lower, and goodbye, I read that I-don't-know-what coagulates in the nervous centres, and in that case they no longer wake up, or they wake up dumb and forgetful; a few degrees higher and they regain consciousness, and in that case they suffer tremendously. Think of the horror, Miss: feeling completely frozen, hands, feet, blood,



As predicted by Robert, Patricia is unable to move during Peter's nighttime visits to her refrigerator ("A trentatré gradi, appena tiepida, che non potevo difendermi in nessun modo. E siccome io stavo zitta, per forza! lui magari si immaginava..."<sup>548</sup>). This renders her a silent contributor to Peter's satisfaction, as though she literally were an object that existed solely to enhance his pleasure. Although Patricia never confirms it, by emphasizing the similarities between the behaviour of all the Thörl men, she implies that she was not only the victim of Peter's sexual advances, but that of his father as well:

#### PATRICIA

[...] Mi faceva la corte, in quel modo buffo che usava allora: per otto disgeli, mi fece la corte... si direbbe che i Thörl ce l'abbiano nel sangue, in questo, posso dirlo, si rassomigliano tutti. Non hanno... come dire? Non hanno un'idea molto seria del rapporto di tutela...<sup>549</sup>

As submitted in the previous chapter, Patricia's forced subjection to Peter's sexual desire closes the gap between sexuality and instrumentality that Haraway foresees as a potential consequence of technological advancement. In her *Cyborg Manifesto*, Haraway states that the melting of boundaries between human and technology increases the risk that the female body will be seen "as a kind of private satisfaction- and utility-maximizing machine"<sup>550</sup>. Levi's play illustrates the realization of such a risk in the sexual dynamic between Peter and Patricia, whom Peter defrosts outside of the schedule to use as his personal sex toy. Patricia's instrumentality in Peter's sexual gratification is furthermore suggested by the fact that, in performing a series of temperature and pressure adjustments to bring Patricia out of hibernation, it is as though rather than waking her up, Peter were activating her by pushing a multi-step *On* button. This perpetuates the fantasy often portrayed in pornography that female

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heart, brain; and unable to move a finger, unable to bat an eyelid, unable to make a sound to ask for help!"

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101. Translation: "At thirty-three degrees, barely lukewarm, I was unable to defend myself in any way. And since I stayed silent, of course! He probably thought..."

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95. Translation: "PATRICIA: [...] He was courting me, in that funny way he used to then: for eight defreezings, he courted me... one could say that the Thörl men have it in their blood, in this way, I can say, they're all alike. They don't have...how do I put this? They don't consider the guardianship relationship very seriously."

<sup>550</sup> Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", *op. cit.*, p. 169.

sexuality is mechanically activated by male desire. Although Levi's story is set in the future, he thus nevertheless references a dynamic that frequently surfaces in a very contemporary industry. Helen Longino's reflections on the representation of the female body in pornography address the false ideology that holds the female body as an instrument for male pleasure. In her article "Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom: A Closer Look", Longino states:

Women are represented as passive and as slavishly dependent upon men. The role of female characters is limited to the provision of sexual services to men. To the extent that women's sexual pleasure is represented at all, it is subordinated to that of men and is never an end in itself as is the sexual pleasure of men. What pleases women is the use of their bodies to satisfy male desires.<sup>551</sup>

Peter's instrumentalization of Patricia's body for his personal gratification contributes to the perpetuation of the same false ideology propagated in pornography – that the female body exists as an object of desire.

We see a similar dynamic unfold between Nurse Benigno and Alicia in *Hable con ella*. Not only does Benigno play hairdresser and aesthetician with Alicia as one might with a doll, thereby pushing the boundary of his professional duty to look after her sanitary needs, but he ultimately crosses the boundary of the nurse-patient relationship when he rapes her. The particular way in which Almodóvar represents Alicia's rape further reinforces her status as an object for male sexual desire. The director substitutes the rape scene with a sex scene from a silent film that Benigno is retelling the sleeping Alicia. In the film *El amante menguante* (*The Shrinking Lover*) a miniature-sized man, Alfredo (Fele Martínez), enters between the legs of a sleeping woman, Amparo (Paz Vega). The parallels between the two circumstances and the two sets of characters alert readers to their interchangeability, suggesting that the sexual content of *El amante menguante* symbolizes Benigno's rape of Alicia. Benigno identifies himself with Alfredo, referring to him as "un chico un poco gordito como yo"<sup>552</sup>. He also removes Alicia's gown to reveal her bare breasts moments before he

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<sup>551</sup> Helen Longino, "Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom: A Closer Look", in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, ed. Laura Lederer, New York: William Morrow And Company, Inc., 1980, p. 42.

<sup>552</sup> *Hable con ella*, *op. cit.* Translation: "A bit of a chubby guy, like me".

begins to recount the film in which Alfredo, too, undresses Amparo to uncover her naked body.



FIGURE 7. Alfredo (Fele Martínez) kisses the body of the sleeping Amparo (Paz Vega) after undressing her in the silent film *El Amante Menguante* within *Hable con ella*, dir. Pedro Almodóvar, 2002.

Alicia and Amparo are also obvious substitutes for one another – they are both sleeping women on whom men perform sexual acts. The sexually explicit nature of the silent film suggests that Almodóvar has crossed over into the genre of pornography. Enlisting said genre for the representation of Alicia’s rape reinforces her objectification in three ways.

The first way is by jeopardizing her individuality. The interchangeability of Alicia and Amparo in Alodóvar’s film mirrors the interchangeability of female bodies on pornographic websites, where their lack of subjectivity is underscored by their exclusive function as objects for male sexual gratification, rendering their distinction irrelevant.

Secondly, the pornographic silent film reaffirms Mulvey’s assertion that in cinema “the woman displayed has traditionally functioned as erotic object within the screen story and for the spectator within the auditorium”<sup>553</sup>. To a similar conclusion, Susanne Kappeler, author of *The Pornography of Representation*, analyzes the dynamics of the gaze specifically in pornography. She points out that in “the

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<sup>553</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure”, *op. cit.*, p. 838.

pornographic structure of representation [...]the woman object is twice objectified: once as object of the action of the scenario, and once as object of the representation, the object of viewing.”<sup>554</sup> Women’s function in cinema as erotic object for both the characters within the film and for the audience is arguably magnified in pornography where the woman kinesthetically, rather than just visually, caters to both diegetic and extradiegetic male sexual arousal. This in turn confirms Helen Longino’s assertion that the function of the female body in pornography is to ensure male sexual gratification. In fact, it appears that even as a Swiftian caricature, Amparo’s gigantic body becomes an object of desire.

Considering that we are discussing the representation of women in terms of both the erotic and the pornographic we considered it necessary to say a few words on these two much-debated terms. In his book *An Unhurried View of Erotica*, Ralph Ginzburg emphasizes that “no truly satisfactory definition of erotica (and/or pornography [...]) has ever been devised. The concept is entirely too subjective.”<sup>555</sup> In *Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm*, Diana Russell has likewise written about the trouble in distinguishing the two, claiming, “Many people have talked or written about the difficulty of defining pornography and erotica, declaring that ‘one person’s erotica is another person’s pornography.’”<sup>556</sup> It is Matthew Kieran who provides a satisfactory distinction in his book *Revealing Art* and within whose theory we frame the use of the terms erotica and pornography in our dissertation. According to Kieran, the only distinguishing factor between the erotic and the pornographic is the level of explicitness between the two. He claims that

there are many things that are erotic but not pornographic. But that which is pornographic is erotic. The pornographic is a sub-species of the erotic or erotica – it seeks to realise the aim that all erotic works do but via distinctive means: sexually explicit representation.<sup>557</sup>

Contrary to Kieran, Russell distinguishes the two concepts based on additional criteria

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<sup>554</sup> Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p. 52.

<sup>555</sup> Ralph Ginzburg, *An Unhurried View of Erotica*, New York: Helmsman Press, 1958, p. 20 - 21.

<sup>556</sup> Diana Russell, *Against Pornography: The Evidence of Harm*, Berkeley: Russell Publications, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>557</sup> Matthew Kieran, *Revealing Art*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 152.

that accounts for their propagation or subversion of the represented person's objectification. She claims that unlike pornography, erotica is "*sexually suggestive or arousing material that is free of sexism, racism, and homophobia*"<sup>558</sup>. According to Russell, the distinction, then, appears to be that while pornography fosters the objectification of the characters, erotica allows for the subjectivity of the represented person to emerge. Kieran disagrees. He claims that pornography does not have to be sexist, either, and can in fact be conducive to the representation of subjectivity. He states, "It's assumed that we are not interested in the subject, as a person, whom we take a pornographic interest in."<sup>559</sup> However, while according to Kieran many people believe pornography to "preclude[...] the represented person's subjectivity,"<sup>560</sup> he insists, "One way of naturally eliciting sensuous thoughts and arousal is to cultivate interest in someone's viewpoint, interests and desires with respect to sensuousness and arousal."<sup>561</sup> In providing this framework, he argues that pornography, like erotica, can reinforce the "represented person's subjectivity"<sup>562</sup>, suggesting that female subjectivity can theoretically persist in pornographic material. While we might agree with Kieran that pornographic material does not necessarily preclude the representation of female subjectivity, this is certainly not the case in the context of a sexual act performed on an unconscious woman who is unable to give consent. Amparo's – and thus Alicia's – inability to either condone or condemn her rapist's actions instrumentalizes her body within the framework of male sexual desire.

The silent film renders Alicia not only an object within the diegetic world of the film and the extradiegetic world of the audience, but finally an object of viewing within Benigno's mind, as well. This third plane of objectification is enabled by the fact that *El amante menguante* is a reflection of Benigno's fantasy. Benigno has created an imaginary world whereby he believes he and Alicia to be lovers and that Alicia reciprocates his affection despite being in a coma. He tells Marco about his conviction, assuring him, "Alicia y yo nos llevamos mejor que la mayoría de los matrimonios."<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> Diana Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Our de-italicization of "free of" for emphasis.

<sup>559</sup> Matthew Kieran, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>563</sup> *Hable con ella*, *op. cit.* Translation: "Alicia and I get along better than the majority of married couples."

The silent film serves as a visual stand-in for Benigno's perverted perception of their relationship. Recalling that Alicia is a fan of silent films (in a flashback she tells Benigno "Ultimamente he descubierto el cine mudo. Es mi favorito"<sup>564</sup>), Benigno frequents the cinema so as to be able to recount to Alicia the plots of the films he sees, considering that she is unable to watch them for herself. The fact that *El amante menguante* is a silent film leaves room in the audio track for Benigno's voice-over narration when he is retelling the film's plot to Alicia; this positions him as the ultimate storyteller. In such a way Benigno takes on the role of the author, thus reflecting the silent film's function as a representation of his own fantasies. He calls the plot of *El amante menguante* a love story owing to Alfredo's and Amparo's extended romantic involvement prior to their sex scene, that which parallels how he sees his relationship with Alicia. In reality, no such relationship existed between Benigno and Alicia prior to her coma; rather, he stalked her by watching her dance recitals without her knowledge and made an appointment with her father, a psychiatrist, just so he could enter her house. The disjunction between the relationship in Benigno's mind and that in reality mirrors the disjunction between Benigno's rape of Alicia and his perception of the encounter as consensual. In the silent film, although she is asleep, Amparo's facial expressions during the sexual act suggest that she is in ecstasy. At this point, the camera cuts from a close-up shot of Amparo's face to a close-up shot of Alicia's face whereby the metaphorical connection between the two women is underscored. The camera's substitution of Amparo's elated expression with Alicia's neutral expression symbolizes the fact that Benigno perceives Alicia to be enjoying herself like the woman in his fantasy even though the reality is quite different. In reality, the film within the film is a gross misrepresentation of Alicia's experience. The fact that Benigno presents his fantasy in the form of a silent film – that is, Alicia's favourite genre – further suggests that in his mind, her approval of the film equals her approval of his actions, which is again not the case. In this way, it is as though Benigno is speaking for Alicia when he provides consent instead of her, as she is unable to do so herself, thereby instrumentalizing her body for his desires rather than caring for his patient and her real needs.

Like in "La bella addormentata nel frigo" and *Hable con ella*, in *Eternal*

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<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: "Recently I discovered silent films. They're my favourite."

*Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* Patrick and Howard's unethical behaviour negatively impacts Clementine and Mary. Unlike for Peter or Benigno, one cannot define Patrick's or Howard's actions as rape in the strict sense of the term. Nevertheless, the lack of consent to sexual engagement by which rape is defined is a common attribute of the doctor-patient and technician-patient relationships in *Eternal Sunshine*, as well.

The memory removal technician Patrick capitalizes on Clementine's memory loss in order to convince her to date him. In this scenario, Clementine's compliance can be deemed non-consensual as it is informed exclusively by her lack of knowledge of the truth. During the procedure itself, the Lacuna employee falls in love with Clementine because of her beauty, like Basile's king who becomes "enflamed" upon seeing the sleeping Talia. In a subsequent conversation with his co-worker, Patrick reveals that he had crossed the boundary of professional behaviour by taking advantage of Clementine's unconsciousness to steal her lingerie while erasing her memory. Patrick's unethical behaviour during the procedure foreshadows the way in which he exploits Clementine's amnesia once she has forgotten Joel. The technician recovers the bag of Clementine stuff that Joel had discarded prior to his own memory erasure and reuses Joel's gifts, letters, and nicknames for Clementine in order to seduce her.



FIGURE 8. Clementine (Kate Winslet) and Patrick (Elijah Wood) in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michel Gondry, 2004.

On the one hand, although she does not know it, by dating Patrick, Clementine is actually giving consent to Joel since by appropriating Joel's things, Patrick in a sense takes on Joel's identity. Joel himself accuses Patrick of this: "He's stealing my identity,

he stole my stuff. He's seducing my girlfriend with my words and my things!"<sup>565</sup> On the other hand, it is only because Clementine does not know what Patrick has done that she concedes the relationship with him. According to the UK National Health Service, consent is defined by "the capacity to make a voluntary and informed decision."<sup>566</sup> Although Clementine voluntarily agrees to date Patrick, it is only because she is neither informed of what she is consenting to or capable of understanding its full repercussions. By abusing his power as Clementine's memory removal technician, Patrick effectively turns Clementine into his personal marionette, controlling her words and actions with amnesia as the marionettist controls his puppet with strings. Owing to Clementine's inability to consent to a sexual relationship with Patrick while engaging in one, Patrick's actions can be deemed comparable to rape.

Howard's abuse of his role as the head physician at Lacuna similarly leads to Mary engaging in actions to which she did not consent. Mary does not know that she had previously had a sexual relationship with her married boss and that he had coerced her into undergoing the memory removal procedure so that he could erase their affair for the benefit of his marriage. Mary's ignorance of the truth is the reason she continuously praises Howard but, more importantly, instigates a physical relationship with him, as well.



FIGURE 9. Mary (Kirsten Dunst) watching Dr. Howard Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson) in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michel Gondry, 2004.

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<sup>565</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>566</sup> "Consent to Treatment", *NHS*, June 3, 2014, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/consent-to-treatment/pages/introduction.aspx>.



While her memory of their relationship has been erased, her feelings for Howard remain. Although this suggests that emotions are technology-proof, thus perhaps alleviating our fear that an invention such as a memory removal machine could ever fully dehumanize us, Mary's continued love for Howard despite her amnesia has deeper consequences. After watching him resolve a technical error with Joel's procedure, she compliments him saying, "That was beautiful to watch, Howard. Like a surgeon or a concert pianist or something."<sup>567</sup> Moments later she kisses him. Like Clementine, Mary is not responsible for her actions as she lacks the capacity to make an informed decision. While unlike Patrick, Howard is not the one to instigate a physical relationship with Mary following her memory loss, his abuse of the memory removal technology is arguably worse as it leads Mary to instigate the physical relationship herself while unable to consent to it. Had she known the truth, she may have never kissed Howard or admitted her feelings to him. The film reaffirms the likelihood of this by the fact that, when Howard's wife ultimately informs Mary of the truth, Mary immediately renounces Howard and the company and returns to Lacuna's clients their respective files so that they would not suffer the same fate as she did. By influencing a physical relationship with Clementine and Mary without their consent, technically speaking Patrick and Howard sexually abuse their patients, much like Basile's king abuses the sleeping Talia. In one way or another, both Patrick and Howard use the memory removal tool for their personal gain as opposed to for the benefit of the patient, thereby engaging in unethical behaviour. This unprofessionalism instrumentalizes the female body as it culminates in Clementine's and Mary's sexual victimization.

In *Against Our Will*, Susan Brownmiller addresses the question of rape, describing it as a means for man to exercise power<sup>568</sup> in a way that is unavailable to women.<sup>569</sup> By virtue of this distinction, rape polarizes the binary model of gender. Such is the consequence in the works we have discussed thus far in this chapter: the male doctor, nurse, or technician's sexual abuse of the female patient's body results in her instrumentalization. This is a model we have seen in Basile's "Sole, Luna e Talia" where the predatory king sexually violates the sleeping Talia. In *Bella Addormentata*, Dr. Pallido constitutes a departure from this model. In contrast to Peter's, Benigno's,

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<sup>567</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>568</sup> Susan Brownmiller, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Patrick's, and Howard's abuse of power, Dr. Pallido maintains ethical standards while caring for the hospitalized Rossa. His professional behaviour precludes her subjection to the voyeuristic gaze and prevents, rather than catalyzes, her transformation into a tool for male desire, ultimately challenging traditional conceptualizations of *Prince Charming*, as well.

Dr. Pallido is an ethical physician in a hospital of doctors who do not take their medical obligations seriously. He rejects his colleagues' attempts to pressure him into waging on when Eluana Englaro will die ("4/1 che non passa la notte", "Guarda che è un'occasione", "2/1 se muore stanotte. Di più non ti posso dare"<sup>570</sup>). When other doctors advise him to abandon Rossa, calling her a hopeless addict, he does not listen and resultantly saves her life twice, once when she cuts her wrists and once when she tries to jump out of a window. He thereafter keeps watch over her in the hospital room to make sure she is safe. As her rescuer and protector, he appears to fulfil the function of a traditional *Prince Charming*. However, in contrast to the objectifying male gaze of the *Prince Charmings* in the classical Sleeping Beauty tales, Dr. Pallido's is the protective gaze of a doctor. After rescuing Rossa from a suicide attempt, he does not watch her sleep because he is "pigliato de caudo de chelle bellezze"<sup>571</sup> (Basile), because in front of him was "le plus beau spectacle qu'il eût jamais vu" (Perrault), or because "her beauty was so marvelous that he could not take his eyes off her"<sup>572</sup> (Grimm), but to ensure that she does not attempt to kill herself again. When Rossa wakes up, she appears to be skeptical of his intentions, and asks him why he is looking at her: "Perché mi guardi? Che cosa mi guardi a fare?"<sup>573</sup> In line with what she believes to be his motives, she self-destructively invites him to have sex with her: "Vuoi farti una scopata? Adesso è facile."<sup>574</sup> Unlike Peter or Benigno, however, Pallido is not a modern reincarnation of Basile's king – he refuses the opportunity to sleep with a vulnerable woman ("Troppo facile. Non mi interessa."<sup>575</sup>) and reassures Rossa that his intentions are strictly in line with an ethical doctor-patient relationship: "Io sono medico. Se stai male devo curarti.

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<sup>570</sup> *Bella Addormentata*, *op. cit.* Translation: "4/1 that she doesn't survive the night" ; "Listen, it's an opportunity" ; "2/1 if she dies tonight. I can't give you more than that."

<sup>571</sup> Giambattista Basile, *op. cit.* p. ., p. 444. Translation: "her beauty had enflamed him", p. 423.

<sup>572</sup> Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *op. cit.* l. 4093.

<sup>573</sup> *Bella Addormentata*, *op. cit.* Translation: "Why are you looking at me? What are you looking at me for?"

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: "You want to have a fuck? Now it's easy."

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: "Too easy. I'm not interested."

Finito.”<sup>576</sup> Although, unlike his colleagues, Pallido takes his medical obligations seriously, he reveals that his moral compass is informed not only by his professional duty as a doctor, but by his sense of duty as a human being:

Tu sei libera di ammazzarti e io di non farti ammazzare. Mi sentirei un vigliacco se non facessi tutto il possibile per impedirtelo. Ma non solo perché sono un medico, per dovere professionale, ma per umanità, per semplice umanità. Non c'è un'altra parola. Se vedi uno che si butta dalla finestra cerchi di impedirglielo. Non ti chiedi se è giusto o sbagliato. Lo fai e basta.<sup>577</sup>

Owing to the role allocation in *Bella Addormentata* which attributes to the man the part of the rescuer and to the woman that of the damsel in distress, on the one hand the fact that Pallido saves Rossa reaffirms traditional fairy tale gender expectations. On the other hand, if, as per Mulvey's argument, the male gaze constitutes one of the essential ingredients of male/female differentiation (given that the voyeuristic gaze is one-directional), by substituting the objectifying gaze with a protective one, Pallido renders gender inconsequential in the context of the rescuer-rescued dynamic. In this way, he reverts the male doctor-female patient relationship to simply a doctor-patient relationship. He thus breaks the pattern of instrumentalization of the female body and challenges our inclination as critics to interpret Sleeping Beauty from the perspective of traditional fairy tale gender roles and dynamics.

Like in Bellocchio's *Bella Addormentata*, the doctor-patient relationship in Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska* puts into question traditional conceptualizations of the Prince Charming-Damsel in Distress dynamic, teaching us not to make assumptions. However, whereas Pallido constitutes a clear departure from the model presented by Basile's predatory king, thereby positively impacting the patient Rossa, Dr. Hornby blurs the boundaries between dedicated physician and victimizer, consequently both safeguarding Deborah's bodily integrity and rendering her an instrument of male desire. Like the *Prince Charming* in the classical Sleeping Beauty fairy tale who can be victimizer,

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<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “I’m a doctor. If you’re sick I have to treat you. The end.”

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “You’re free to kill yourself and I’m free to prevent you from killing yourself. I would feel like a coward if I didn’t do everything possible to stop you. But not just because I’m a doctor, because of professional duty, but out of humanity, basic humanity. There’s no other word. If you see someone throwing themselves out the window you try to stop them. You don’t ask yourself if it’s right or wrong. You just do it.”

rescuer, or inconsequential, so, too, does Dr. Hornby's role simultaneously lend itself to multiple interpretations. *A Kind of Alaska* thereby renders palpable the rejection of unilateral conclusions inherent to the Sleeping Beauty tradition.

Dr. Hornby is the physician whose dedication saves Deborah's life. When others wanted to give up on her he did not and, like Dr. Pallido, he persisted in treating his patient. He tells her as much:

I have been your doctor for many years. [...] It was I who took the vase from your hands. I lifted you onto this bed, like a corpse. Some wanted to bury you. I forbade it. I have nourished you, watched over you, for all this time. [...] I have never let you go.<sup>578</sup>

His commitment to her care ultimately leads to her physical recovery. Once in possession of the appropriate medicine, he administers the L-DOPA vaccine and brings Deborah out of the sleeping sickness to which she had been victim for twenty-nine years ("I injected you and woke you up"<sup>579</sup>).

Although we are initially inclined to interpret Dr. Hornby's actions as protective and medically motivated, Deborah's accusation of her doctor confuses our original instincts. Her claims that Dr. Hornby "stripped [her]", "had [his] way with [her]", and "made [her] touch [him]"<sup>580</sup> make us wonder whether Dr. Hornby indeed overstepped his professional boundaries. On the one hand, Deborah may be confusing reality and fiction with regards to Dr. Hornby just as she confuses her age and how much time has passed since the onset of her illness. She furthermore divulges her tendency to fictionalize reality when she blankets the facts of her circumstance with a fairy tale filter, calling Dr. Hornby her "Prince Charming" who awakened her with "a magic wand"<sup>581</sup>. We are therefore inclined to interpret Deborah's accusation of Dr. Hornby in light of her confused state rather than an accurate account of events. To a similar effect, as we submitted in the last chapter, Deborah's complaints may not be directed at Dr. Hornby at all, but at her illness.

On the other hand, Pinter does not allow us to arrive at a conclusive judgment by the fact that Hornby's actions always lead down multiple interpretative paths. Although

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<sup>578</sup> Harold Pinter, *op. cit.*, p. 184-185.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160-161.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

Hornby is dedicated, his excessive commitment to Deborah's recovery creates doubt as to whether his intentions are only medically motivated. He tells her:

HORNBY

[...] I have never let you go.

*Silence.*

I have lived with you.

*Pause.*

Your sister Pauline was twelve when you were left for dead. When she was twenty I married her. She is a widow. I have lived with you.<sup>582</sup>

Hornby has abandoned his wife for Deborah to such an extent that he compares his absence from their marriage to his death. This suggests that he perceives his relationship with Deborah beyond the conventional doctor-patient dynamic; indeed, it appears to serve as a substitute for his marriage to Deborah's sister. As Deborah awakens, the first questions Hornby poses to her are "Do you know me?" and "Do you recognise me?"<sup>583</sup> We resultantly question if he is asking in order to gage the functionality of her mental faculties as a doctor might do, or if he is attempting to assess if she remembers the time he spent with her, as a lover might do. Yet he may also be trying to determine how capable she is of identifying him as her abuser. With regards to the latter, the first time Deborah gets out of bed Hornby moves to help her up but Deborah warns him not to touch her by no unclear means:

DEBORAH

[...] Right. I'll get up now.

*He moves to her.*

No! Don't! Don't be ridiculous.

*She eases herself out of the bed, stands, falls. He moves to her.*

No! Don't! Don't! Don't! Don't touch me.<sup>584</sup>

While Deborah's reluctance to receive help may be interpreted as an indication of her desire to be autonomous, Pinter's emphasis of negative commands through exclamatory punctuation ("No! Don't!") suggests that Deborah's reaction to being touched by Hornby is inordinately negative. This points to an ulterior motive behind Deborah's behaviour, for example, a previous unpleasant experience being touched by her doctor.

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<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172-173.

Pinter emphasizes this possibility by blurring the distinction between the literal and the symbolic in the image of Dr. Hornby administering the L-DOPA vaccine to Deborah. The vaccine not only represents Dr. Hornby's medical treatment of Deborah, but as a phallic symbol that expels fluid into the female body, it reproduces the image of intercourse, thereby symbolizing a sexual act that may or may not have occurred between the patient and the vaccine's administrator. The dynamics of the gaze in *A Kind of Alaska* similarly render inconclusive to what extent Dr. Hornby sexually objectifies his patient. On multiple occasions the stage directions indicate that he is looking at Deborah ("*He watches her*"<sup>585</sup>, "*He retreats, watching*"<sup>586</sup>), but at no point does Pinter elaborate on the characteristics of this gaze: like that of Pallido, it may be protective; like that of Benigno, it may be sexualizing. On stage, Pinter leaves the decision to the discretion of the director, but the dramatic script itself does not exclude either possibility.

On each occasion, Pinter prevents the reader from reaching a conclusive decision regarding Hornby's and Deborah's relationship. Why is it important that we not know for certain what happens? As Maurice Charney observes in his article "Pinter's Fractured Discourse in *The Homecoming*" (2011/2012), unverifiability is a staple of the Pinteresque and serves to emphasize the many layers of meaning beneath the written word:

Pinter strongly objected to providing any narrative justification, or verification, for what happens, and refused, on principle, to explain what his plays were about [...].<sup>587</sup>

Pinter's preference for non-verifiable experience is crucial to his dramatic method, and it is significant how skeptical he is of articulate expression, [...]. Pinter thought of his dialogue as naturalistic speech, but not completely so. It also has to express truths that lie behind and beneath language.<sup>588</sup>

Pinter himself has discussed the significance of ambiguous language in his works in

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<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>587</sup> Maurice Charney, "Pinter's Fractured Discourse in *The Homecoming*", in *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*, 21.2-3, 2011/2012, p. 241, accessed November 18, 2016, available at <http://www.connotations.uni-tuebingen.de/charney02123.htm>.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

“Writing for the Theatre” (1962), calling attention to its role in underscoring the various meanings it conceals:

Language [...] is a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unspoken. My characters tell me so much and no more, with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity of what they say lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore. You and I, the characters which grow on a page, most of the time we're inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling. But it's out of these attributes that a language arises. A language, I repeat, where under what is said, another thing is being said.<sup>589</sup>

Pinter thus uses unverifiability as a tool to emphasize that “another thing is being said” beneath the surface meaning of his characters’ language. If we cannot verify the characters’ biographical data (as even the author himself admits he cannot), we are forced to ponder what that other thing might be, thereby acknowledging that the circumstance is open to multiple interpretations. In other words, we are forced to take a second look instead of relying on univocal judgments. Such is the approach we took with regards to Dr. Hornby, who emerged as both an ethical physician and as a sexual victimizer, resultantly impacting both positively and negatively Deborah’s subjectivity.

Pinter’s interception of unilateral judgments gives body to a position of third-wave feminist philosophy: that the subject is multiple and must be comprehended as such if we are to develop a tenable theory of subjectivity. Although multiplicity constitutes an important characteristic of Pinter’s *A Kind of Alaska*, it is not unique to Pinter’s corpus. Rather, his authorial approach only concretizes what we have already seen in both classical Sleeping Beauty tales and their hypertexts: the rejection of one-sided conclusions.

Concerning the multiple nature of contemporary hypertexts, our investigation thus far has revealed how the impact of science and technology on female subjectivity is not univocal, but varies depending on the angle from which we observe it or the medical category we put into focus. While in the previous chapter we addressed the effects of

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<sup>589</sup> Harold Pinter, “Writing for the Theatre”, *Various Voices: Prose, Poetry, Politics*, New York: Grove, 1998, p. 19, quoted in Maurice Charney, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

medical technology on female subjectivity, in this chapter we looked at how the medical figure can impact the agency of the female patient. We observed that while the doctor, nurse, and technician tend to impact negatively the bodily agency of the female patient in “La bella addormentata nel frigo”, *Hable con ella*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, in *Bella Addormentata* the doctor’s actions conversely enable the patient to occupy a subject-position. In *A Kind of Alaska*, Pinter, as we have pointed out, blurs the boundaries of positive and negative influence.

While the male doctor-female patient relationship in these works appears to reinforce the traditional fairy tale distribution of gender (with the exception of *Bella Addormentata* which removes gender from the rescuer-rescued dichotomy), it also endorses Fox Keller’s contention that men have monopolized the domain of science. Fox Keller importantly observes, however, that there is a distinction to be made between the “white, middle-class men” that have formulated science, and the ideology that resulted from it.<sup>590</sup> The domination of science by male professionals has produced a medical discourse that tends to provide a narrow and inaccurate portrayal of the female experience of the body. This is particularly true of medical discourse on mental illness, which remains one of the most gender biased diagnostic categories. In the next chapter we will address how creative discourse on the topic of mental illness from the patient’s perspective can challenge the limits of traditional medical discourse, constructing a new image of the female body and, consequently, of female subjectivity.

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<sup>590</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, *op. cit.*, p. 6-7.



### 3.4 Medical Discourse vs. Patient Discourse: Creativity and the Reconceptualization of Mental Illness

Feminist investigations into the relationship between science and gender have revealed that scientific discourse has historically been contaminated by a gender bias that imposes homogenizing definitions on the female body from a male ideological perspective. In her book *Reflections on Gender and Science*, Evelyn Fox Keller recognizes that in the male-dominated field of science, gendered vocabulary relegates women to the realm of the emotional and men to that of the intellectual, in turn impacting social constructions of gender.<sup>591</sup> In *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Thomas Laqueur addresses how medical discourse has been used in the service of sexual politics that justify male dominance, for example, in post-Enlightenment discourses on reproduction where the fact that “female sexual arousal bec[a]me irrelevant to an understanding of conception”<sup>592</sup> was used to endorse a hierarchical classification of sex. The discourse of psychopathology has also contributed to the perpetuation of a dichotomous conceptualization of gender. As Jane Ussher points out in her book *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience*, hysteria has been viewed as a typically female disorder and was “the most commonly diagnosed ‘female malady’ of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”<sup>593</sup> While feminist historians today recognize cultural ideology as one of the provocations of hysteria<sup>594</sup>, they also acknowledge its diagnosis as an act of discrimination. In *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961), Michel Foucault calls attention to how the modern conceptualization of madness supports a disjunction between *the mad* and *the rational* that justifies the dominance of the latter over the former. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault moreover argues that the speaking subject – that is, the discourse of psychopathology – forms and thus appropriates the object of its discourse – that is, *the mad*. In his analysis, Foucault

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<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>592</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>593</sup> Jane Ussher, *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience*, London and New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 8.

<sup>594</sup> Susan Bordo, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

addresses the patriarchal nature of this power dynamic. As summarized by John Derby in his article “Animality-Patriarchy in Mental Disability Representations”, “Foucault’s [...] chief concern is the role of the psychiatrist as a paternalistic authority over people with mental disability. [...] He] associates patriarchy with institutionalized psychiatry”<sup>595</sup>. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Foucault discusses the effects of this patriarchal power dynamic on women, suggesting that the “*hysterization of women’s bodies*” was a way through which medical authorities exerted power over the female body to ensure what was deemed its appropriate function in the social body, in the family space, and in the life of children.<sup>596</sup> In her article on the political appropriation of hysteria in the late nineteenth century, Laura Briggs similarly discusses the widespread opinion in feminist scholarship that hysteria was a diagnostic tactic intended to keep women in the home after industrialization and urbanization introduced changes in the workforce.<sup>597</sup> She calls hysteria “a diagnostic gesture of dismissal of women as competent participants in public life [...] and a warning about the dangerous consequences for women engaging in ‘unfeminine’ behaviour.”<sup>598</sup> A look into the history of scientific discourse suggests that it has tended to frame the female experience of the body for male political gain.

While feminist writers continue to question the political motives behind diagnoses of hysteria (today an outdated diagnostic category), present-day medical discourse on mental illness still provides a narrow and inaccurate account of the female experience of the body. The difference between medical discourse and the medical figure should here be underlined: by medical discourse we intend a discourse espoused by a specialist or specialists on a given medical issue as distinct from the attitude of a practitioner towards an individual patient, like we investigated in the previous chapter. Following Foucault, feminist scholars continued to investigate the question of madness in women. Ussher perceives a continuity of female diagnoses of madness throughout the ages, pointing out, “Women outnumber men in diagnoses of madness, from the ‘hysteria’ of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to ‘neurotic’ and mood disorders in

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<sup>595</sup> John Derby, “Animality-Patriarchy in Mental Disability Representations”, in *Visual Culture and Gender*, Vol. 9, 2014, p. 21, accessed March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016, <http://vcg.emitto.net/>.

<sup>596</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p. 104.

<sup>597</sup> Laura Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

the twentieth and twenty-first.”<sup>599</sup> According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the discrepancy in male and female diagnostic patterns can be attributed to this day to “[g]ender stereotypes regarding proneness to emotional problems in women”<sup>600</sup>. Such stereotypes are dangerous not only because of the cultural constructions of gender they perpetuate, but also because of their influence on courses of treatment. The WHO states, “Female gender is a significant predictor of being prescribed mood altering psychotropic drugs.”<sup>601</sup> Women are also more likely to be hospitalized, restrained, or given electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) and psychosurgery.<sup>602</sup>

Skepticism regarding the motives behind diagnosing women with mental illness has prompted many feminist theorists to question the integrity of modern psychiatry as a system. To this effect, Ussher denounces the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) developed by the American Psychiatric Association. Drawing on Foucault’s contention that discourses should be viewed as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak”<sup>603</sup>, Ussher claims that

the DSM not only define[s] the boundaries of what it means to have a “disordered” mind, but also [...] legitimi[zes] the right of particular experts to [...] defin[e] which particular “truths” are accepted as explanations for [woman’s] disordered state.<sup>604</sup>

While we do not intend, like Ussher, to question the integrity of the whole of modern psychiatry, our objective is to investigate, in a literary and cinematic forum, instances of gender bias within that system that fail to give body to women’s truth of their experience.

In this chapter, we will put different perspectives into play by focusing on the conceptualization of mental illness from the viewpoint of traditional medical discourse and its reconceptualization from the point of view of the female patient. Our choice to investigate the relationship between gender and mental illness specifically is predicated

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<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>600</sup> “Gender and women’s mental health”, *World Health Organization*, 2016, accessed January 18, 2016, [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/).

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> Jane Ussher, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>603</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 54.

<sup>604</sup> Jane Ussher, *op. cit.*, p. 4-5.

not only on the fact that mental health continues to be one of the most gender biased diagnostic categories, but also because the different aspects of a woman's experience of mental illness are reflected in the works in our contemporary corpus. In our analysis of Sleeping Beauty hypo and hypertexts so far, we have witnessed the metaphorical flexibility of different Sleeping Beauty elements. Thus, in classical versions of the tale we have interpreted Sleeping Beauty's *Long and Unnatural Sleep* as a punishment for female transgression, as an expression of female sexual agency, and as a period of mental and physical maturation. In the form of cryogenic hibernation, a coma, or amnesia, to name a few of its manifestations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Sleeping Beauty's *Long and Unnatural Sleep* again revealed both woman's powerlessness and her capacity for bodily agency. In the three works we will examine in this chapter, the *Long and Unnatural Sleep* comes to symbolize both the vulnerability and power inherent to women's experience of mental illness.

Initially, each work calls attention to the portrayal of the female experience of mental illness from the point of view of medical discourse that, owing to its narrow perspective, precludes the representation of agency in the patient. The representation of medical discourse in these works of fiction is distinct from how it typically appears in medical journals or conferences. Rather than emerging in the form of an article or a speech, sometimes the symbolic presence of medical discourse can be recognized in the viewpoint of a laic. For example, in "The Lady of the House of Love", author Angela Carter establishes a relationship between the character of the soldier and medical discourse first by emphasizing the soldier's affinity to the domain of science, and then by attributing to him the role of the Countess's diagnostician. When the soldier diagnoses the Countess with hysteria, while she instead appears to be suffering from an eating disorder, we are reminded of the limits of medical discourse in speaking for the female body. In our corpus, medical discourse also symbolically emerges as an implicit cause behind the attitudes of individuals towards a patient and the treatment options available to her. Women are still underrepresented in medical discourse on addiction, due to which not only do treatment options fail to address challenges particular to women, but the absence of female addicts in research on addiction perpetuates the viewpoint that substance abuse is a male problem, in turn propagating stigma for women who have substance abuse issues. In Marco Bellocchio's *Bella Addormentata*,

the disparaging attitude of Dr. Pallido's colleagues towards Rossa, a woman addicted to heroin, reflects both the stigma associated with female addiction and medical limits in treating it. Medical discourse can also be embodied in the practices of an institution. In Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Lacuna offers the memory-erasing procedure as a solution to heartache, whereby heartache becomes a diagnostic category by virtue of the fact that it is surgically treated. However, Lacuna offers the surgical solution to every client, meanwhile failing to establish whether heartache is the only underlying issue behind their clients' desire to have their memory erased. When they offer the memory removal procedure to Clementine without noticing that her symptoms meanwhile suggest a medical diagnosis closer to bipolar disorder, they illustrate an incorrect picture of Clementine's relationship with mental illness. Their superficial approach to patient diagnostics is reminiscent of the lack of research into the psychology of patients on the part of plastic surgery associations who, by blindly offering a cosmetic solution, may be masking other issues. Carter, Bellocchio, and Gondry all invite an investigation into how medical discourse can inaccurately represent women's experience with mental illness. This is detrimental above all because medical discourse thus fails to acknowledge the different layers of meaning inherent to the concept of illness that allow for a representation of the female patient not just as a vulnerable victim, but also as an active agent. The omission of this possibility is predicated on the one-sided nature of medical discourse, which neglects the personal testimony of the female patient that could, instead, contribute to a more authentic portrayal.

In contemporary feminist discourse, philosophers challenge the theoretical practices that exclude the individual female experience. Rosi Braidotti, for one, contests the homogenizing viewpoint that considers all women as subjugated, and defends the concept of *situated knowledge* which places value on the subjective experience of each woman. Judith Butler also rejects univocal conceptualizations of the female experience by calling attention to the continuity of the term "woman", referring to it as a term "in process" without beginning or end.<sup>605</sup> Like Braidotti and Butler, Donna Haraway challenges the theoretical approach that sees women's experience amassed under umbrella descriptions, arguing:

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<sup>605</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

There is nothing about being “female” that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as “being” female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices.<sup>606</sup>

Feminist theory has been fundamental in contesting reified fallacies about women’s common subjugated experience because it allocates value to the individual voice of each woman.

In this chapter, we will investigate to what extent each female patient uses her voice to give an account of her personal experience of mental illness, thereby challenging her status as what Foucault calls the object formed by medical discourse by becoming, instead, the speaking subject. By giving voice to her subjective experience, the female patient engages in a creative discourse: insofar as creativity can be defined as the ability to create something both new and meaningful<sup>607</sup>, by creating a new image of herself distinct from the objectifying description of medical discourse, the patient’s language can be regarded as creative. This act of challenging the traditional mode of representation renders the female patient’s creative discourse at once political. Hélène Cixous famously elaborated on the concept of creativity as political in her essay “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975), in which she described how women’s creative expression of themselves through writing would challenge their repression in the writing of the masculine economy.<sup>608</sup> She referred to this creative and political process as *écriture féminine*, or, women’s writing.<sup>609</sup> Through an analysis of the Countess, Rossa, and Clementine, we will investigate to what extent the female patient engages in a creative discourse that challenges the dismissal of her capacity for agency in medical discourse. In our study of “The Lady of the House of Love”, we will see how the Countess’s creative discourse on anorexia nervosa allows her to contest the traditional misconception that the disordered body is a weak body, vindicating it as a site of affirmation of power. Conversely, in *Bella Addormentata*, Rossa’s failure to articulate her struggle with addiction prevents her from disentangling her body from the

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<sup>606</sup> Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>607</sup> *Dictionary.com*, s.v. “Creativity”, accessed March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016, *Dictionary.com Unabridged*, Random House, Inc., <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/creativity>.

<sup>608</sup> Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”, trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, in *Signs*, 1.4, Summer, 1976, p. 879.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 875.

objectifying discourse of psychopathology and establishing her subjecthood. In *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, whether Clementine is able to give a distinct voice to her experience remains ambiguous by the closing credits; however, the relationship established between the character and the viewer throughout the course of the film invites each female spectator to decide for her.

In “The Lady of the House of Love”, the discrepancy between the soldier’s perception of the Countess and the Countess’s personal testimony of her illness attests to the gap that medical discourse leaves in speaking for the female experience of the body and the power of creative discourse on the part of the female patient to fill that gap.

Carter sets up the soldier’s role as a mouthpiece for medical discourse by first establishing his affinity to the masculine domain of science. The soldier’s arrival on bicycle appears to endorse the traditional gendered association between men and science, that which Fox Keller calls “the historic conjunction of science and masculinity”, and, correspondingly, “the equally historic disjunction between science and femininity.”<sup>610</sup> The passage in Carter’s tale that highlights this dichotomy reads as follows:

Although so young, he is also rational. He has chosen the most rational mode of transport in the world for his trip around the Carpathians. [...T]he bicycle is the product of pure reason applied to motion. Geometry at the service of man. Give me two spheres and a straight line and I will show you how far I can take them.<sup>611</sup>

As Fox Keller contends, science, the domain of reason and the rational, “has been the preserve of men.”<sup>612</sup> Not only does the soldier’s choice of “the most rational mode of transport”, “a product of pure reason”, suggest that he, too, belongs to the realm of science, but Carter’s emphasis of the bicycle’s phallic shape (“two spheres and a straight line”) leaves little doubt as to the gender to whom that realm has traditionally belonged. In contrast to the bicycle’s phallic associations, the mammary imagery of the Carpathian mountains evokes the ever-traditional connection of femininity to nature as

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<sup>610</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, *op. cit.*, p.4

<sup>611</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>612</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, p. 7.

though perpetuating the cultural myth that negates the connection of femininity to science.

Once Carter has established the soldier as a representative of the scientific field, she appears to position him as the mouthpiece for medical discourse by attributing to him the role of the Countess's diagnostician. He declares, "[S]he will be treated for nervous hysteria. Then [we shall take her] to an eye specialist, for her photophobia, and to a dentist to put her teeth into better shape."<sup>613</sup> Although the soldier has interpreted the Countess's symptoms as indications of hysteria, evidence suggests that the Countess is suffering from an eating disorder, most closely identifiable as anorexia nervosa.

The DSM-5 (2013), the fifth and most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, defines feeding and eating disorders in the following way:

Feeding and eating disorders are characterized by a persistent disturbance of eating or eating-related behavior that results in the altered consumption or absorption of food and that significantly impairs physical health or psychosocial functioning.<sup>614</sup>

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder that can more specifically be characterized by a restriction of caloric intake, sometimes accompanied by binge-eating and/or purging behaviour, to the point of reaching "a significantly low body weight in the context of age, sex, developmental trajectory, and physical health"<sup>615</sup>. An analysis of "The Lady of the House of Love" reveals that many of the physical and psychological diagnostic features of anorexia nervosa can be identified among the Countess's symptoms. According to the DSM-5, "The most remarkable finding on physical examination [of the anorexic patient] is emaciation."<sup>616</sup> This symptom is mirrored in Carter's reference to the Countess's skeletal frame: "a girl with the fragility of the skeleton of a moth, so thin, so frail that her dress seemed [...] to hang suspended, as if untenanted in the dank air, a fabulous lending, a self-articulated garment in which she lived like a ghost in a

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<sup>613</sup> Angela Carter, "The Lady of the House of Love", *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>614</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition, Washington and London: American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 329.

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.



machine”<sup>617</sup>; “a hand so slender you could almost see the frail net of bone beneath the translucent skin”<sup>618</sup>; “the bedizened scarecrow”<sup>619</sup>. Physical symptoms of anorexia are accompanied by a host of characteristic psychological symptoms. Lack of control characterizes binge-eating episodes, which, according to the DSM-5, are thus defined:

An occurrence of excessive food consumption must be accompanied by a sense of lack of control [...] to be considered an episode of binge eating. An indicator of loss of control is the inability to refrain from eating or to stop eating once started.<sup>620</sup>

Such appears to be the Countess’s attitude towards food, as she only eats because she cannot help herself:

She loathes the food she eats; she would have liked to take the rabbits home with her, feed them on lettuce, pet them and make them a nest in her red-and-black chinoiserie escritoire, but hunger always overcomes her.<sup>621</sup>

Her attempts to refrain from eating in turn recall the anorectic’s restriction of caloric intake. Once she gives in to the hunger, guilt and shame, emotions typically present following bingeing episodes<sup>622</sup>, appear. After feeding, the countess “will creep home, *whimpering*, with blood smeared on her cheeks”<sup>623</sup>, as though regretting what she had done. It is suggested that she is ashamed by the fact she makes sure to hide any evidence, reiterating the DSM-5’s statement that “[b]inge eating usually occurs in secrecy or as inconspicuously as possible”<sup>624</sup>: “Afterwards, her governess will tidy the remains into a neat pile and wrap it in its own discarded clothes. This mortal parcel she then discreetly buries in the garden.”<sup>625</sup> Aside from eating-related behaviours, the DSM-5 outlines additional symptoms associated with anorexia but not directly related to food

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<sup>617</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>620</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

<sup>621</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>622</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 345 and p. 350.

<sup>623</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 95. Our italics.

<sup>624</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

<sup>625</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

consumption. The countess's "habitual tormented somnambulism"<sup>626</sup> mirrors the DSM-5's identification of insomnia in many individuals suffering from anorexia.<sup>627</sup> The prominence of obsessive-compulsive features, "both related and unrelated to food", in individuals with anorexia<sup>628</sup> is reflected in the Countess's obsessive consultation of tarot cards, underscored by the use of adverbs suggesting repetitive behaviour: "She resorts to the magic comfort of the Tarot pack and shuffles the cards, lays them out, reads them, gathers them up with a sigh, shuffles them *again, constantly* constructing hypotheses about a future which is irreversible"<sup>629</sup>; "she counts out the Tarot cards, *ceaselessly* construing a constellation of possibilities."<sup>630</sup> Although the male authority in the story has diagnosed her with hysteria, the physical and mental symptoms exhibited by the Countess suggest that she is suffering from what can be termed anorexia nervosa.

The soldier's misinterpretation of the Countess's symptoms is symbolic of how traditional medical discourse does not always provide an accurate representation of the female body. It is also significant that hysteria is at the centre of the misdiagnosis. On the one hand, both hysteria and anorexia have been used to support the cultural mythology that the female body is inferior to the male body. Like hysteria, anorexia has been labelled a "female" illness due to its prevalence in women, a 10:1 female to male ratio according to the DSM-5<sup>631</sup> (although it should be noted that the large discrepancy between female and male sufferers of anorexia can be attributed at least partly to men's fear of being stigmatized for having what is considered a woman's illness and thus failing to come forward<sup>632</sup>). As a "female" illness, anorexia has been appropriated in the service of promoting gender bias. We have already cited Cecilia Åsberg's discussion of how "female" illnesses including hysteria and anorexia have been appropriated in medical discourse to illustrate the female body as inherently weaker than that of the man. In *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*, Emily Martin addresses how, in fact, the very state of being a woman has historically been described in terms of illness, commenting, for example, how in nineteenth-century medical

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<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>627</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

<sup>629</sup> Angela Carter, "The Lady of the House of Love", *op. cit.*, p. 95. Our italics.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93. Our italics.

<sup>631</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

<sup>632</sup> "Males and Eating Disorders", *National Eating Disorders Association*, accessed January 20, 2016, <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/males-and-eating-disorders>.

discourse menstruation was regarded as “debilitating” and menstruation and menopause were often considered “pathological”<sup>633</sup>. The soldier’s mission to turn the Countess “into the lovely girl she is” and “cure her of all these nightmares”<sup>634</sup> supports the medical mythology that illustrates the female body as a powerless entity – at least without outside male intervention.

It is important to recognize that eating disorders are first and foremost a dangerous and deadly disease with the highest mortality rate of any mental illness.<sup>635</sup> However, they should not be regarded as only manifestations of weakness. Like hysteria, anorexia has recently been reclaimed in feminist discourse as a form of political protest and as such as a source of power. As Cecily Devereux points out in her article “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender Revisited: The Case of the Second Wave”, in feminist discourse, hysteria came to be recognized as “an embodied index of forms of oppression”<sup>636</sup>. Inasmuch as hysteria can be considered a product of oppression, it becomes a form of protest against it, “a specifically feminine pathology that speaks to *and* against patriarchy”<sup>637</sup>, as argued by Elaine Showalter in her article “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender”. Showalter discusses how feminist discourse has reclaimed hysteria as “a specifically feminine protolanguage, communicating through the body messages that cannot be verbalized.”<sup>638</sup> As such, hysteria can function “as a space for marking feminist reaction and resistance to the patriarchal oppression it indexed”<sup>639</sup>. In a similar way, anorexia can be considered a language of political protest. While eating disorders can never be exclusively attributed to cultural factors, societal pressure on women to be thin and patriarchal control of the female body have contributed to the development and spreading of anorexia nervosa. Rather than only being a manifestation of this oppression, the anorexic body carries with it a deeper political message in its

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<sup>633</sup> Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001, p. 35.

<sup>634</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>635</sup> National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, <http://www.anad.org/get-information/about-eating-disorders/eating-disorders-statistics/>

<sup>636</sup> Cecily Devereux, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>637</sup> Elaine Showalter, “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender”, in *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, ed. Sander Gilman et al., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p. 286. Our italics.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>639</sup> Cecily Devereux, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

struggle against ideological constructions of femininity. Susan Bordo attests to the variety of connotations of the anorexic body, stating:

For the feminist analyst, [...] the disordered body, like all bodies, is engaged in a process of making meaning [...]. From this perspective, anorexia [...] is never merely regressive, never merely a fall into illness and chaos. Nor is it facilitated simply by bedazzlement by cultural images, “indoctrination” by what happens, arbitrarily, to be in fashion at this time. Rather, the “relentless pursuit of excessive thinness”<sup>640</sup> is an attempt to embody certain values, to create a body that will speak for the self in a meaningful and powerful way.<sup>641</sup>

Because “[f]emale slenderness [...] has a wide range of sometimes contradictory meanings”<sup>642</sup>, Bordo rejects univocal interpretations of anorexia, emphasizing how “interpreting anorexia requires [...] awareness of the many layers of cultural signification that are crystallized in the disorder.”<sup>643</sup> Rosi Braidotti has also interpreted anorexia and bulimia beyond their designation as oppressive illnesses. She claims that they are clear symptoms that bodies are malfunctioning under the current system, thereby symbolizing breakdowns within that system.<sup>644</sup> Rather than only being manifestations of disorder, malfunctioning bodies, therefore, carry with them a deeper political message.

This message cannot surface in the soldier’s superficial diagnosis of the Countess. Nor can it emanate from our diagnosis of the Countess based on the diagnostic criteria of anorexia offered by the DSM-5, a diagnosis that, while more individualized than that of the soldier, is still external and therefore exclusionary. The language of medical discourse – a language that, according to Foucault, establishes its superiority over the object of which it speaks – excludes the subjective experience of the patient. Instead, the female patient’s personal testimony of her illness can only be embodied in a creative discourse, which, insofar as it challenges the traditional modes of representation, creates a space for reaction and resistance.

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<sup>640</sup> Hilde Bruch, *The Golden Cage: The Enigma of Anorexia Nervosa*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. xxi.

<sup>641</sup> Susan Bordo, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>644</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

The Countess's creative capacity emerges through Carter's use of third person subjective narration. This is a stylistic choice that allots a quality of intimacy to narrative descriptions making it seem as though the Countess herself were speaking. Carter's narrative voice therefore does not appear to substitute the voice of the Countess, like Basile's paraphrasing of Talia seems to. At most, it alludes to an underlying connection between the protagonist and the author, one which may be predicated on the fact that Carter, like the Countess, battled anorexia.<sup>645</sup>

In reading "The Lady of the House of Love", one almost feels as though they were reading the Countess's diary. Her descriptions of different aspects of her struggle with anorexia give voice to her personal experience of the illness. Owing to her idealization of thinness, the anorexic woman perceives beauty in the emaciated body. At the same time, she knows she is sick and that her perception is thus manipulated. So the Countess is aware that her perception of herself as beautiful is a symptom of her illness:

She is so beautiful she is unnatural; her beauty is an abnormality, a deformity, for none of her features exhibit any of those touching imperfections that reconcile us to the imperfection of the human condition. Her beauty is a symptom of her disorder, of her soullessness.<sup>646</sup>

Through her compulsive consultation of tarot cards, it is almost as though she were describing the anorectic's inability to refrain from playing the calorie-counting game, pouring over a journal of numbers, checking them "again, constantly"<sup>647</sup>, "ceaselessly"<sup>648</sup>, because of their "magic comfort"<sup>649</sup>. Moreover, the anorexic woman's desire for an ever-decreasing body size is symbolized in the Countess's lack of reflection, a cross-over metaphor from vampire lore, as though the mirror represented the anorectic's ultimate goal of incorporeality: "a cracked mirror suspended from a wall does not reflect a presence"<sup>650</sup>. At the same time, this bodily absence is indicative of the social condition of being female, predicated on women's occupation of as little space as

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<sup>645</sup> Susannah Clapp, "Angela Carter: A portrait in postcards", *The Guardian*, January 22, 2012, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jan/22/angela-carter-postcards-susannah-clapp>.

<sup>646</sup> Angela Carter, "The Lady of the House of Love", *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

possible. According to Bourdieu,

[F]emale submissiveness seems to find a natural translation in bending, stooping, lowering oneself, “submitting” – curved and supple postures and the associated docility being seen as appropriate to women [...a]s if femininity were measured by the art of “shrinking” [...].<sup>651</sup>

On the one hand, by ceaselessly willing a smaller self, the anorectic may be perceived as a patriarchal victory. In any case, she is perceived as a product of patriarchal ideology – symbolized in Carter’s text by the Countess’s inheritance of her vampiric condition from the patriarch, her farther (“[S]he is the last bud of the poison tree that sprang from the loins of Vlad the Impaler”<sup>652</sup>). However, inasmuch as the shrinking female body responds to patriarchal demands on femininity, it also rejects them. The quality of being invisible connotes the statement “I feel invisible”, thus serving as political ammunition of the marginalized speaking back. So the Countess speaks back by rejecting her condition. She describes herself as a prisoner of her castle (“a huge, spiked wall that incarcerates her in the castle”<sup>653</sup>), but her physical incarceration can alternatively be interpreted as a metaphor for her imprisonment in her illness. Her descriptions of the rotting interior of her room can thus be read as a reflection of her awareness of her mental deterioration:

Depredations of rot and fungus everywhere. The unlit chandelier is so heavy with dust the individual prisms no longer show any shapes; industrious spiders have woven canopies in the corners of this ornate and rotting place, have trapped the porcelain vases on the mantelpiece in soft grey nets.<sup>654</sup>

Her subjective testimony speaks to how the anorexic woman can feel dehumanized, a deeply personal experience of the self that a manual cannot reproduce. Thus the Countess casts herself in a non-human body: “When the back door opens, the Countess will sniff the air and howl. She drops, now, on all fours. Crouching, quivering, she catches the scent of her prey”<sup>655</sup>; “She has no mouth with which to kiss, no hands with

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<sup>651</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 27-28.

<sup>652</sup> Angela Carter, “The Lady of the House of Love”, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

which to caress, only the fangs and talons of a beast of prey.”<sup>656</sup> Her death at the end of the tale appears to suggest that only once she is dead can she regain her humanity, thereby seemingly reflecting the anorexic woman’s pessimism with regards to being cured while she is alive: “In death, she looked far older, less beautiful and so, for the first time, fully human.”<sup>657</sup> She recognizes that she is playing a role assigned to her by external forces (“And she is herself a cave full of echoes, she is a system of repetitions, she is a closed circuit”) and questions her capacity to break free (“Can a bird sing only the song it knows or can it learn a new song?”<sup>658</sup>), thereby bridging the gap between personal, creative testimony and political feminist discourse.

It is not incidental that Carter casts the Countess in the role of the vampire figure. Many symptoms of anorexia coincide with characteristics typically associated with vampires, including a lack of reflection, uncontrollable hunger, identification and self-identification as non-human or *Other*. The metaphoric compatibility between the anorectic and the vampire is not a novelty in academic discourse. Emma Domínguez-Rué has brought the similarities to our attention in her article “Sins of the flesh: anorexia, eroticism and the female vampire in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (2010) in which she proposes that the vampire’s monstrous eating is an exaggerated representation of anorexia in Victorian culture.<sup>659</sup> In “Dieting and Damnation: Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*” (1997), Sandra Tomc cites self-denial and strict bodily control as common attributes of the anorectic and the vampire attempting to deny its cravings.<sup>660</sup> Speaking more broadly, the vampire’s association with anorexia can be attributed to its metaphoric versatility. Sarah Sceats attributes the vampire’s versatility to its state of being “undead”. “Being ‘undead’”, claims Sceats, “involves an indeterminate, permanently ambiguous metaphysical condition that resonates with questions about embodiment and definition”<sup>661</sup>. Sleeping Beauty’s *Long and Unnatural Sleep* similarly casts her into a metaphorically flexible state between life and death that lends itself to

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<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>659</sup> Domínguez-Rué, Emma. “Sins of the Flesh: Anorexia, Eroticism and the Female Vampire in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*”, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 19.3, 2010, p. 297-308.

<sup>660</sup> Sandra Tomc, “Dieting and Damnation: Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*”, in *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, eds. Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, p. 104.

<sup>661</sup> Sarah Sceats, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

multiple interpretations, suggesting why Carter's employment of the vampire figure complements the Sleeping Beauty figure in her text, both of which, in turn, give body to woman's experience of anorexia. In this way, the vampire functions as a physical embodiment of the eating disorder, exemplifying David Punter's contention in *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* that vampires can be interpreted as "recognizable embodiments of psychological features"<sup>662</sup>. Sceats confirms that it is in this key that Carter employs the figure of the vampire in her tale, arguing, "Carter plays with vampirism as a way of exploring the murky recesses of the contemporary psyche, foregrounding what is habitually covert, taboo, or suppressed."<sup>663</sup>

As we have shown, it is not only the Countess's status as a vampire that foregrounds a habitually hidden aspect of the psyche. Rather, it is the Countess's creative discourse that reveals a usually uninvestigated side of mental illness, that is, the woman's subjective experience. This allows her to reclaim the anorexic body as a site of political resistance, thereby challenging the view propagated in medical discourse of the woman as only and ever a victim of her illness.

In contrast to the Countess, in Marco Bellocchio's *Bella Addormentata* Rossa fails to give voice to her personal experience, due to which her struggle with mental illness remains concealed in the one-sided discourse of psychopathology.

Rossa is a thirty-something-year-old woman struggling with heroin addiction. Unlike the Countess whose diagnosis is not immediately evident, Rossa's substance abuse problems are apparent from the start of the film. The medical staff refers to her as a drug addict, a description that Rossa herself adopts, and the track marks on her arms indicating heroin use corroborate the diagnosis.

Addiction is typically perceived as a man's illness, largely owing to the prevalence of substance abuse issues in men. In 2008, the U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health reported that 11.5% of males ages 12 and up compared to 6.4% of

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<sup>662</sup> David Punter, *The Literature of Terror – A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, London and New York: Longman Group Limited, 1980, p. 409.

<sup>663</sup> Sarah Sceats, *op. cit.*, p. 108-109.



females in the same age category had substance abuse or dependence problems.<sup>664</sup> With regards to heroin addiction specifically, the figures indicate an even greater disparity, with the DSM-5 reporting a 3:1 male to female ratio.<sup>665</sup> The widespread conceptualization of addiction as a male issue generates problems for female addicts. As the Harvard Medical School points out in their article on addiction in women, until the 1990s most research focused on substance abuse and dependence in men. Women are still underrepresented in medical research today, due to which there is a lack of adequate tools and treatment methods in the medical community offered to women with substance abuse issues. Resultantly, the unique challenges women with substance abuse issues face, including a quicker progression to dependence, more difficulty in quitting using addictive substances, and a greater susceptibility to relapse, are still inadequately addressed in medical research.<sup>666</sup> The exclusion of women from studies on addiction not only results in inadequate treatment options for women but also propagates the ongoing bias associated with female addicts. In a study on women's mental health, the WHO states in this regard, "In most countries substance abuse has been traditionally viewed as a problem of men and as incompatible with a women's [*sic*] role in society. Consequently this has led to considerable stigma for women who abuse substances."<sup>667</sup>

The consequences of women's exclusion from medical discourse – that is, the stigma in the community towards female addicts and inadequate treatment options – emerge in *Bella Addormentata* through the attitude of medical figures towards Rossa. The exclusively female cast of patients in the film (Rossa, Rosa, Eluana, Maria's mother, an anonymous girl with a broken nose in the hospital emergency room, the vegetative mother of an anonymous woman) reaffirms the significance of the fact that Rossa is female, indicating the necessity to employ a gender-based reading of how Rossa's condition is treated. Rossa epitomizes the female addict whom treatment has thus far failed. She acknowledges that her numerous attempts at recovery have been unsuccessful, reflecting the greater susceptibility to relapse in women with substance

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<sup>664</sup> Harvard Medical School, "Addiction in Women", *Harvard Health Publications*, January 1, 2010, accessed on January 26, 2016, [http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter\\_article/addiction-in-women](http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/addiction-in-women).

<sup>665</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 543.

<sup>666</sup> Harvard Medical School, *op. cit.*

<sup>667</sup> Michelle Gomel, *Nations for Mental Health: A Focus on Women*, Geneva: World Health Organization, 1997, p. 5, accessed January 20, 2016, available at: [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/67225/1/WHO\\_MSA\\_NAM\\_97.4.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/67225/1/WHO_MSA_NAM_97.4.pdf).

abuse issues: “Non c’è cura. Mi sarò disintossicata venti volte.”<sup>668</sup> While Dr. Pallido resolves to help her, his dedication appears to be in direct opposition to the indifference of the rest of the hospital staff. After checking Rossa’s pulse, another doctor and nurse decide to discharge her even though she is still sedated and unable to move of her own volition. Their apathy towards Rossa finds a stronger counterpart in the depreciative attitude of a third doctor. By refusing to call Rossa by name, this doctor treats her as though she were anonymous. On the one hand, Rossa’s anonymity can be said to reflect the female addict’s absence in medical discourse on substance abuse. However, her anonymity also reflects the stigma associated with female addicts. This stigma is reinforced owing to the belittling substitutions by which the third doctor calls Rossa instead of by her name, like “tossico”<sup>669</sup>. When he instructs the nurse to release her, he calls her by her room number as though her identity were irrelevant: “Domani mattina la 115 in dimissione, chiaro?”<sup>670</sup> When Pallido tells him he wants to wait for Rossa to wake up, the third doctor calls her, “Lei?”<sup>671</sup> as though questioning incredulously Pallido’s disposition to help her. Bellocchio further emphasizes Rossa’s anonymity by the fact that it is not only the third doctor who fails to use her name; no one calls her Rossa. The only reason viewers know how she is called is because the camera frames her identity card as Dr. Pallido reads it while she sleeps – again symbolizing that he is the only one who cares who she is. Ironically, while holding her identity card his thumb covers her last name, further contributing to her anonymity. While the third doctor also remains nameless, unlike that of Rossa, his anonymity appears to reinforce the fact that his opinions are not unique to him as an individual, but that instead he only serves as a mouthpiece for the widespread stigma associated with female addicts. Such is the conclusion we reach when he instructs Pallido that trying to save Rossa is useless and contends that even if she stops using she will always be simply a drug addict, a statement that in turn reflects the incapability of medical institutions to offer proper treatment to women with substance abuse issues: “Vuoi salvarla, eh? Ti faccio il pronostico. Lei vivrà ancora dieci anni rompendo i coglioni a tutti. [...] Un tossico,

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<sup>668</sup> *Bella Addormentata*, *op. cit.* Translation: “There is no cure. I must have gone through detox twenty times.”

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “junkie”.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “Tomorrow morning discharge room 115, is that clear?”

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “Her?”

anche se smette di farsi, rimane sempre un tossico.”<sup>672</sup> The camera work in the film reinforces this notion that Rossa’s identity is inextricably linked to her heroin addiction: a close-up shot of her bruised and punctured arm, the site of injection, excludes from the frame any markers of individuality, as if to say that she is her addiction.

In “The Lady of the House of Love”, through the Countess’s personal testimony of anorexia, Carter shows that the female voice is a powerful political tool that gives presence to the woman’s individual experience of the body. In contrast to the Countess, Rossa rejects the opportunity to speak for herself, thereby remaining in the folds of a one-sided depiction. Although many of Rossa’s statements and actions have the potential to become political, the motive behind them trivializes their significance.

On the one hand, her admission to Pallido that she has become desensitized after so many relapses (“Non sento più niente”<sup>673</sup>) could be interpreted as a testimony to how she feels emotionally numb owing to so many unsuccessful attempts at recovery. When she tells Pallido that there is nothing to see in her eyes (“Cosa vedi nei miei occhi? Nel mio sguardo? Nulla.”<sup>674</sup>) she appears to reiterate that the addiction has emotionally hollowed her. She claims that she is dead (“Sono morta”<sup>675</sup>) as though admitting, like the Countess, how invisible she feels. Conversely, she could be implying that she has already given up. She accuses Pallido of being a disillusioned addict like herself (“Sei morto come me. È pieno il mondo”<sup>676</sup>), telling him to uncover his arms as though coercing him to prove that he, too, has injection marks. From an earlier scene the viewer knows that his arms are mark-free, suggesting that Rossa’s accusation is a projection of her state of mind onto those around her. Her perception of herself and others as non-living suggests that she feels as though she were in a kind of Hell. Her suicide attempts can correspondingly be interpreted as a physical affirmation of those feelings. It is no coincidence that Rossa’s struggle takes place in the context of a film focused on the political significance of death: just as Eluana’s ultimate termination of life can be interpreted as an affirmation of her right to die in a hopeless situation, so, too, can

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<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “You want to save her? I’ll make you a prognosis. She will live another ten years busting everyone’s balls. [...] A junkie remains a junkie forever, even if she stops shooting up.”

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “I don’t feel anything anymore.”

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: ““Why are you looking at me? What are you looking at me for? What do you see in my eyes? In my gaze? Nothing.”

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “I’m dead.”

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “You’re dead like me. The world is full of people like us.”

Rossa's suicide attempt symbolize her right to choose how she will exit a situation that she perceives as hopeless ("Ma a me non me ne frega niente di vivere, niente. Voglio solo farla finita. Ho questa libertà"<sup>677</sup>). Such is the contention of director Marco Bellocchio, who in an interview about *Bella Addormentata* describes Rossa as a character "che afferma un suo principio [...] un suo diritto a suicidarsi"<sup>678</sup>. Rossa's actions and statements appear to foreground her personal experience with addiction, thus ostensibly illuminating through creative discourse an aspect of mental illness to which the external observation of medical discourse, particularly in the often gender-biased field of mental health, cannot give voice.

On the other hand, recognizing the context of Rossa's statements and actions reveals that she has trivialized them by employing them for superficial means, thereby depleting them of their creative and political potential. Rossa's admissions to Dr. Pallido that she wants to kill herself occur during her seclusion in a hospital room from which she is prohibited from leaving. When she threatens, "Appena fuori mi ucciderò"<sup>679</sup>, we are reminded of the way in which a spoiled teenager who has yet to learn to express her disapproval maturely uses emotional blackmail to make her parents feel guilty for not letting her go to her favourite band's concert. The emergence of a child-parent dynamic in the film is not incidental; Bellocchio himself admits to initially writing Rossa's character for a young actress, a "ragazzetta"<sup>680</sup> in his words. When Pallido refuses to let her smoke a cigarette, she whines, "Non posso fare quello che mi pare perché poi arriva sempre uno stronzo che mi deve salvare"<sup>681</sup>, again recalling the image of a child in the middle of a temper tantrum. Her childlike demeanour also emerges in her mockery of the doctor's shoes and name, reminiscent of adolescent schoolyard bullying: "Che brutte scarpe hai", "[Il] tuo nome squallido", "[T]u fai

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<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: "But I don't give a shit about living, at all. I just want it to be over. I have that freedom."

<sup>678</sup> "Intervista 'Marco Bellocchio – Maya Sansa' – *Bella Addormentata*", *Movieplayer.it*, 2015, accessed January 27, 2016, [http://movieplayer.it/video/intervista-marco-bellocchio-maya-sansa-bella-addormentata\\_11527/](http://movieplayer.it/video/intervista-marco-bellocchio-maya-sansa-bella-addormentata_11527/). Our translation: "who affirms one of her principles [...] her right to commit suicide".

<sup>679</sup> *Bella Addormentata*, *op. cit.* Translation: "As soon as I get out I'll kill myself."

<sup>680</sup> "Intervista 'Marco Bellocchio – Maya Sansa'", *op. cit.* Our translation: "young girl".

<sup>681</sup> *Bella Addormentata*, *op. cit.* Translation: "I can't do what I want because an asshole like you always has to come save me."

schifo”<sup>682</sup>.

Rossa’s immaturity extends to her actions, as well, whereby her suicide attempts equally emerge depleted of meaning. The first time she cuts her wrists in front of Dr. Pallido is when she gets caught for attempting to steal methadone from the hospital. Considering the unlikelihood of her suicide being successful in the middle of a hospital directly in front of a doctor, we are tempted to interpret Rossa’s gesture not in terms of her principled belief in one’s right to die, but rather as a tactic to avoid being punished. Her failed attempt to jump out of the window also appears to be a way for her to express that she wants to be let out of the room. In fact, the scene is a mirror image of a grounded teenager sneaking out of the house through her bedroom window.

While Rossa’s decontextualized words and actions have the potential to make a political statement about one woman’s individual experience with addiction, she depoliticizes them by employing them for trivial pursuits. In such a way, she excludes the audience from her inner struggle, thereby failing to give voice to her addiction in a creative way.

In contrast to Rossa’s rejection of any intimate connection with the audience, it is precisely Clementine’s relationship with the female viewer that ultimately provides her the opportunity to challenge the misrepresentation of female identity by medical discourse, embodied in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* by the memory removal company Lacuna. Lacuna contributes to Clementine’s false representation not only by erroneously diagnosing her, but also by thus assisting in Clementine’s inability to speak for herself.

Despite the fact that Clementine appears to present with symptoms of bipolar disorder, Lacuna superficially diagnoses her with heartache, thereby defining Clementine in a way that masks her real relationship with mental illness. As other critics of the film have also observed,<sup>683</sup> Clementine seems to be suffering from bipolar disorder, also known as manic depression. This is a mental disorder in which individuals experience manic episodes, characterized by the DSM-5 as distinct periods

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<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.* Translation: “What ugly shoes you have” ; “Your squalid name” ; “You’re disgusting.”

<sup>683</sup> For example, Cathleen Rountree, *The Movie Lovers’ Club: How to Start Your Own Film Group*, Maui and San Francisco: Inner Ocean Publishing, 2006, p. 48, and “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind”, *Ruthless Reviews*, March 12, 2006, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.ruthlessreviews.com/1460/eternal-sunshine-of-the-spotless-mind/>.

“of abnormally and persistently elevated, expansive, or irritable mood”<sup>684</sup>. These may be followed or preceded by periods of depression.<sup>685</sup> Numerous factors suggest that Clementine is prone to manic episodes, including her frequent mood lability, that is, “Rapid shifts in mood over brief periods of time”<sup>686</sup>, a diagnostic feature of bipolar disorder according to the DSM-5. Throughout the film, Clementine tends to become irritable or angry within a short span of time. We witness this when she is having a conversation with Joel after meeting him for the first time following his memory erasure. In the middle of their discussion, she suddenly becomes hostile, irritated by the fact that he refers to himself and her as “nice”:

JOEL

I’m trying to be nice. [...] You seem nice, so...

CLEMENTINE

Oh, now I’m nice? Oh, God. Don’t you know any other adjectives?<sup>687</sup>

Within moments she has changed her mind about how she feels regarding Joel’s comment and admits that she is prone to mood fluctuations:

CLEMENTINE

My embarrassing admission is: I really like that you’re nice right now. I mean, I can’t tell from one moment to the next what I’m gonna like, but right now... I’m glad you are.<sup>688</sup>

According to the DSM-5, irritability emerges “particularly when the individual’s wishes are denied”<sup>689</sup>. On one occasion, Clementine becomes angry when Joel contradicts her. During a walk through a flea market, she claims excitedly that she wants a child. When Joel suggests that the time is not right, she quickly becomes aggressive and starts yelling at him in the middle of the crowded street:

CLEMENTINE

I want to have a baby.

JOEL

Let’s talk about it later.

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<sup>684</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>686</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>687</sup> *Eternal Sunshine, op. cit.*

<sup>688</sup> *Eternal Sunshine, op. cit.*

<sup>689</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

CLEMENTINE  
 No! I want to have a baby.  
 JOEL  
 I don't think we're ready.  
 CLEMENTINE  
 You're not ready.  
 JOEL  
 Clem, do you really think you could take care of a kid?  
 CLEMENTINE  
 What?  
 JOEL  
 I don't want to talk about it here.  
 CLEMENTINE  
 I can't hear you. I can never the fuck understand what you're saying.  
 JOEL  
 I don't wanna talk about this!  
 CLEMENTINE  
 Fucking ventriloquist! We're fucking gonna talk about it!  
 JOEL  
 I. Don't. Want. To. Talk...  
 CLEMENTINE  
 You can't just say something like that and say you don't wanna talk about it!  
 JOEL  
 I'm sorry, Clem.  
 CLEMENTINE  
 I'd make a fucking good mother! I love children. I'm creative and smart and I'd make a fucking great mother! It's you, Joel. It's you who can't commit to anything!<sup>690</sup>

Impulsivity is also a common feature of a manic episode.<sup>691</sup> In a conversation in Joel's mind, Clementine identifies herself as being impulsive, apologetically explaining to Joel that she erased him for this very reason ("You know me. I'm impulsive."<sup>692</sup>). Their mutual friend confirms this when she first breaks the news to Joel that Clementine had erased him:

CARRIE  
 What can I say, Joel? You know Clementine. She's like that. She's...impulsive. She decided to erase you almost as a lark.<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>691</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>692</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*

Clementine's spontaneous insistence to Patrick that they must immediately go to Boston further corroborates her impulsivity:

CLEMENTINE  
Hey, let's go out dancing! Yeah? You want to go out to Montauk with me?  
PATRICK  
Montauk?  
CLEMENTINE  
Yeah! No! Come up to Boston with me!  
PATRICK  
Sure, yeah, we can go next weekend.  
CLEMENTINE  
No, no, no! Now! Now! Yeah, I have to go now. I have to see the frozen Charles now!<sup>694</sup>

According to the DSM-5, reckless and dangerous behaviour is also characteristic of a manic episode.<sup>695</sup> Such appears to be Clementine's attitude when she pressures Joel into walking on the frozen lake, disregarding the possibility that the ice will break:

JOEL  
What if it breaks?  
CLEMENTINE  
"What if"? Do you really care right now?<sup>696</sup>

Furthermore, in one of Joel's memories of her, she admits to getting into a car crash after driving drunk:

CLEMENTINE  
I kinda sorta wrecked your car.  
JOEL  
Were you driving drunk? It's pathetic.  
CLEMENTINE  
I was a little tipsy.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>695</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>696</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*



Manic depression and alcoholism are comorbid conditions, meaning that they often co-occur. The DSM-5 reports that women with bipolar disorder have “a much greater likelihood of alcohol use disorder than do females in the general population.”<sup>698</sup> It is suggested on numerous occasions that Clementine may be an alcoholic, an interpretation we share with Christopher Grau and Katherine Clark, who characterize Clementine as such in their articles on the film.<sup>699</sup> Firstly, we see that Joel recognizes Clementine’s drinking problem from his continuous depreciative comments on her substance-induced behaviour, including in the above-cited example of Clementine’s drunk driving and during dinner at a restaurant (“She’s gonna be drunk and stupid now”<sup>700</sup>). However, Clementine’s alcohol issues can also be identified in the many instances throughout the film in which Clementine expresses her affinity for drinking: she pours whiskey into her coffee under the table at a café, she expresses joy at the prospect of drinking (“Alcohol! Oh boy”<sup>701</sup>), she constantly proposes to others to drink or asks for a drink herself (“Do you wanna have a drink? I have lots of drinks”<sup>702</sup>, “Drink up young man. It’ll make the whole seduction part less repugnant”<sup>703</sup>, “Do you have something to drink? I would die for a vodka”<sup>704</sup>).

Despite the fact that Clementine presents many of the diagnostic features of bipolar disorder, owing to the diverse presentation of its symptoms in each individual, its frequent coexistence with other illnesses, and its similarity to other conditions, including unipolar depression, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and personality disorders,<sup>705</sup> making an accurate diagnosis of a fictional character becomes that much more difficult. The reason we can claim what Clementine’s diagnosis is with even less certainty is because the medical authority charged with diagnosing her fails to do so. As Kathy Davis points out in her book *Reshaping the Female Body*, “In most medical specialties, patients don’t know what their problem is, and leave it to the specialist to

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<sup>698</sup> American Psychiatric Association, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>699</sup> Christopher Grau, *op. cit.*, p. 125 and Katherine Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>700</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.*

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>705</sup> Russ Federman, “Misdiagnosis of Bipolar Disorder: Getting the diagnosis right when symptoms are confusing”, *Psychology Today*, February 13, 2014, accessed January 28, 2016, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/bipolar-you/201402/misdiagnosis-bipolar-disorder>.

figure out.”<sup>706</sup> Lacuna skips the step of diagnosing its patients by automatically and superficially applying the same diagnosis to everyone: heartache. This diagnosis calls for the same solution each time and that is memory removal. Lacuna thus offers the memory removal procedure to Clementine without recognizing that her symptoms meanwhile suggest a medical diagnosis distinct from heartache. One of the catalysts behind the misrepresentation of Clementine’s experience with mental illness is thus a lack of discourse on Clementine’s actual condition from the part of the medical institution in charge of her treatment.

We can identify a similar pattern in the discourse of cosmetic surgery in which patients’ psychological issues are rarely addressed. While there is medical research on mental disorders in cosmetic surgery candidates (for example, the prevalence of body dysmorphic disorder has been identified in the medical literature<sup>707</sup>), this research is typically not conducted by plastic surgery specialists themselves. As Sandra Caponi and Paulo Poli Neto point out in their article “The medicalization of beauty” (2007), nowhere in approximately 130 articles from two of the main international journals of aesthetic plastic surgery, *Aesthetic Plastic Surgery* and *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*<sup>708</sup>, is there any elaboration on the origin of the low self-esteem that prompts patients to seek cosmetic surgery. Rather, the physical “defect” itself is identified as the root of the problem.<sup>709</sup> Like in the discourse of cosmetic surgery, Lacuna, too, fails to evaluate their patients’ psychological state prior to conducting the medical procedure.

Although Lacuna’s services are offered to both male and female clients, suggesting that they equally treat patients of both sexes, like in the case of cosmetic surgery, a gender bias emerges in the fact that women appear to be the target clientele. According to the *Plastic Surgery Statistics Report* for 2014 composed by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 92% of all cosmetic procedures are done on women

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<sup>706</sup> Kathy Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Plastic Surgery*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995, p. 2.

<sup>707</sup> Elizabeth Didie, Ashley Hart, and Megan Kelly, “Cosmetic Treatments and Body Dysmorphic Disorder”, *International OCD Foundation*, 2016, accessed February 20, 2016, <https://bdd.iocdf.org/expert-opinions/cosmetic-treatments-and-bdd/>.

<sup>708</sup> The data is drawn from the study of journals from 2003 to 2004.

<sup>709</sup> Sandra Caponi and Paulo Poli Neto, “The medicalization of beauty”, in *Interface: Comunicação, Saúde, Educação*, 11.23, Botucatu, September/December 2007, accessed January 28, 2016, available at [http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S1414-32832007000300012&script=sci\\_arttext&tlng=en](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S1414-32832007000300012&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en).

compared to 8% of men.<sup>710</sup> We may recall that these statistics are reflected in Bordo's contention that bodily corrections are "the major substance of male-female differentiation, the most immediate physical and psychological reality of being a woman."<sup>711</sup> Lacuna's clientele similarly seems to confirm this gender bias by the fact that two of the three main characters that undergo the procedure are female (Clementine, Mary: Joel). It is also a woman whom Mary has to deny a third procedure because she has already had too many ("No, I'm sorry, Mrs. Henry. You can't have the procedure done three times in one month"<sup>712</sup>).

Lacuna's failure to investigate Clementine's psychological state prior to performing neurosurgery on her contributes to the misrepresentation of Clementine's relationship with mental illness not only because it leads to her misdiagnosis, but also because the misdiagnosis itself prevents Clementine from exploring the roots of her actual problems and thus from giving them a voice distinct from the one-sided depiction typical of medical discourse.

However, Clementine herself contributes to the silencing of her own voice by consistently engaging in behaviour that prevents her from being in touch with herself. By electing to have the memory removal procedure done in the first place, we can say that she applies a quick fix over a deeper issue, thereby camouflaging it in the same way as Lacuna's superficial diagnosis does. Immanuel Kant has contended that drunkenness and suicide limit the individual's freedom by depriving them of using their power.<sup>713</sup> Drawing on Kant's argument, Christopher Grau observes that memory removal functions in the same way: "The cliché 'knowledge is power' rings true here: the self-imposed ignorance brought on through memory removal limits your power and your freedom through limiting your options."<sup>714</sup> Clementine limits her ability to explore her

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<sup>710</sup> American Society of Plastic Surgeons, *2014 Plastic Surgery Statistics Report: ASPS National Clearinghouse of Plastic Surgery Procedural Statistics*, American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2015, accessed January 28, 2016, <http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Documents/news-resources/statistics/2014-statistics/plastic-surgery-statsitics-full-report.pdf>.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>712</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, *op. cit.* This imbalanced female to male ratio with regards to the treatment of heartache additionally appears to endorse the stereotype identified by the WHO that women are more prone to emotional problems and are thus treated for them more frequently than men.

<sup>713</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, ed. Peter Heath and J.B. Schneewind, trans. Peter Heath, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p 126.

<sup>714</sup> Christopher Grau, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

issues through self-imposed ignorance via memory erasure. Once she has undergone the procedure, Lacuna informs her friends and family by sending them a card: “Clementine Kruczynski has had Joel Barish erased from her memory. Please never mention their relationship to her again.”<sup>715</sup> When Joel’s friends show him the card, Clementine’s name slowly disappears from it, as though symbolizing that she has erased not only Joel, but a part of herself in the process. In this way, she engages in the destruction as opposed to creation of meaning, the latter of which we identified as fundamental to bodily agency in our analysis of the role of motherhood, sexual agency, and sexual maturation in the classical versions of the Sleeping Beauty tale. Clementine’s self-limiting behaviour also emerges in her alcohol abuse, another act that impairs her memory, thus drawing her further away from facing her problems. Her projection of blame for her problems onto others similarly prevents her from taking responsibility for them. When Clementine receives a tape of her interview at Lacuna from Mary and pops it in the cassette player, we hear her reasoning for wanting to erase Joel:

He’s boring. Is that enough reason to erase someone? I’ve been thinking lately how I was before and how I am now, and it’s like he changed me. I feel like I’m always pissy now. I don’t like myself when I’m with him.<sup>716</sup>

The repetition of the third person singular by the voice on the tape (*He’s boring. He changed me*) suggests that Clementine blamed Joel for her unhappiness, thus excusing herself from investigating its deeper causes. Just as the superficial nature of Rossa’s testimony prevents her from speaking of her addiction in a powerful and meaningful way, so, too, does Clementine’s evasion of investigating her problems through memory erasure, alcohol abuse, and blame projection prevent her from giving voice to them.

By being unable to speak subjectively about her issues owing to the fact that she refuses to face them, Clementine remains the object of discourse of those who do the speaking for her. In failing to define who she is, she lets others define her. In this way, Clementine propagates the mind/body dichotomy in which the woman, an object, awaits signification from a male subject. Indeed, Clementine is defined either by Lacuna, who fails to recognize that Clementine’s predominant problem is not heartache, or by Joel, who instructs us how to judge Clementine through his biased memories of her.

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<sup>715</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, op. cit.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*

Only at the end of the film do viewers get the impression that Clementine might abandon her self-destructive behaviour and stop running away from her problems. In the last scene of the film, Clementine begins using the first person singular, suggesting that she is not only finally taking responsibility for herself, but that she is also taking advantage of her capacity to speak for herself. She says:

CLEMENTINE

*I'm not a concept, Joel. I'm just a fucked-up girl who's looking for my own peace of mind. I'm not perfect.*

JOEL

I can't see anything that I don't like about you. Right now I can't.

CLEMENTINE

But you will. But you will. You know, you will think of things, and *I'll* get bored with you and feel trapped, because that's what happens with *me*.<sup>717</sup>

The new Clementine acknowledges that it is not Joel who is boring, but that it is she who gets bored. After listening to the voice on Joel's tape describe her as promiscuous from a disparaging perspective ("The only way Clem thinks she can get people to like her... is to fuck 'em. Or at least dangle the possibility of getting fucked in front of 'em. And she's so desperate and insecure... that she'll, sooner or later, go around fucking everybody"<sup>718</sup>), Clementine again uses the personal pronoun *I* to set the record straight about who she is, or rather, who she is not: she affirms, "*I* don't do that."<sup>719</sup> Clementine's pronoun shift suggests that she has begun to define herself and has thus started to bridge the gap between the mind/body dichotomy.

The fact that Clementine has stopped engaging in evasive behaviour also gives the impression that she might be ready to acknowledge the truth of her relationship with mental illness. However, whether Clementine in fact faces her issues or regresses to forms of evasion again, remains ambiguous by the end of the film. After hearing each other's tapes, Joel and Clementine decide to give their relationship another try. When Clementine tells Joel that she will get bored again and feel trapped, he says, "Ok." She smiles back at him and affirms, "Ok." On the one hand, due to the cyclical nature of the

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<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.* Our italics.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>719</sup> *Ibid.* Our italics.

film, suggested by the fact that the same song accompanies both the opening and closing credits, as well as the fact that both the beginning and end of the film are at the same point in the timeline (that is, following Joel's procedure), we are tempted to think that Clementine, too, might engage in a cyclical pattern and revert back to her self-destructive ways. In other words, we ponder whether Clementine's actions will take on the same cyclicity as the format of the film in which they are presented. Just before the closing credits, a final image of Joel and Clementine running together on a snowy beach is put on loop, suggesting that their relationship might continue following the same cyclical pattern. On the other hand, the title of the song that frames the film, Beck's "Everybody's Gotta Learn Sometime", invites us to question whether Clementine's "Ok" means that she has accepted who she is because she has learned something from her experience that will help her bring an end to her self-destructive cycle. Accordingly, the credits come on following Clementine's affirmation, thereby symbolically marking *the end*. The final image of the film fades to white, an editing feature that reaffirms the ambiguity of Clementine's situation. As a *blank slate*, it indicates a new beginning; as a whiteout, it symbolizes erasure, inviting us to question whether Clementine will return to Lacuna again.

Whether Clementine will use her ability for self-reflection to investigate the root of her problems, thus providing herself with the possibility of speaking about them in a meaningful and powerful way, or whether she will reengage in acts of avoidance remains undetermined by the end of the film. Without any affirmation, both options remain possible. It is thus up to each female viewer to decide Clementine's fate for her – kind of like a Choose Your Own Adventure. The notion that a reader or viewer produces the meaning of a given work is central to Hans Robert Jauss's Reception Theory in which the German academic argues that there is a relationship between the text and the reader such that a text can be seen in "unendingly different ways"<sup>720</sup> depending on the interpretation each reader gives to it. In the case of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, it is as though the film extends an invitation to the female viewer specifically to interpret Clementine's path for her by inviting her to identify with Clementine. This occurs by virtue of Clementine's continuous transformations into

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<sup>720</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, "The Theory of Reception: A Retrospective of its Unrecognized Prehistory", trans. John Whitlam, in *Literary Theory Today*, eds. Peter Collier and Geyer-Ryan, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 55.

different women, whereby she becomes the *Everywoman*, that is, the woman to whom each female viewer can relate. Clementine's status as the *Everywoman* is primarily suggested by her ever-changing hair colour, which goes from blue, to orange, to green just within the timespan of the film. By her own admission her personality changes with each colour ("I apply my personality in a paste"<sup>721</sup>) so it is as though she becomes a different person each time she dyes her hair. At the same time she is both the real Clementine and the imagined Clementine in Joel's head, simultaneously two different women. When she and Joel break in to an empty house on the Montauk beach, she also temporarily takes on the identity of the owner: she looks at an envelope on the counter and exclaims to Joel, "We are David and Ruth Laskin. Which one do you want to be? I can be Ruth, but I'm flexible..."<sup>722</sup> Furthermore, during Joel's memory erasure when he begins to regret having the procedure, the Clementine in his head instructs him to project his memories of her onto memories unrelated to their relationship so that Lacuna's technicians will have more difficulty locating her on Joel's brain map and erasing her. Thus Joel hides her in his childhood memories, whereby Clementine transforms into Joel's mother's friend in one scene, Joel's childhood friend in another. Clementine's constant transformations into different women suggest that she symbolizes not one, but all women. The disappearance of her name from Lacuna's card can thus be read not only as her erasure of herself, but it likewise leaves a blank space that can be filled in with other names, as though Clementine herself could be substituted by other women. The female viewer is thus invited to put herself in Clementine's shoes, since Clementine, by virtue of her multiplicity, has already put herself in theirs. Just as how in Jauss's Reception Theory the reader shifts from a historically passive role to an active one by becoming the creator of meaning, so, too, does the identification of the female spectator with Clementine allow her to adopt an active position by engaging in Clementine's journey for her and deciding its outcome. In this way, Clementine's creative capacity depends on that of the female spectator.

In "The Laugh of the Medusa", Hélène Cixous encourages women to reclaim their bodies from the patriarchal ideal of representation by writing themselves through a process she calls women's writing:

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<sup>721</sup> *Eternal Sunshine*, op. cit.

<sup>722</sup> *Ibid.*

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you: your body is yours, take it.<sup>723</sup>

Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies [...]. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement.<sup>724</sup>

Intrinsic to Cixous's theory is the notion that the woman engages in a political act of challenging the traditional patriarchal mode of representation by giving voice to her experience through creative expression.<sup>725</sup>

In the preceding pages, we investigated this notion of political creativity in women's language through an evaluation of how the creative discourse of the female patient can challenge traditional conceptualizations of women's experience of mental illness in medical discourse. First, we discussed how some of the gender biases present in traditional medical discourse are reflected in the works in our contemporary corpus. Thus in the viewpoint of the soldier (Carter), the attitude of the hospital staff (Bellocchio), and the practice of an institution (Gondry), we identified the symbolic representation of a medical discourse that provides a narrow and inaccurate depiction of the female experience of mental illness. We then investigated to what extent each female patient takes advantage of her ability to give voice to her individual experience through creative discourse, thereby challenging her status as the Foucauldian object of medical discourse by becoming the speaking subject. In our contemporary corpus, we saw that each work presents a unique outcome. In Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love", the Countess provides her subjective testimony on her experience with anorexia, thereby engaging in a political discourse that challenges the conceptualization of the anorectic as only a victim of her body. In Bellocchio's *Bella Addormentata*, the triviality of Rossa's testimony impedes her from speaking about her addiction in a powerful and meaningful way, due to which she ultimately fails to affirm her

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<sup>723</sup> Hélène Cixous, *op. cit.*, p. 876.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 875.

<sup>725</sup> While we share Cixous's argument that female subjectivity derives from female acts of empowerment, Cixous's concept of women's writing is predicated on the notion that female subjectivity cannot emerge in a male-authored text. As is obvious throughout our investigation of the multiple interpretations to which the classical and contemporary Sleeping Beauty figure lends herself in both male and female-authored works, this is a position we do not share.



subjecthood. In Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Clementine's initial self-destructive behaviour prevents her from acknowledging her problems, which in turn disenables her from giving voice to them. By the end of the film it remains ambiguous whether Clementine will face the truth or return to her evasive habits; however, owing to the relationship established between Clementine and the female viewer, the creative capacity of the former rests on that of the latter.

Our analysis of the conceptualization of the female body from the perspective of medical discourse and its reconceptualization through the creative discourse of the female patient is part of a larger study, undertaken throughout Part III of this dissertation, of the many complex and contradictory relationships between science, technology, and the body. Alongside the role of medical discourse, we addressed how medical technology and the medical figure influence female subjectivity. By focusing on different intersections between science, technology, and the body, we explored, in a literary and cinematic forum, the emancipating potential of scientific and technological advances, but also the many risks they pose with regards to gender equality. In this way, we gave body to Braidotti's contention that science and technology are neither inherently good or bad, but that their emancipating potential depends on how we use them. The contemporary figure of Sleeping Beauty, whose body is not subjected to the magical influence of fairies in the twentieth and twenty-first century, but to medical technology, staff, and discourse, was the ideal candidate for such an investigation.



## CONCLUSION

“Sleeping Beauty is a myth that gave us a way to see ourselves when we were young girls. Its essential theme was passivity, and so we waited to be acted upon long after it was useful, appropriate, or practical.”<sup>726</sup> So says Jane Adams in her book *Wake Up, Sleeping Beauty* (2001), in which she addresses “the transmogrification of the Sleeping Beauty myth into the cultural role of women”<sup>727</sup>. The idea that Sleeping Beauty is an inadequate model for young girls is a common one, frequently surfacing across fairy tale scholarship. It is an idea that has its roots about half a century ago with the beginnings of feminist fairy tale criticism.

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir argues in her book *The Second Sex* that the fairy tale teaches the young girl to be passive by presenting female characters who are locked up, chained, captive, put to sleep, or in any other way, waiting. With the rising critical interest in the role of the fairy tale in female acculturation, sparked by an increase in the study of the fairy tale and the application of sociohistorical and political approaches to literature, in the 1970s feminist scholars took up where De Beauvoir left off. Fairy tale critics such as Marcia Lieberman and Andrea Dworkin reaffirmed De Beauvoir’s argument that the fairy tale contributed negatively to the girl’s perception of herself.

Feminist fairy tale criticism in the 1970s was based on second-wave methodology. As has been stated, this means that the goal of critics was to identify sexual differences, for example, that men appeared in the role of the active hero while the passive woman was relegated to the position of damsel in distress. Sleeping Beauty became one of the most often-cited examples of this argument. The inanimate female body at the centre of each version of the tale rendered the issue of female passivity and objectification palpable.

By the 1980s and 1990s third-wave feminists like Judith Butler and Rosi Braidotti rejected the binary model inherent to second-wave methodology. They claimed that the polarization of gender in feminist theory portrayed an inaccurate

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<sup>726</sup> Jane Adams, *Wake Up, Sleeping Beauty: How to Live Happily Ever After – Starting Right Now*, San Jose, New York, Lincoln, Shanghai: iUniverse.com, Inc., 2001, p. 13.

<sup>727</sup> Jane Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

picture of the subject as singular, which obscured how multiple and fluid identity really is. As such, third-wave feminist scholars proposed a new theory of subjectivity that took stock of the fact that woman cannot be uniquely identified by umbrella categorizations such as *Passive* or *Object*.

While third-wave feminist methodology has today replaced the second wave in most theoretical discussions of subjectivity, it has yet to permeate the majority of fairy tale scholarship. Although fairy tale scholars have branched out to look at previously unknown female authors from the seventeenth-century onwards, and focused their critical attention on the new feminist rewritings of fairy tales, the classical male-authored tales, including those of Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm, have remained, for the most part, the subject of feminist contempt. As such, despite the theoretical advances made in feminist scholarship with regards to the conceptualization of identity as *mobile*, *flexible*, and *multiple*, Sleeping Beauty has critically remained a figure addressed in terms of *immobility*, *fixity*, and *singularity*. Well after the establishment of feminist fairy tale criticism in the 1970s, into the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and even as recently as a 2014 article by renowned fairy tale scholar Maria Tatar, Sleeping Beauty has been identified as “supremely passive”<sup>728</sup>.

In our dissertation, we applied a third-wave feminist framework to the study of Sleeping Beauty precisely to go beyond the widespread misconception of the fairy tale princess as purely inactive. We articulated our argument through two channels.

First, with specific references to the sources of the Sleeping Beauty tradition (including the Greek myths of Danaë, Persephone, Leto, Talia, the Norse myth of Brunhild, the Indian folktale Surya Bai, and the fourteenth-century anonymous French and Catalan texts *Perceforest* and “Frayre de Joy et Sor de Plaser”), we analyzed the three classical versions of the fairy tale – that is, Giambattista Basile’s “Sole, Luna e Talia”, Charles Perrault’s “La Belle au bois dormant”, and the Brothers Grimms’ “Dornröschen” – to demonstrate how each singular version gives expression to female activity in a distinct way.

In order to do so, we first had to look at what had already been done. From a historical perspective, we investigated how each tale’s relationship to preceding versions, political context, and documentation of authorial intent contributed to the

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<sup>728</sup> Maria Tatar, “Show and Tell”, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

construction of Sleeping Beauty as a passive female figure in feminist fairy tale criticism. For example, we discussed how the similarities of Basile's Talia to the mythological figure of Danaë facilitate a reading of her imprisonment in her castle by her father as a restriction on female sexuality. We likewise addressed how the absence of premarital sex in Perrault's version of the tale reflects the valorization of female purity by the European bourgeoisie in the author's time period, thereby arguably mirroring the era's sexual politics. In our analysis of the Grimms' Dornröschen, we discussed how the well-documented puritanical beliefs of the German authors appeared to contribute to the further strengthening of female virtue and sexual purity in their Sleeping Beauty tale with respect to the versions of their Italian and French predecessors.

Our historical investigation of the three classical versions of the tale was followed by a re-reading that excluded extra-textual factors, relying, instead, on the meaning offered by the text itself. Through this distinct perspective, we challenged the univocal conceptualization of Sleeping Beauty as submissive in feminist fairy tale criticism. Our re-interpretation of the three versions took stock of the fact that it is inconceivable that Sleeping Beauty's identity be described from a single viewpoint given the changes introduced by third-wave feminism. Drawing on the concept of *situated knowledge* which places value on the individual experience of each woman, we demonstrated how each individual Sleeping Beauty displays a unique subjectivity. Thus, with the help of the *female-to-female nutritional system*, Basile's Talia returns to a lively state following her passive slumber upon becoming a mother and nurturing her children. Instead of negating female sexual desire, Perrault's tale upholds female sexual agency, thereby rendering Sleeping Beauty a sexual subject as opposed to a sexual object. The Grimms' Dornröschen displays her activity through her mental and physical transformation from girlhood to womanhood. Whereas De Beauvoir and Butler claim that the objectified female body is given meaning by the male subject within the context of the mind/body dichotomy – that is, the oppositional framework by which men are considered the creators of meaning and women its recipients – we demonstrated how each classical version of the Sleeping Beauty tale presents the female body as a creator of meaning for itself, whether through motherhood, sexual agency, or sexual maturation, thereby affirming its own subjecthood.

This study served as the foundation for our subsequent investigation of Sleeping Beauty in the contemporary age. The advanced tools of third-wave feminism not only allow us to revisit the gaps left behind by previous feminist studies, but they also provide us with the methodology to interpret the kind of subjects we are in the process of becoming. Beginning in the 1990s, feminist scholars turned their attention to the complex and contradictory ways in which science and technology are affecting female subjectivity. While some warned against the risks they pose with regards to the further polarization of gender, others conceived them as powerful tools that will help bring an end to discriminatory dichotomies by blurring the boundaries of reified dualisms such as active/passive, self/other, and mind/body. To this effect, in her *Cyborg Manifesto* Donna Haraway proposes that the cyborg, the metaphor she uses for the different kinds of interactions between science, technology, and the body, will enable female emancipation. Since the cyborg is a metaphor for the diverse interactions between science, technology, and our bodies, and since, as we have stated, Sleeping Beauty renders palpable the role of the female body in questions of subjectivity owing to her inanimate form, then the historical figure of the cyborg embodied by the contemporary Sleeping Beauty is the ideal channel through which to investigate the effect of science and technology on female subjectivity.

Based on Gérard Genette's theory of hypertextuality, we identified Sleeping Beauty hypertexts in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries using the six common elements from the classical hypotexts, previously identified as *Fate*, *the Spindle*, *Enclosure*, *A Long and Unnatural Sleep*, *Awakening*, and *Prince Charming*. The hypertexts are: Primo Levi's "La bella addormentata nel frigo", Angela Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love", Harold Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska*, Pedro Almodóvar's *Hable con ella*, Michel Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and Marco Bellocchio's *Bella Addormentata*. Each hypertext places Sleeping Beauty in a scientific and technological context. In her new framework, Sleeping Beauty becomes a patient in a medical context, subject no longer to magical intervention, but to medical technology, the medical figure, and medical discourse. This offers us a platform on which to investigate three distinct interactions of science, technology, and the female body and the varied ways in which they influence female subjectivity.

In our analysis of how medical technology impacts *Sleeping Beauty's* subjectivity, we investigated how vaccines, devices, and procedures impact the female body both positively and negatively. First, we evaluated how medical technology has the potential to challenge traditional conceptualizations of the female body in stasis as an inactive body. To this effect, we elaborated on how mechanical ventilation in *Hable con ella* and *Bella Addormentata* interrupts the voyeuristic male gaze incited by the medium of cinema, thereby protecting Lydia and Rosa from sexual objectification. In *A Kind of Alaska*, we explored the positive impact of the L-DOPA vaccine that allows Deborah to regain her autonomy of movement and autonomy of expression, that which enables her to face her illness head on rather than unwillingly acquiesce to it. With regards to “La bella addormentata nel frigo”, we argued that the cryogenic chamber fortifies Patricia’s body against the degenerative effects of time and hostile temperatures. We also maintained that Patricia’s integration of the technological potential of her cyborg body into her behaviour is what allows her to escape her abuser.

While acknowledging how the different forms of medical technology in the analyzed works strengthen the female body, we likewise took stock of their ability to perpetuate the notion of the female body as what Bourdieu calls “the body-for-others”<sup>729</sup>. We argued that while the L-DOPA vaccine restores to Deborah her ability to move and speak in *A Kind of Alaska*, it leaves her unable to create meaning with her body through acts pertaining to the female experience, including motherhood, sexual agency, and sexual maturation. In our analysis of *Bella Addormentata*, we discussed how even though life support protects Eluana’s body from death, it simultaneously perpetuates her status as the object of viewing and discourse of others. Moreover, we argued that the hibernation technique that Patricia undergoes in Levi’s play contributes to her objectification by rendering her a source of amusement for guests and a source of sexual pleasure for her abuser. In our analysis of Gondry’s *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, we maintained that the memory removal procedure subjects Mary and Clementine to exploitation by the medical staff. We also emphasized how the memory removal procedure negatively impacts Clementine’s agency even when it is Joel who erases her, as by doing so he influences both her physical and metaphorical disappearance.

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<sup>729</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

In our subsequent investigation of the impact of the medical figure on female subjectivity, we observed that the fact that in each work the medical figure is male and the patient is female appears to reaffirm the traditional gendered distribution of roles in the classical fairy tale whereby the man is designated as the hero and the woman as the damsel in distress. Nevertheless, we argued that the crucial determinant for the representation of female subjectivity is the way in which each medical figure navigates between professional integrity and abusing his authoritative status. We discussed how the refrigerator technician Peter (“La bella addormentata nel frigo”), Nurse Benigno (*Hable con ella*), Dr. Mierzwiak, and the memory removal technician Patrick (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*) take sexual advantage of their female patients, thereby perpetuating the instrumentalization of the female body inherent to the dynamic between the king and Sleeping Beauty in Basile’s “Sole, Luna e Talia”. In contrast, in our analysis of Dr. Pallido’s professional demeanour towards Rossa in *Bella Addormentata*, we cited Mulvey’s argument that the male gaze constitutes one of the essential ingredients of male/female differentiation to argue that Pallido’s protective rather than objectifying gaze of Rossa renders gender inconsequential with respect to their doctor-patient relationship. We argued that in such a way the film negates the instrumentalization of the female body, thereby challenging our inclination as critics to interpret Sleeping Beauty from the perspective of traditional fairy tale gender roles and dynamics. Lastly, in our study of *A Kind of Alaska*, we submitted that Dr. Hornby emerges as both an ethical physician and as a sexual victimizer, resultantly impacting both positively and negatively Deborah’s subjectivity. We argued that Pinter’s interception of unilateral judgments gives body to the third-wave feminist position that the subject is multiple and must be comprehended as such.

In our final investigation of the impact of medical discourse on female subjectivity, we discussed the limits of traditional medical discourse with regards to representing the female experience of mental illness and the role of creative discourse from the patient’s perspective in subverting or reinforcing her subjectivity. First, in the soldier’s viewpoint of the Countess (“The Lady of the House of Love”), the attitude of the hospital staff towards Rossa (*Bella Addormentata*), and Lacuna’s approach to Clementine’s treatment (*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*), we identified the symbolic representation of a medical discourse that inaccurately depicts the experience



of the female patient. We then evaluated to what extent each female patient in the three analyzed works uses her voice to create a new meaning for herself, thereby challenging her status as the Foucauldian object of medical discourse by becoming a speaking subject. Drawing on Cixous's theory of *écriture féminine*, we observed that the Countess in Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love" provides her subjective testimony of her experience with anorexia, thereby engaging in a political discourse that challenges the conceptualization of the anorectic as only a victim. In our study of Bellocchio's *Bella Addormentata*, we concluded that while Rossa's words and actions have the potential to make a political statement about one woman's individual experience with addiction, she depoliticizes them by trivializing their significance, thereby failing to disentangle her body from the one-sided discourse of psychopathology. Finally, in our analysis of Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, we integrated Jauss's Reception Theory to emphasize the importance of the female viewer's role in affirming the subjectivity of the female character. We argued that while Clementine's trajectory remained ambiguous by the closing credits, owing to the relationship established between Clementine and the female viewer, the creative capacity of the former rests on that of the latter.

We thus explored both the positive and negative impact of science and technology on the female body through an investigation of three distinct areas of medicine in contemporary literature and cinema. However, our research has implications that extend beyond literary and cinematic analysis. In the introduction to her manifesto, Donna Haraway emphasizes that when she talks about the cyborg she is not referring only to a fictional concept, but to our concrete social reality.<sup>730</sup> In other words, as an embodiment of the cyborg, *Sleeping Beauty* is a reflection of the various ways in which science and technology are already impacting female subjectivity in our contemporary age. Our study of the effects of medical technology, medical professionals, and medical discourse on female subjectivity in *Sleeping Beauty* hypertexts thus provided a fictional space through which to explore a socially- and politically-relevant matter, that is, how science and technology can either further polarize gender binaries or facilitate women's progress towards emancipation, depending on how we use them. By exploring the relationship between science,

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<sup>730</sup> Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto", p. 149.

technology, and gender, we addressed one of the most current issues in feminist theory and engaged in dialogue with the generation of feminist scholars exploring the evolution of subjectivity in our scientifically and technologically mediated environment.

As artistic and critical interest in the fairy tale continues to flourish alongside scientific and technological advances, new Sleeping Beauty hypertexts that interlace science and fiction are being created. Although our research focused on works by European authors, dramatists, and filmmakers, Sleeping Beauty continues to surface across the globe and across different mediums, not only in literature and cinema, but in theatre, dance, art, music, advertising, video games...even scientific papers on fertilization<sup>731</sup> and puzzles in decision theory.<sup>732</sup> Further research on this topic could be extended to encompass the study of Sleeping Beauty hypertexts from a greater variety of genres, mediums, and cultures, providing us with a global spectrum on which to observe the relationship between science, technology, and Sleeping Beauty.

Our representation of Sleeping Beauty as both active and passive in our dissertation does not only illustrate the different kinds of influence science and technology can have on female agency. It also supports the contention of third-wave philosophy that female identity is hybrid and multiple and thus cannot be accurately described in terms of absolutes like *Object* or *Oppressed*. In other words, there is a strong metaphorical connection between the multiplicity of Sleeping Beauty and the multiplicity of woman. Precisely because of how much fairy tales teach us about who we are, our hope is that debunking the myth that Sleeping Beauty is helpless and submissive in a fictional context will have a crossover effect on how the female reader of the fairy tale comes to understand herself.

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<sup>731</sup> Gerald Schatten and Helen Schatten, "The Energetic Egg," in *The Sciences*, 1983, 23(5), p. 29, quoted in Evelyn Fox Keller, "Gender and Science: Origin, History, and Politics", *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>732</sup> Adam Elga, "Self-locating belief and the Sleeping Beauty problem", in *Analysis*, 60(2), p. 143-147, 2000, accessed February 14, 2016, available at <https://www.princeton.edu/~adame/papers/sleeping/sleeping.html>, February 14, 2016.

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