

What/Who is Sleeping? Sexual Violence against Adolescent Girls and Revenge in Contemporary Film Versions of “Sleeping Beauty”*

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Abstract

This paper discusses sexual violence against adolescent girls and their revenge on rapists in *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) and *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) in comparison with traditional versions of “Sleeping Beauty.” In the traditional Sleeping Beauty legend, the sexuality of an adolescent girl (a princess) is controlled from her birth on the pretext of protecting her, and the sexual violence against her is linked to a paradoxical construction of adolescent girls’ sexuality: they must be innocent yet sexual, and their sexuality needs to be shown but must remain inactive. These contrasting concepts are also found in two contemporary films. *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) is a Korean film based on the 400-year-old Arang legend, and *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) is a popular retelling of the 1959 Disney film *Sleeping Beauty*. While the “sleep” of adolescent girls is a central motif, both films deal with sexual violence against the female protagonists, who both subsequently take revenge on their rapists. Through this revenge, buried truths about violence and human greed are revealed, and the guilty take responsibility for their crimes. Meanwhile, the two films emphasize solidarity and support between the female characters as they heal from their traumatic experiences. *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) in particular criticizes the malfunctioning social justice system in Korea, advocates for social efforts to listen to the abused, and shows how sexual violence damages a girl’s whole being.

Key words

sexual violence, revenge, the films *Arang* and *Maleficent*, Sleeping Beauty

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Introduction

Sexuality has been used to sustain the dominant male power of patriarchal society, and it is argued that sexuality became publicly defined and more systemically controlled through the modern period. Michel Foucault (1990) points out that while sexual practices and the expressions of sexuality were relatively open and common at the beginning of the seventeenth century in European society, the history of sexuality during the following two centuries was “the chronicle of an increasing repression” (p. 5). “Sexuality was carefully confined” (p. 3) and any form of sexuality that those in power considered illegitimate was censured, “driven out, denied and reduced to silence” (p. 4). Interestingly, the published collections of fairy tales that appeared during this period intersected with this repressive trajectory. Fairy tales have constituted “the most profound articulation of the human struggle to form and maintain a civilizing process” (Zipes, 2011, p. 1). In addition, while fairy tales were modified and published during the corresponding period, they became stories where female sexuality is much controlled, and the experiences and voices of female characters are often denied or silenced. In the oral fairy tale tradition, there is “a reasonable balance” between the number of male and female protagonists, but in printed collections “the female folk fairy tale seems to dominate” (Jones, 1995, p. 64). This gendered preference has mainly played the role of revealing “an implicit sexist bias in Western culture” (ibid., p. 64). Zipes (1999) also points out that “the classic fairy tale for children and adults has played a role of reinforcing the patriarchal symbolic order based on rigid notions of sexuality and gender” (p. 338). This paper focuses on examining the portrayals of the sexuality of adolescent girls, sexual violence against them, and their revenge in the contemporary films *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) and *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014), in comparison with the traditional versions of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Simone de Beauvoir (1988) demonstrates that “woman is the Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, she who receives and submits” (p. 318). While all these well-known fairy tale characters embody biased gender roles, this paper focuses on the Sleeping Beauty legend and its contemporary films, by paying attention to the episodes where the female protagonists fall asleep and then wake up. The girls’ sleeping state symbolizes their helpless status, particularly in relation to the sexual violence they experience. *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) and *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014)—two movies from different

cultural backgrounds—share the common themes of sexual violence against adolescent girls, the symbolic motif of sleeping, and the female protagonists' revenge at the end of the stories. Both films depict the social suppression of girls' sexuality in a similar way to the traditional versions of the Sleeping Beauty, but make the girls' voices heard and their actions seen. In classic Sleeping Beauty stories, a king issues the order, and magical characters provide him with justification to control a princess' sexuality in the name of divinity or destiny. The king's justification for constraining the princess' mobility is also strengthened by the purpose of overcoming an evil witch's curse. The witch represents a female character who is disapproved of and feared by the dominant power and is branded as a wicked enemy because she is powerful and sexually dangerous. In Disney's 1959 version of *Sleeping Beauty*, Maleficent's tallness and her long black cane represent her power, while her lips covered with distinctly red lipstick exaggerate her sexuality. The king's desperate efforts to keep the witch away from his daughter are, in this sense, meant to regulate both the princess' sexuality and her potential power. In the traditional Sleeping Beauty legend, this effort seems to work. The witch disappears after her curse. By emphasizing the threat that his daughter will prick her finger and be overcome by a death-like sleep, the king justifies any means to protect her, and her ignorance of this very danger is the first measure. The king is the subject who accesses knowledge, evaluates the situation, and makes further decisions, while the princess becomes an object upon which he exercises his will and plans. In patriarchal cultures, girls are expected to learn "the sexuality of ignorance" and "the sexuality of danger and protection" (Byun, 2006, p. 179), and this lesson is repeated in the stories of Sleeping Beauty.

Despite these controlling means, the princesses are placed in danger and come to fall asleep. In fact, the dominant power that defines and controls the adolescent princess' sexuality is responsible for her vulnerability, and these very controlling means cause the princesses to become helpless in their sleeping states. The connection between the patriarchal politics of controlling girls' sexuality and their vulnerability to sexual violence is similarly found in *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) and *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014). These two films, however, present different endings from the traditional versions of Sleeping Beauty: in the traditional stories, a prince overcomes the curse and offers to marry the heroine, and his previous sexual violence against the sleeping princess is relegated to the past. The princess wakes up but

ultimately “falls asleep” again because the now-married princess acquiesces to her passive role as wife. In contrast, the main characters in these two films do not marry but take revenge on their rapists. Their waking up from the state of slumber means that justice will be achieved against the crime of sexual violence.

This is a significant transformation whereby female characters claim their rights over their own bodies and exercise their right to react to the violence against them. In *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) and *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014), sexual violence and its outcomes show how the discourse of sexual violence is consumed and distributed in contemporary recreated cultural products, as compared with the traditional versions of *Sleeping Beauty*. Historically, “sexual harassment occurred frequently but was unnamed” (Wood, 2007, p. 118). Brownmiller (1975) notes that not only abused women’s voices, but also general and academic discussions of sexual violence against women, “were strangely silent” (p. 12). During the last few decades, academic work, individual voices, and social policies have addressed sexual violence. However, they are far from sufficient, and different cultural and individual circumstances need more discussion. It is also important to recognize that “rape has a history, and that through the tools of historical analysis we may learn what we need to know about our current condition” (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 12). The present study was motivated by this recognition and seeks to further break “enforced silences” (Rowe, 1999, p. 297) by examining these two films where women’s voices are restored and their reactions are witnessed. To sum up, the theme of an adolescent girl’s sexuality, the control of that sexuality, and the resulting consequences all constitute the main plots of the traditional *Sleeping Beauty* stories and their contemporary cultural products. This paper examines these three aspects, and discusses how efforts to control an adolescent girl’s sexuality proceed and how sexual violence is portrayed in these two contemporary films. In particular, this study pays a particular attention to the reactions and stories that follow the sexual assaults, which is what makes these films clearly distinct from the traditional stories in the way that they represent gender roles.

Sexual Violence against Adolescent Girls and Its Consequence in the *Sleeping Beauty* Stories

Adolescence is constructed as a liminal period between childhood and

womanhood. Adolescent girls' position, including their sexuality, seems to be defined as "something between," just as their social status used to sway between their fathers and their future husbands. Ironical and contradictory ideas operate in that "between" status, a status that is particularly related to their sexuality. In the *Sleeping Beauty* stories and the two films, the female figures' sexuality is placed between that of children and of adults. They are not children any longer in that they are sexually blossoming, but at the same time, they are not yet adults in that they are forced to preserve their sexual innocence. This conflict between the adolescent girls' present sexuality and the enforced denial of their sexuality leads to three main episodes, as mentioned above. Firstly, a king or an alternative authority aims to protect the princess or female protagonist from any sexual contact. Secondly, these protecting measures work ironically and the protagonist comes to have sexual experiences. This sexual experience is seen as sexual violence because it is perpetrated on an unconscious female in sleeping state without her consensus or permission. Thirdly, the ending shows what the consequence of the sexual violence is. In the traditional stories, this violence is often justified in the name of love and marriage, while in the two films, the rapists are punished by the female protagonists.

Although there are many variations of the *Sleeping Beauty* story, depending on historical period, cultural background, and targeted readers and classes, the first shared motif is that an adolescent girl falls asleep until someone appears to wake her up. Meanwhile, she is isolated from the world outside, locked up in a "safe place." Even before the magical sleep, she was already highly protected. Magical authorities—such as goddesses, wise men, fairies, or godmothers—define what is dangerous for girls in the name of destiny, and this control of a woman's future begins just after she is born. This gendered socialization still operates in the contemporary world as parents and others "modify, from infancy, their behavior and responses to the child according to its perceived sex" (Paechter, 1998, p. 44). The response of the princess' father is to order all spinning devices removed and to shut the princess away from the world. The command is justified under the pretext of protecting her. In *Perceforest*¹, a fourteenth-century

¹ According to Jack Zipes, "there is little indication that there was an oral tradition of "sleeping beauties" in the medieval period" (2001, p. 684), and *Perceforest* is considered as "the first formation of this tale" (ibid.) in the fourteenth century.

French romance that is possibly the first version of the Sleeping Beauty legend, the king, Zelladine's father, "places her nude in a tower that is inaccessible except one window" in order "to protect her" (Zipes, 2001, p. 684)². The "accident" is foretold to happen when Zelladine, the princess, reaches fifteen or sixteen years old, the age at which she is mature enough to experience sexual relationships. Blood from a pricked finger could symbolize actual sexual intercourse. This becomes more plausible when we consider another king's severe grief in "Sun, Moon, and Talia," an Italian version of Sleeping Beauty by Giambattista Basile (1634). When he heard of Talia's finger being pricked, the father "paid for the bucketful of sour wine with a barrel of tears" (p. 685). "Sexual assault of a wife, daughter, girlfriend, sister or mother is often appropriated by men as a major traumatic injury to themselves, a manifestation all the more significant when we remember that men have generally tended to discount the emotional injury suffered by women who have been raped" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 301). To the king, the princess' sexual relationship is not only personally hurtful but also politically threatening. When a princess is the successor to the kingdom, the possibility of her having uncontrolled sexual relationships is a potential danger to the king. Thus, this warning and the subsequent actions are intended to preserve the girl's sexual innocence. Moreover, sleeping could imply the girl's helpless state after having had a nonconsensual sexual experience. Women were (and still are in some cultures) condemned to death when they lost their virginity outside of marriage, and sleeping could symbolize the impotent, deathlike condition they face.

In *Perceforest*, the king displays his daughter's nude body but at the same time stipulates that the body is not to be touched. Her sexual potential is frozen until the right time and the right person come, and this idea of the "right" timing is especially emphasized in Perrault's version in the 17th century. In this context, her new name, "Sleeping Beauty," is emblematic of the adolescent princess' sexual attraction and beauty, which, at the same time, are not allowed to be active but must remain in slumber. Ironically, although she is sleeping and her voice, thoughts, other qualities, and relationships are inactive, this is when she is defined as a "beauty" and when her beauty is effectively displayed. In other words, she is named "Beauty"

² After this point, quotes from Zipes (2001) are identified by page numbers only.

when all other characteristics but her appearance become suppressed. The locked palace and the tower with a window are intended to both prove the girl's innocence and display her sexual attraction. Bass and Davis (2002) point out that "almost from birth, girls are given mixed messages about their sexuality. They are alternately told to hide it, deny it, repress it, use it, or give it away" (p. 239). These inconsistent messages are similarly imposed on the princess.

Meanwhile, the king's initial measure of protection—the banning of spindles or spinning wheels—does not work; instead, it ironically kindles the princess' curiosity about something she has never seen or experienced. In "Sun, Moon, and Talia," Talia, the daughter of a great lord, "became so curious" (p. 685) about an old woman who had a spinning wheel. In Perrault's "Sleeping Beauty" (1697), the princess is "running about the castle" (p. 689) up to the tower, and in Grimm's "Briar Rose" (1857), she "wandered all over the place and explored as many rooms and chambers as she pleased" (p. 696). In all these stories, the parents are away, and the princesses have a chance to enjoy their freedom and go wherever their curiosity leads them. In this way, these stories seem to emphasize that adolescent girls' curiosity can put them in danger while also showing that the protection policy does not work as intended and cannot eradicate girls' inquisitiveness. Such imposed innocence and ignorance during childhood places the princesses in the exact situation the king has made every effort to avoid.

The several traditional versions of the Sleeping Beauty legend are explicit about the rape of the sleeping princesses. To a male figure, whether he is a king or a prince, the reason for raping the sleeping princess is her beauty. In Basil's story, Talia's beauty "set him afire and the king carried her in his arms to a bed, where he gathered the fruits of love and then left her asleep in the bed" (pp. 685–686). In *Perceforest*, this desire is said to be "urged on by Venus" (p. 684). These words justify the men's sexual violence, claiming that their sexual desire is given by divinity, and women's beauty is to be blamed for awaking their desire. One of the popular myths concerning a man's sexuality is that "once he is sexually aroused, a man cannot stop himself from forcing sex on a woman" (Warshaw, 1994, p. 95). This mistaken concept about men's sexual impulses operates in both traditional stories and the contemporary world. Moreover, such "instinctual sexual desire," and acting upon it, becomes a way for princesses to find hus-

bands and have children who eventually free them from a magical sleep. In patriarchal cultures, women are recognized for their “serious function of reproduction” (Foucault, 1990, p. 3), and the episode in which a baby saves the princess and “escalates” her to a mother emphasizes that role. In summary, men, specifically father figures, establish something that is forbidden to their daughters, and when the girls become curious and explore the forbidden reality, they are destined to die or to fall into a deathlike state. However, children save them from their doomed destiny, and rape turns out to be a beneficial behavior that fulfills this supposed need for the sleeping princesses. In this mechanism, it is completely ignored that what is really dangerous is not the witch’s curse but the justified urge.

Sexual abuse tremendously damages a victim’s entire life because “the trauma does not end when the abuse stops” (Bass & Davis, 2002, p. 20). Nevertheless, the abusers often evade responsibility for their violence, and the victims’ voices and reactions after the violence commonly are silenced and buried. This unjust consequence has a long history. In traditional patriarchal cultures, when a woman was raped, with few exceptions men took revenge on other men. Through these vengeful actions, men aimed to demonstrate their power over and ownership of women. When an adolescent girl was raped, marriage was considered the best way to solve the problem. For example, Genesis 34 in the Hebrew Bible describes Shechem’s sexual violence against Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, after which Hamor asks Jacob to allow his son to marry her. This offer cannot be realized because of the deceitful and brutal way her brothers take revenge on the men of Shechem’s tribe. The vengeance has nothing to do with benefitting Dinah; rather, it is an excuse to violate the women of another community. The brothers killed the men and “took all their children and wives captive and looted everything to be found in the houses” (Genesis, 34: 29). In Dinah’s time, a woman was considered the property of her father or husband, and sexual violence against a woman was a serious infringement of his property. This concept has persisted in different forms and degrees in the contemporary world. Dinah is a victim, but the story is all about men’s opinions and the negotiations, schemes, and actions taken on her behalf. Dinah’s voice is not heard, nor is her own reaction to the life-destroying experience given. Dinah’s story is a vivid example of the situation of women in a patriarchal society, where men control women’s lives, sexual violence against women is a way for men to exercise power over other men,

and women's perspectives on their own victimization are completely ignored and unheard. There are old stories, such as the story of Philomela and Procne in *Metamorphoses*, that "can serve as a type for the narrative power of the female, capable of weaving in tapestry the brutal story of rape that leads to the enactment of a terrible revenge" (Rowe, 1999, p. 297). However, traditional versions of the Sleeping Beauty legend normally end with a happy marriage between the awakened sleeping beauty and a prince or king. The male figure's sexual assault seems to be completely forgotten, and he is portrayed as saving her by returning and bringing her to his kingdom.

Sexual Violence against Adolescent Girls and Its Consequence in Maleficent

Maleficent (Stromberg, 2014) is a recent retelling of Disney's 1959 film *Sleeping Beauty*, which was based on Perrault's tale "Sleeping Beauty." Disney was "a radical filmmaker who changed our way of viewing fairy tales" (Zipes, 1999, p. 333) and played a pioneering role in reproducing traditional fairy tales. Disney has also been strongly criticized for proliferating commercialism as "the new face of neoliberal power" (Giroux, 2010, p. xv); for reproducing stereotypes of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and disability; and for standardizing and idealizing white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class values (Giroux, 2010, pp. 91-95). While these values have been challenged, other filmmakers, and even Disney itself, have seemingly made an effort to deliver "different" fairy tale films with new perspectives and interpretations. The narrator introduces *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) as such a fresh interpretation. Disney's films, as well as Perrault's and Grimm's embellished versions, diluted the sexual elements. Nevertheless, "sex and violence [...] are the major thematic concerns of tales" (Tatar, 1999, p. 369) in the unedited form of Grimm's collection, and sexual violence against an adolescent princess is a key feature of the Sleeping Beauty stories, from *Perceforest* to *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014).

The title character of *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) also has an ironic experience of love and sexual maturity. In Disney's 1959 version, Maleficent is a witch, a traditional villain figure, who curses Aurora, a newborn baby princess. While claiming to be "an old story anew," *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) delivers a hidden story about Maleficent, who is neither hero nor

outright villain, but “both hero and villain” in the new film. The evil figure in *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) is greed itself rather than a particular character. From the beginning, the film highlights the conflict-causing qualities—such as vanity, greed, envy, and discontent—that characterize the two kings. Far from being an evil witch, the young Maleficent epitomizes innocence and a happy childhood with little knowledge of “the greed and envy of men” and their betrayals. Her fairy world is detached from the world of human beings, which is full of evil. One day, she meets Stefan, the first human boy she has seen. They are both orphans. Maleficent seems easily touched by Stefan’s caring actions, and on her sixteenth birthday he gives her her first kiss, claiming it represents true love. This kiss can be said to be her first sexual experience. In the traditional Sleeping Beauty stories, the princess is left alone, sometimes in desperation, after her first sexual experience. Then, the king or prince returns to her, and the story ends with their marriage, preserving the concept of “true love.” However, the story of *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) denies the idea of such true love. Love is fragile in the face of human selfishness, and Maleficent’s innocence is completely shaken by Stefan’s betrayal. The story shows that when a girl is ignorant of reality, love makes her vulnerable and endangers her own life and position.

While the betrayal that the female protagonist suffers in relation to her love and sexuality is a main motif, Disney’s *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) does not portray any scenes of sexual violence. Given that Disney is known to be very conservative regarding overt expressions of sexuality and officially advertises its films as “family films,” it is not surprising that Disney chose Perrault’s text for the first animated version and avoided explicit sexual scenes in *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014). Still, *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) contains strong implications of sexual violence, and discourse justifying rape is rampant. In *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014), Stefan leaves Maleficent and does not return for a long time after the “true love kiss.” Abandoned and lonely, Maleficent accepts Stefan when he revisits the Moors. Stefan sends her to sleep with a potion and tries to kill her, but he seems to be moved by her sleeping appearance. Instead of murder, Stefan cuts off her powerful wings and steals them. Princesses classically function as “trophies, indicators of the hero’s success” (Hourihan, 1997, p. 199), and Maleficent’s “big wings” are the trophy confirming his future kingship. After waking up in a dark and deserted atmosphere, Maleficent wails, grasping her empty

shoulders. She looks very weak and stumbles. Her grief and miserable crying remind the viewer of women's traumatic reactions after experiencing sexual violence. In addition, the wings, as part of her body, are attacked by Stefan and torn away from her, which can be seen as a representation of sexual violence. A sexual assault is "an invasion of bodily integrity and a violation of freedom and self-determination" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 381). Maleficent's wings symbolize her abilities and freedom, of which Stefan robs her. Many statistics indicate that sexual violence occurs most often with acquaintances, (Warshaw, 1994, p. 11), and this explains the circumstances of Maleficent and Min-jung, the female protagonist in *Arang* (Ahn, 2006). The experience of betrayal and the violation of her wings are the turning points that turn Maleficent into an "evil" and cursing witch who wears a pitch-dark black gown that emits a greenish light—an image familiar from the previous Disney version.

On the other hand, the stealing of Maleficent's wings corresponds to the avaricious old king's obsessive efforts to invade the Moors. The patriarchal culture often identifies women with the land—space that can be transformed into an object to explore and conquer. Many geographical terms have female suffixes: America, Philadelphia, Virginia, Carolina, Georgia, etc. (Hulme, 1985; Jeong, 2006, p. 219). America is the female form of Amerigo, who considered himself the founder of the continent. He claimed ownership by naming the land after himself. This illustrates how the hierarchical relation between the "explorer/the civilizer/the Western/Men and land to discover/the civilized/non-West/Women" (Byun, 2006, p. 219) works through notions of space and language. Compared to the king's deserted-looking kingdom, the Moors seems full of life and symbolic of feminine fertility (e.g., beauty, trees, and flowers). For the old king, this land and "its treasures" are mere objects to conquer and to possess.

While Maleficent's innocence is linked to the sexual violence perpetrated against her in a similar way to the traditional Sleeping Beauty stories, the ending of *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) is different: far from forgetting the past and getting married, she avenges Stefan's betrayal, and the special bond between the female characters is highlighted. After her wings are stolen, Maleficent no longer seeks happiness with Stefan but tries to take revenge on him by cursing his baby daughter. On Aurora's christening day, Maleficent threatens Stefan, "You stole something precious from me. And now, you owe me something precious in return." She chooses to be evil

and an avenger. Maleficent follows the traditional plot in that she curses the baby, another female figure, rather than take Stefan's own life. The angelic-looking baby princess is precious to Stefan because she is his own child and a successor to his kingdom. However, she also represents the innocence and happy childhood Maleficent lost through Stefan's betrayal and violence. In fact, when the three fairies Stefan entrusts the baby princess to are neglectful and inadequate, Maleficent protects her from danger and watches her grow up. Maleficent is supposed to dislike Aurora, but through Aurora, Maleficent comes to "take what she is owed"—the sense of innocence and a warm heart. It is Maleficent, not Prince Phillip, who awakens Aurora with her kiss, and Aurora in turn helps Maleficent get her wings back and overcome Stefan's dark kingdom.

While this film emphasizes the growing sympathy, understanding, and cooperation between Aurora and Maleficent that plays a key role in resolving the problem, there are women who are still neglected and ignored, whose voices are never heard. Stefan's wife, the old king's daughter, is such a person. She is another sleeping beauty who is constrained by her father's authority and married to Stefan, who is selected as her husband and future king. Afterwards, enjoying "a long life with her husband and children" (Zipes, 2001, p. 688) is certainly not her experience: she loses her daughter, Aurora, without her consent or proper explanation, and dies early and dejectedly without her husband's presence or ever seeing her daughter again. She was lonely even after her wedding. Aurora comes to love Maleficent by recognizing her as her protector and fairy godmother. She helps Maleficent win back her wings and lives with her on the Moors, but she never wonders about her own mother or asks after her well-being. The relationship between mother and daughter is damaged under the patriarchal system.

Also, the ending of *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) seems to be a mixture of "new" messages and "old" ones. For Maleficent, the fact that she wins back her wings is a symbol of healing. Her body, her emotional stability, and her power are linked with each other. The restoration of her wings symbolizes regaining her integrity as her segmented body parts become whole. Meanwhile, Stefan's attitude presents another example of commodifying a woman's body. He takes only what he needs—the wings containing Maleficent's power—and exhibits them on the wall, locked in glass. This scene resembles the depiction of the sleeping princess displayed inside

glass. As Maria Tatar (2014) argues, “Beauty may be sleeping, but we want to look at her to indulge in the pleasures of her visible charms” and “‘we’ is gendered male” (p. 143), for whom a girl’s beauty and power are mere objects to be locked away and gazed upon. In particular, Stefan knows that “iron burns fairies,” and makes the glass iron barred, showing his fear of her power being released. As the story reaches the climax, Stefan becomes obsessive and mad with his own haunting fear that Maleficent is coming to destroy his kingdom. This film, however, saves Maleficent from punishing Stefan by killing him, and he makes the mistake of falling from a high tower and dies. In this way, this film preserves the protagonist’s moral innocence, but at the same time, repeats the traditional “gender role” concept that somehow women cannot conquer men for themselves. Maleficent’s final victory happens only when Stefan “falls down” himself. Moreover, the adolescent Maleficent’s romantic fantasy and innocence are echoed in Aurora, who is similarly pretty, kind, ignorant of sexuality, and protected. Above all, Aurora’s innocence melts Maleficent’s hatred and motivation to avenge, illustrating the recurring concept of childhood innocence as a saving quality. “Innocence [is] a cultural metaphor” (Giroux, 2010, p. 17) for Disney, which also works in this film by suggesting that the powers of childhood innocence “eliminate a number of social ills” (p. 18). Maleficent is described as a multidimensional character, but the dichotomy between innocence and knowledge is strongly at work. She is ignorant as an angelic girl and assumes typical witch images when she obtains knowledge of reality. There is also a dichotomy between childhood innocence and adult realism, reproducing the patriarchal concept that a woman with knowledge is dangerous. Disney makes an old story “anew,” but it still echoes the old stories.

Sexual Violence against Adolescent Girls and Its Consequence in *Arang*

Arang (Ahn, 2006) is a Korean film based on a 400-year-old Korean fairy tale, “The Story of Arang.” The original legend of Arang concerns sexual violence and the victim’s revenge, which the film takes as its main motif. In the legend, many new magistrates are mysteriously killed in a village, and no new magistrate wants to be appointed to go to the village. However, one new magistrate is willing to go to the village. He discovers that the spirit of Arang is full of vengeance because she had been raped and killed.

He then helps the spirit to catch the culprit who had raped and killed her, delivering the culprit to justice. He finds Arang's corpse and buries her. It was said that her corpse had not decomposed when it was found many years later, just as if she had been sleeping. In Korea, several films have transformed traditional fairy tales into versions critical of conflicts and issues in contemporary Korean society. Sexual violence against children is one of the main themes of such films, including *Arang* (Ahn, 2006). As the sleeping beauties are typically princesses and Maleficent has a similar class background, in the traditional version of *Arang* (Ahn, 2006), Arang, the female protagonist, also belongs to a high class elite family, called *Yangban*. This means that her adolescent sexuality was strictly controlled before marriage. For example, girls and boys over seven years in the *Yangban* class were forbidden to sit together. In contrast, Min-jung, in the contemporary film version, belongs to a deprived family. While in the first three stories, i.e., *Perceforest*, *Sun, Moon, and Talia* (Basile, 1634) and *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) the patriarchal power to control girls' sexuality is exercised by an authoritative father figure, in this film, the absence of Min-jung's father ironically emphasizes the importance of the patriarchal power. Min-jung lives with her grandmother only. Although they seem to be happy with each other before the tragic sexual violence against Min-jung, her grandmother is too weak and powerless to protect her from the violence. Min-jung being an orphan is directly related to her deprived circumstance where no individual or social power exists to defend her. In this sense, this film is about the violence that Korean contemporary society commits on the isolated and powerless. Despite this difference, Maleficent and Min-jung share similar characteristics: they are both pretty, jovial, kind, and most of all, innocently ignorant of the cruel reality of life until they actually suffer. The harsh reality is mainly the pain that love and their sexual experience bring to their lives. At first, Maleficent is securely guarded in a fantasy land, "The Moors," and Min-jung seems to be protected in a small fishing village. This is similar to the traditional stories of Sleeping Beauty, where the ideas of innocence and protection from, and consequently ignorance of, tough reality are common motifs. With her naturally sunny disposition, Min-jung seems ignorant of the realities of violence, but she is also mature enough to have a sexual relationship with her boyfriend. Like Maleficent, Min-jung follows the traditional characterization of adolescent girls as somehow perfectly innocent but also sexual, and this innocence makes her more

vulnerable.

In *Arang* (Ahn, 2006), sexual violence against this innocent adolescent girl and its traumatic aftereffects are the main elements of the plot. In the richest area of Seoul, a series of mysterious murders occurs. A bright female police detective, So-young, and a newly appointed young male detective, Hyun-gi, who specializes in scientific crime investigation, form a team to solve the case. As they inspect the crimes more deeply, complex connections and reasons are uncovered, which are traced, in the end, to a crucial crime. Based on a video chip hidden in the dead dog of the first murder victim, So-young finds out the truth: ten years ago, a group of four young men in their late teens visited a small fishing village, the hometown of the first murder victim, and raped a girl named Min-jung, whose beauty was admired by several boys. They also killed her boyfriend, who tried to stop them. Jung-ho, the boy from the village, asked his younger school friend to record a video of the other boys raping Min-jung to blackmail them in the future. Exercising the “physical strength, aggression and weaponry” (Lemish, 2010, p. 16) that masculinity largely represents in the dominant culture, the gang rape of one woman becomes “the vehicle of his victorious conquest over her being, the ultimate test of his superior strength, the triumph of his manhood” (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 14). Group rape is obviously an easier way than individual rape for men to confirm their power and compensate for their lack of confidence. In *Arang* (Ahn, 2006), the four boys are introduced as “jaesusaeng,” a term referring to high school graduates who are waiting for a second chance to enter a university. They often endure a high amount of stress because they tend to be considered failures in Korean society. The boys’ giggling is in stark contrast with Min-jung’s screams, and to the boys, rape seems to be merely a way to reduce their stress and their sense of incompetence. Min-jung’s sad situation does not end there. When she finds out she is pregnant, she tries to reach the boys and hold them responsible for supporting her child. She asks a local police officer for help, but after being bribed by the boys’ parents, he locks Min-jung in a salt barn to die.

So-young bursts into tears when she watches the video, and the scene of her own traumatic experience is superimposed. As a teenager, she is desperately trying to run away from a man pursuing her, but she is raped. The only thing she remembers about the rapist is a cut on his wrist. She always checks the wrist of any man accused of sexual harassment and often loses

her temper when a man justifies his behavior. One man admits to sexual harassment but insists it happened because the victim wore a miniskirt. He claims that it meant she “actually” wanted to be “raped” by men. The same justification is echoed by another male character. He claims he knows her “hidden” sexual desire while reducing her body to a mere object to gratify his sexual hunger. Judith Butler (2007) argues that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; the identity is performativity constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 34). All these ideas are confidently expressed and reproduced in everyday language, constantly defining what women are and what they “secretly” want. So-young kicks the man and beats him until she is forced to stop by her colleagues. She almost never sleeps peacefully, always suffering from the same nightmare—the scene of her being hunted by the faceless rapist. These parallel truths about the two girls imply that sexual violence against adolescent girls might not be uncommon in Korea and that “this violation not only exists on an individual level but also involves social and cultural dimensions” (Park, 2015, p. 65). Figuratively uncovering the buried story about Min-jung and literally uncovering her body—which had been buried with a baby for ten years—*Arang* (Ahn, 2006) presents “a vivid picture of what kind of tragedy might happen ... where the distorted images and violent desires that men have toward women are given free reign” (ibid., p. 65).

The female protagonists’ desire for revenge and the bond between them are found in *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) as well as in *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014). Min-jung does not simply die after she is cruelly raped and murdered. She returns as a ghost and punishes the murderers, demonstrating the failure of the public justice system. The public powers, such as laws and police officers, are corrupt and serve rich criminals. Even if there are police who try to catch criminals, they are not the ones who really crack the cases. The victims’ stories are neglected and buried, and they cannot die until their stories are known and the guilty are punished. Ten years after Min-jung dies, the four rapists are murdered one after another, starting with Jungho. For the last ten years, Jungho had been in jail for killing Min-jung’s boyfriend and was recently released; the three other boys, meanwhile, managed to hide their crimes and were apparently living affluent lives as a doctor and businessmen. Their parents were extremely selfish in that they offered a lot of money to the poor Jungho, on the condition that he assume their sons’ guilt. To the audience, the murderer seems in the beginning to

be a female ghost with bleeding red eyes and long disheveled black hair—a typical image of a *guishin* (a ghost with a human form). In Korean culture, there is the concept of *han*, a deep resentment that needs to be unraveled, even if the person is dead. The film at first implies that Min-jung's *han* makes her return and take revenge on her rapists. Then, the plot is reversed when it is discovered that Hyun-gi was the boy who filmed the other boys' rape of Min-jung and that she was actually his first love. Crushed by guilt and ashamed of his cowardice, he becomes a detective in order to take revenge on the four boys. As an expert in poisons and autopsy, he tracks down the rapists and poisons them using deadly cigarettes. After finding the policeman who locked Min-jung in a salt barn and shooting him to death, Hyun-gi kills himself. At this point, the story almost suggests that the real murderer is Hyun-gi, not the ghost of Min-jung, and that the several *guishin* images were actually the boys' psychological fantasies. Everything about the case seems uncovered, and So-young enjoys a restful sleep without nightmares. Two years later, she publishes a detective novel, fulfilling her original dream of being a writer.

The story, however, is reversed one last time, making the plot ambiguous and intriguing. A gentleman who looks like a successful financier stays in a hotel. While the camera focuses on his scarred wrist, he opens an e-mail. Suddenly, the *guishin* of a pregnant girl gushing blood comes out of the computer, and we hear the man screaming, suggesting he is killed. This last scene upturns the previous resolution implying that Hyun-gi was the murderer and suggests that Min-jung as a ghost has taken revenge on not only the boys who raped her but also the man who raped So-young but managed to evade responsibility. Min-jung and So-young share a common trauma, and the solidarity between the two women is emphasized, too. So-young did not achieve her goal to catch her rapist. However, after Min-jung's case is resolved, she dances with Min-jung in her dream, both of them smiling, and she becomes free and healed. This implies that So-young identifies Min-jung's experience with her own. She works to catch the men who raped Min-jung, but Min-jung catches and punishes the rapist of the female detective. The police detectives do not really bring the criminals to justice; they just function to show the hidden truth to the audience. While the two detectives function as a voice that tells what happened to Min-jung ten years earlier, their painful experiences are revealed and healed too. This suggests that all traumatic experiences related to sex-

ual violence may be linked to each other and are not separate matters in a society. Ultimately, it is the ghost of Min-jung who acts not only for herself but also for another surviving female victim. Unlike *Maleficent*, Min-jung completes her revenge on the rapists on her own. “The two main functions of folktale films in Korea have been cultural conservation and socio-political allegory” (Lee, 2016, p. 209). This film satirizes the usefulness of the public justice system in contemporary Korea, suggesting that society must make serious efforts to demand legal responsibility and to remove outdated male-centered concepts.

Like Stefan in *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014), the four male friends in *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) suffer from feelings of fear, hallucinations, and nightmares about the girl they raped. The criminals are punished not only by losing their worldly possessions and their lives but also by experiencing fear and inner disruption they inflicted on the girl. As sexual violence damages not only the girls’ bodies but also their emotions and souls, revenge is taken in both dimensions. Rape is “a deliberate violation of emotional, physical, and rational integrity” (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 376), and its trauma affects the whole person. In particular, the boy who becomes a doctor cannot sleep with his wife because she overlaps with Min-jung’s ghost, and eventually he kills his wife when he mistakes her for the ghost. Given that sexual violence damages the most intimate relations between couples and lovers, he is consequently punished by destroying his own intimate relationship.

Conclusion

Throughout history, sexual violence has served as a means to reinforce men’s authority and control over women, the women being depicted as possessions of the men. Traditional fairy tales have often served to excuse the rape of female characters by men. They repeat the discourse of controlling women’s sexuality and suggest that men’s actions are driven by nature and instinct. However, there is no “natural” reason to justify sexual violence, any more than any other kind of violence. In many traditional stories dealing with sexual violence against women, men have suppressed women’s curiosity and desire to explore the outside world. Dinah, who “went out to visit some of the women” (Genesis 34: 1) of a foreign region, and the adolescent girls who seek out something hidden are cursed to be locked up, their bodies and voices both imprisoned. Their curiosity and their

openness to new and different things are fettered. Rapists in the Bible and fairy tales easily turn into saviors by locking their victims up again in marriage, which is portrayed as a happy event that “rescues” the sleeping girl. Marriage seems to save the sleeping beauty, but at the same time, it functions as a means to close off further stories. Consequently, the girls’ feelings and reactions regarding these experiences of being locked up and falling asleep are unheard, neglected, or ignored.

Retelling traditional fairy tales serves to uncover and imagine what those further stories and unknown actions might be and bring them to life. The films *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014) and *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) are also about those further stories and the actions undertaken after sexual violence and betrayal occur in the name of love. Marriage is not an option for the female protagonists, and they are not just sleeping or simply forgiving. These women choose to be avengers themselves, showing how victims can fight back. In *Maleficent* (Stromberg, 2014), the betrayals and the violence against Maleficent’s love and body make her choose to be a traditional evil fairy. She curses her enemy’s baby girl, Aurora, but Aurora’s innocence and friendliness transform her, restoring warmth and love. While the friendship and cooperation between them solves the situation and leads to a happy ending, Stefan’s greed and misery lead him to destroy himself. *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) seems to satirize the corruption and ineffectiveness of the social justice system in Korea, which is supposed to protect victims and the disadvantaged but often does the opposite. Both female protagonists in *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) had a traumatic experience of sexual violence during adolescence; one becomes a ghost and the other becomes a police detective to take revenge. Their experiences were forcibly buried with their death or in their memory, and there was no social justice for either. The female and male detectives work hard to resolve the case, but it is the ghost of Min-jung, who ultimately takes revenge on the guilty. This may suggest that in Korean society, there is still little room for female victims of sexual violence to receive justice, and their voices and reactions are still suppressed and buried. Therefore, what is sleeping is the social justice system, whose helplessness continues to create “sleeping beauties” in society. Just as the violence of abusers can never be justified, violence against the abusers cannot be justified either. However, it is often difficult for victimized girls to exercise their right to demand that the abusers take responsibility for their violence. Angry women are constantly labeled “man-haters, castrators, and

bitches” (Bass & Davis, 2002, p. 122), although anger is “the backbone” (p. 59) of their healing process. Thus, the women’s revenge in these films is a meaningful way to restore their right to demand accountability as well as a means for them to recover from their traumatic experiences.

Fairy tales “unsettle us by showing what we lack and how we might compensate for lack” (Zipes, 2011, p. 1). These two cinematic retellings, which are in line with traditional versions of *Sleeping Beauty*, show what we are achieving in fighting back against sexual violence and what we still fail to do. As Rose (1984) notes that “the very idea of speaking to all children serves to close off a set of cultural divisions” (p. 7), the discussion of sexual violence in this paper cannot address all adolescent girls. Sexual violence does not exclude any class, culture, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Not every man is a sexual abuser. Women abuse, too, although “the vast majority of abusers are heterosexual men” (Bass & Davis, 2002, p. 20). Thus, for further research, there should be more thorough discussions concerning the connections between girls’ sexuality and different power relationships, regarding class, race, and ethnicity, and examining the ethical, ideological, political, or social implications of female solidarity. Nevertheless, both films, which come from different cultural backgrounds, show that the objects and subjects of sexual violence can be anyone, as long as the party with physical strength and social power uses force to impose power and greed on the weaker, less powerful party. Most of all, they demonstrate that the experience of sexual violence is a “horror” itself, as *Arang* (Ahn, 2006) clearly shows by its status as a horror genre film, and show what hard efforts many women are making to fight back against the horrible violence.

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