The Stylistic Analysis of Disney's Sleeping Beauty (1959)

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Student/ica: Mentor/ica:

Lucija Mišković   Prof. dr. sc. Rajko Petković

Zadar, 2024.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Lucija Mišković,** ovime izjavljujem da je moj **završni** rad pod naslovom *The Stylistic Analysis of Disney's Sleeping Beauty (1959)* rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

Izjavljujem da ni jedan dio ovoga rada nije iskorišten u kojem drugom radu pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj, obrazovnoj ili inoj ustanovi.

Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 3. studeni 2024.

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1.   Introduction

Disney features are divided into several eras according to their release year. The first was the golden era, lasting from 1928 to 1941 which contains the first five big Disney features*: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942). Following the golden age is the wartime period from 1941 to 1945, also known as the 'package' era. The studio suffered the loss of great animators along with shortening of certain projects during the Second World War which greatly damaged it at the time. After the war came the silver age which began in 1946 and lasted until 1960. This era was Disney's comeback to storytelling and longer features, starting with the release of *Cinderella* (1950). The era was marked by great films such as: *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *Peter Pan* (1953), *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) and finally *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) which served as a beautiful end to the existing style of the Disney studios during that period (Solomon 43-200).

The story of *Sleeping Beauty*, specifically the Disney version, has become a tale as old as time, known by most of the old and new generations and recognized as one of the old Disney classics. But what makes this specific feature different from the works of the golden age? Why can it be viewed as influential and a classic? This paper will first explain the origins of this adored fairytale and what was happening during the production process, including Walt Disney's absence. It will explore the film's ultimate financial failure and discuss elements which contributed to it while tying it to Disney's neglect. Further on, it will point out the similarities and the differences between *Sleeping Beaut*y and her predecessors *Snow White* and *Cinderella* while elaborating on the fact that this film is not a mere copy of the two prior princess films. In the main part, the paper will analyse various stylistic segments of the film, starting with its original animation style, followed by its inventive background design and how it differs from the previous Disney films, as well as what

makes it so unique. Then, the paper will detail the costuming and the deliberate usage of colours for symbolism throughout the film. It will touch upon the topic of who should be considered the actual main character of the story and can it even be the film's very own *Sleeping Beauty*. In the last part the paper will focus on how the culmination of all of these factors affected the film's release. The paper will end with some critical viewpoints, and its concluding remarks.

2. Once Upon a Time: The Story Then and Now

Sleeping Beauty is one of those stories which has had multiple sets of retellings over the centuries. The first noted source is from 1634, the story called *The Sun, The Moon, and Talia* written by Giambattista Basile. Evidently, it is a lot different and much darker than Disney's. The story features a princess who dies from a splinter of flax and then gets assaulted by a king who leaves her pregnant with twins (Ball). However, this was not the only version of the story, as it got rewritten in 1697 by Charles Perrault into a story called *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*. This version is more reminiscent of the Disney feature with a princess who is cursed to sleep for a hundred years and a prince who serves as her reward after she awakes (Sitzia). It can be noticed that the 1959 film preserved only small portions of Perrault's story and made changes to others. For example, instead of sleeping for a hundred years, Aurora spends one day under her "eternal" curse (Solomon 198). In 1812, the story got rewritten yet again by the Brothers Grimm with a title *Little Briar Rose,* making it into the oldest fairytale adapted by Disney studios (Ball).

The version produced by Disney follows the life of princess Aurora who gets cursed during her christening by an evil fairy, Maleficent, to live until her 16th birthday and then die by pricking herself on the spinning wheel. The curse gets lessened by a good fairy, making her awakening possible by a true love's kiss. Aurora grows up separated from her royal identity in the care of the three good fairies who hide her in the woods. On her 16th birthday she meets a boy and the two fall

in love, both of them unaware they are actually engaged to each other. As planned, the fairies proceed to take her back to the castle where Aurora's curse comes to be and she falls into her slumber. During her sleep, the fairies aid the prince in slaying Maleficent so he can kiss Aurora and wake her up. After her awakening, Aurora and the prince present themselves to their parents and presumably live happily ever after.

3. Behind the Scenes

3.1. The Working Stages

After the success provided by *Lady and the Tramp* (1955), Disney decided to handle another beloved fairytale and that was *Sleeping Beauty.* It was imagined to be the next most creatively ambitious film after *Fantasia* (Solomon 207). The earliest stages of its production date back to 1950 with the first plot structure being recorded in May of 1951. But the actual production only officially began in 1954 (Allan 296). At that time, it was the film with the longest production time of four and a half years and with over a million drawings (Solomon 207), with the so called "Super Technorama 70", a seventy-millimetre widescreen, the largest at the time with the 2:55:1 ratio[1] which was the first time in both video format and in theatres that the audience got to see so much of the top and the sides of the scenes.

Usually, the films were produced in a smaller 1.37:1 ratio making them square-shaped and focusing the attention and the view of the audience in the middle at the centre of the shot. So, if anyone pauses the film such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* at any point, it is almost certain that if a character is present, they will be positioned in the middle of the screen. Otherwise, the camera would follow their movements to place them in the centre. *Sleeping Beauty* changed this

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[1] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:03:40-00:03:50.

by widening the film's ratio. Now, the attention was no longer solely on the characters, but on the scenery of the shot as well. Some scenes still featured them in the forefront, but in others the environment became the heart of the scene.

Sleeping Beauty (1959) was the last film based on a fairytale that Walt Disney was alive to produce (Kelly 196), but the first Disney animated feature to get its Blu-ray Disc which helped the intricate backgrounds and extraordinary design stand out even more.[2]

3.2. Just Another Princess Movie?

Sleeping Beauty served as Disney's long-awaited comeback to fairytale films for the third time. He knew that the expectations from the critics and the audience were high which meant they had to come up with something innovative.[3]

But, creating this new film enabled Disney to pick out some of the unused drafts from his previous works and give them new opportunities. And such was the case with a dynamic between the prince and the horse. Originally, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) was supposed to use this idea, but it got scrapped. So, it was decided to be reused in *Sleeping Beauty* which ended up working splendidly and has resulted in Prince Philip and his horse Samson being portrayed as a friendly duo (Barrier 272). Milt Kahl who animated Prince Phillip, at first did not want to do it and complained how the others had much more interesting characters to animate. "But Walt knew that nobody else could do these characters as well as Milt, and Milt was an animator who could not only do that, he could do just about anything," making him the best person for the job.[4] He ended up departing from the staleness of *Snow White and Cinderella'*s princes. Phillip was animated more

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[2] Taken from *Sleeping Beauty* Blu-ray.
[3] Taken from "Audio commentary" 0:02:09-00:02:50.
[4] Taken from ("Audio commentary" 00:24:43-00:24:55.

dynamically (Solomon 210). The horse served as the extension of the prince, giving him personality that he alone lacked. It was yet another character who served as comedic relief, especially with his facial expressions.[5]

In their core, the emotional climax of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Sleeping Beauty* revolves around a princess who is put into a sleeping state by the antagonist and is later awoken by the prince. There are certain parallels with *Cinderella* (1950) too. The films centre around three female characters who find themselves diminished by the antagonists. All three are in a sense deprived of their high-class life, Snow White and Aurora who are forced into hiding and Cinderella who becomes a servant. Maleficent, The Evil Queen and Lady Tremaine, all embody characteristics of jealousy and vengeance that they take out on the protagonists. They put them in dire situations from which they have to be saved by their princes in order to resolve the films' emotional conflict. Other than these, some other similar elements between *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Sleeping Beauty*, include: the princesses who are sent away from their castles due to a threat posed by the female villain character, animal side-kicks and human companions who serve as both mentors and comedic relief, these being the dwarfs and the fairies and the defeat of the villain which allows the princess and the prince to get their happy ending.

It can be noted how *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* all use the same common themes of transformation and true love. All three female leads appear in an unroyal environment, Snow White in a cottage with the dwarfs, Cinderella as her step-mother's maid and Aurora hidden away in the woods. But by the end of the film, all three get to enjoy their status as princesses in a much more lavish setting. The princes serve as their love interests who save them from a dire situation, in Snow White and Aurora's case by a true love's kiss and in

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[5] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:25:11-00:25:21.

Cinderella's case by fitting a slipper onto her foot. These actions exist to show the magnitude of love and how much it can overcome (Eslit). Allan added how even some of the speaking lines reflect each other. Both Snow White and Aurora describe their princes as tall and romantic, and the line: "I'm awfully sorry – I didn't mean to frighten you," is repeated word for word. Additionally, the interactions between Aurora and Phillip mirror that of Snow White and her prince. The princesses back away with a hand covering their face before hiding behind another object, but soon reemerging and interacting with the princes (234-235).

While it may seem that the films are just reusing the same elements which makes them too similar in structure, their overall design, characters, and even storylines all differ from one another. When children, who are the target audience for these sorts of films, watch them, they most likely will not even notice the overlaps. And even though at their core, they might resemble each other, they are still separate works of art. Disney studios has always had its ways of taking all of these similar elements and giving them new light and that is why people tended to love their movies then, and continue to praise them after more than fifty decades. Because they were able to take the plainest of concepts and make three completely different viewing experiences for each.

3.3. Disney: A Contributor or a Setback?

Disney began this project with many ideas and an ambition, taking the production slowly and prioritizing the look over the time consumption (Solomon 195). But eventually, it was no secret to anyone working on the project that Disney was not truly invested in the creation of *Sleeping Beauty* like he was for his works in the years prior (Barrier 271). He did have his own input, but it did not come close to how he behaved during the production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)

where everything simply had to be perfect and exactly how Walt had wanted. Back then it looked as if he was breathing that film, but in 1950's that was no longer the case.[6]

It was made clear that the people who worked on this project all agreed on one simple thing. Walt Disney had other, seemingly greater priorities than monitoring *Sleeping Beauty's* production. They found it just impossible to figure out where Disney stood and what failed to catch his interest. And working in such an environment causes inconsistencies, mistakes and overall tends to damage the project. *Sleeping Beauty* suffered that exact fate as Disney's neglect would cost the movie greatly at the time of its release.

Looking back now, it was evident to his crew that Walt had changed over the course of twenty years between making *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), he no longer gave his everything to one feature because his studio which was once little had turned into something much bigger.[7] During that time his attention was mostly on the newly opened Disneyland Park and the cancellation of *Mickey Mouse Club* and *Zorro* which caused a massive blow to Disney's income (Barrier 271). And not only was *Sleeping Beauty* time consuming to create, it was also extremely expensive, costing them around six million dollars which would be equal to a starting budget for an action movie being produced in today's time. So, for the time that it was released in, it just could not earn all of that money back, making the film a financial disaster.[8]

It is apparent that without Disney's key role as someone who overlooked all aspects of the project, the film suffered a lot of setbacks during its production and served as a massive loss for the company's finances. But, creating a film, especially as significant and as lavish as this one takes

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[6] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:39:58-00:40:01.
[7] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:40:16-00:40:22.
[8] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:32:24-00:33:32.

more than just one individual and consists of plethora of other elements. As it will be elaborated in the paragraphs below, Disney nearly passed on some of his responsibilities onto another man, Eyvind Earle, by giving him a lot of creative freedom and authority over the rest of the crew. And it was some of Earle's choices and desires that lead to the budget increase, causing the film to turn out as expensive as it did. The film still had to be perfect, but this time it was not Walt's word against the crew's, it was Earle's above everyone else's because that was how much faith Walt had in him. So, if Earle envisioned something in a certain way, the crew had to oblige.

But, regardless of his behaviour towards the project, Disney did not see the film's eventual flop as his fault, but as a sign to stop giving animated projects such a big part within his company (Barrier 273).

4. Stylistic Analysis

Walt Disney has always been known as a visionary when it came to making his films. If he had an idea or a concept it had to be executed perfectly. Even if it meant working longer hours and redoing entire scenes from scratch. He did not do this with *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), but the film still stemmed from his vision and a wish for a very specific design. He wanted medieval illustrations and it all of it ended up revolving around an illustrator called Eyvind Earl.

Earle was a man with a traumatic and complicated past that had to do with his overbearing and abusive father. He would isolate Eyvind from the rest of society and force him to repeatedly paint which made young Eyvind question if he would ever paint out of his own interest. But as an adult, he managed to escape the clutches of his father and make a name for himself in painting, even before he started working for Walt Disney in 1951.[9]

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[9] Taken from "Eyvind Earle", 00:01:10-00:03:45.

Accomplishing Disney's vision was done through a multitude of choices regarding the production process. The production itself was based off of a live action feature (Maltin 42), casting Mary Costa and Helene Stanley as Aurora, Eleanor Audley as Maleficent and Bill Shirley as Prince Phillip along with many more extremely talented and hardworking actors to do both the voices and some of the live action sequences. Mary Costa had been picked by Disney himself due to the purity and kindness of her voice. She quotes a conversation she had with Disney during the preparations for the filming: "I want you to drop all of the colours and the things that you feel about Briar Rose to your vocal palate and I want you to paint with your voice,".[10] Regarding the casting choice of Eleanor Audley, Jeff Lenburg, an animation historian described how so much of Maleficent's personality was inspired by Eleanor's own mannerisms, so much so that they would be amazed at how well she embodied the character.[11]

These specific actors were picked among thousands of others for their impressions, their voices and even their mannerisms which serves to prove just how much detail was put into making this film the best that it can be with the time and resources that they had. Some of the actors already had their names tied to the other Disney films, and yet, they made these new characters feel completely unique. They needed people who could do both the voice acting, and some of the acting for live-action sequences, so in a way, the actors had to literally become these characters. They did not have to shoot the entirety of the film, so the live-action process was not the same like shooting a movie, but they still had to act out the more complex scenes in order to provide animators with quality references. Once they were put into costumes, it made the entire filming feel that much more real.

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[10] Taken from "Picture Perfect" Costa quoting Disney, 00:25:17-00:25:29.
[11] Taken from "Picture Perfect" 00:24:30-00:29:47.

Disney demanded to have the characters look realistic and faithful to the actual human appearance which was another reason for having live action references (Maltin 42). They did not merely trace all of the steps to create the animation, but only used it as inspiration by taking their time to analyse the footage and thus, learn from it. The animators regarded the live action shots and separated the unnecessary movements which left them with references for the needed scenes, like the dance scene in the forest or the fight with the dragon and the end.[12] Another way to achieve the vision of realistic appearances was done by learning from other works of art, such as Renato Castellani's *Romeo and Juliet* (1954) which features zoomed in shots of Juliet's sleeping form. Those scenes ended up looking quite similar to those of Aurora while she is under her curse (Allan 297).

However, the realism Walt wanted could not be so easily accomplished in an animated feature, there had to be some limitations. There was only so much that they could draw and have it still properly function. The animators had to know what could and could not be drawn, and what had to be prioritized. Ultimately, this is why so many of the background characters act simply as room-fillers. The opening sequence follows the arrival of large groups, most of which are drawn with very minimal facial features, often with their eyes closed or wearing armour that covers the entirety of their faces. The first full set of face features that the film shows are that of the King and the Queen, followed by King Hubert and Prince Phillip. Only the characters important to the scene were animated and drawn in detail. Still, one important feature that marks a human's appearance was omitted, and that was eye colour. All of the characters featured in the film just have a set of black pupils. This was definitely a deliberate choice done by the crew because in some previous Disney movies the characters had irises, even the non-human characters in *Lady and the Tramp*

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[12] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:19:40-00:20:27.

(1955). But, still there are a few exceptions to this omission in *Sleeping Beauty*, thus, in a couple of shots the characters were provided with eye colour. The most notable is during Aurora's awakening, and the close up on her face. When her eyes open the audience is presented with a set of piercing blue eyes. It could be argued that providing Aurora with eye colour in this specific scene was extremely important for its impact. After the battle with Maleficent which was the film's action climax, lifting Aurora's curse with the true love's kiss was the emotional core of the film. If she had just awoken and her eyes were solid-black it would lessen the effect of the scene, the moment when the audience truly realizes that the protagonists had won. Some of the other exceptions happen during close-ups on other characters, so, sometimes one of the fairies would have brown or blue eyes in one scene, but in the next she would go back to having no irises. The same could be noted for Phillip, who had brown eyes on a small number of occasions. Even though omitting irises was done to cut some corners during animating and achieve a stylized look, it does take away from the realistic aspects of the film.

There also happened to be several lapses in production which both Walt and the studio failed to notice. One such occurs in a scene between Prince Philip and his father. The prince, who is significantly slimmer, picks up and spins his father, who weighs around 250 pounds. This was a sort of thing that Walt Disney would have never missed or allowed in his prior projects (Barrier 271).

A comparable set of scenes that seemed to have been overlooked, occur while the three fairies are preparing a surprise for Aurora's birthday. The scenes in question are the making of the dress and preparing the cake. Fauna is trying to bake a cake for Aurora by following a recipe which tells her to add eggs. She proceeds to do so, but without removing the shells. She puts the whole eggs in-between the dough and then smashes them inside. In the same sequence Flora and Merryweather

are unsuccessfully attempting to make a dress by just cutting holes in the fabric and pinning it in various places. Moreover, Flora, who is in charge, models the dress on Merryweather who is completely different from Aurora in both body type and height. So, even if she was good at making the dress, it would be way too large on a much skinnier and taller body.

The film uses these scenes as comedy, even going so far as to joke about them within the movie. Merryweather comments how the dress looks awful and Flora responds by saying that it is just because it is being styled on her. In another scene Merryweather even says: "But you can't sow and she has never cooked," which only solidifies this example.[13]

The audience is shown that they have been caring for Aurora for sixteen years, and somehow, they do not know how to cook nor how to make clothes. They created their peasant dresses with magic prior to taking Aurora out of the kingdom and then hid their wands. So, even if the viewers are led to believe that they just reuse their own clothes, the same cannot be said for a growing child that they had to clothe for sixteen years. One could argue that they might have been buying the dresses, but they lived in the middle of an empty forest, so it was hardly the solution. It is the same with using eggs for baking. There is no way that they did not learn how to cook for an entire decade and a half. While this entire sequence was clearly done for comedic relief and to flash out the fairies' personalities, it still poses a question of believability.

4.1. The Animation Style

Eyvind Earle had brought not only his own sense of style to the backgrounds, but to the design of the characters as well. Contrary to the previous works of Disney Studios and their rounded designs, known as the "Disney style", *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), featured a new type of style, and

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[13] Taken from *Sleeping Beauty* 00:20:03-00:20:07.

that was angular. By making the character contours more pointed and geometric they achieved an angular contemporary design (Allan 297). The biggest departure from this innovation became the three good fairies, whose clothes were made with geometric shapes, while their faces retained the "Disneyesque" roundness.[14]

The three fairies have some similarities to the design of the Fairy Godmother from *Cinderella* (1950). She was drawn as an older, plump woman who wore extremely baggy and wide clothes, coloured periwinkle with some pink details. In the same way, the three good fairies are designed as middle-aged, chubby women who share that inviting, warm feeling of comforting, almost parental figures. So, they had to keep that Disney magic with their pudgy faces, but also blend in with the rest of the angular character designs through their clothing. However, the new style was definitely prominent in the other characters such as King Stefan, Aurora, Maleficent and Phillip. Looking at Aurora's design especially, in comparison to her predecessor Snow White, the difference is very noticeable. Not only are Snow White's face and hair a lot softer with entirely rounded edges, it also extends to her clothing with the curved collar and puffed, circle-shaped sleeves. On the other hand, Aurora's face is elongated with high cheekbones, her dress has a pointed top-piece and the angular style also ranges to the way her body curves within the dress. Wherever there is a curve, it is sharp and precise, whereas before it would have been soft and rounded. Trying to imagine Aurora with plump cheeks just does not fit her character. The angularity of her silhouette gives her this strict semblance, making her appear confident and maybe even older than she is. Whilst the plump cheeks on Snow White present her as kind, compassionate and child-like.

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[14] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:12:50-00:13:09:00.

4.2. The Backgrounds

One of Disney's other wishes was to make the film illustrative and decorative, a "moving illustration" of sorts. It would mean that if a viewer decided to pause a film at any point, they would see a beautiful and well-structured picture, almost as if it were a painting.[15] The vision that Disney had revolved around illuminated manuscripts dating from the fifteenth century France. Eyvind Earle was a person that everything else had to stem from. His backgrounds were incredible works that drew inspiration from other art styles and periods such as van Eyck, Duc de Berry (Solomon 207) and miniature tapestries from medieval times, like the tapestry of a unicorn, exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Arts (Barrier 271). Kelly noted that the castle in the film bears similarities to Château de Saumur and the Louvre, both buildings located in France that were showcased in September and October inside the *Book of Hours* (196). Along with the medieval inspiration, Eyvind Earle remarks how there was a lot of Gothicism that he took from the Persians and their attention to detail when it came to painting the trees and the grass. But, Charles Solomon, an animation historian describes how the film is not only gothic, but of the contemporary style of the 1950's as well.[16] Earle's touch was said to be present in almost every single background in the film, but especially in the central scenes).[17]

Duc de Berry's influence is evident in the backgrounds dedicated to the landscape surrounding the castle, along with the forest in which a segment of the film took place. The scenery contains plain fields of evenly painted green grass with lines of trees scattered through the landscape. It is both detailed in regards to the number of things featured on it, and plain in regards to the texture and the colouring. All the trees are drawn condensed to give an illusion of a forest

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[15] Taken from "Audio commentary" 00:06:29-00:07:00.
[16] Taken from "The Picture Perfect" 00:09:53 - 00:10:07.
[17] Taken from "Eyvind Earle" 00:06:25-00:06:46.

with castles that can be spotted in the distance. Earle uses a similar approach when painting the lavish forest scenery for *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). Much like the *Book of Hours*, he used a single shade of green to paint all of the grass surfaces, together with the tightly drawn trees to give depth to the forest. But, unlike Duc de Berry's, Earle's plants and background objects all had patterns and precisely done textures.

However, the detailed backgrounds posed as a predicament for the animation team. They were so intricate that the characters had to be designed in order to properly fit them and they had to stand firm, able to be distinguished from the backdrops and be seen as individual pieces, rather than blends within the landscape (Barrier 272). Eyvind Earle wanted to have the full control over the way it was done, providing the animators with very specific rules. And despite the ideas of other crew members about some of the designs, Earle could not be argued with.[18]

Some parts of the *Book of Hours* contain a certain business to them. There are crowds of people in vibrant clothes against a background that is coloured just as starkly that it gets difficult to separate the characters from what is behind them. A similar thing is present in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) in a couple of scenes. An example is in the throne room when the three fairies talk about Maleficent's curse. The room itself is built from brownish brick with a coquelicot draping over it, two thrones with red cushions and with green ottomans at their feet and a mustard yellow carpet that leads up to them. Off to the side is a table with a blue tablecloth and silver and golden dishes. All of these furniture pieces contain additional patterns which makes them look incredibly busy. Altogether that is without counting in the fairies who are also present in the scene. Their assigned colours, blue, green and red stand out only because the fairies move. Their placement in the scene had to be deliberate and carefully planned out because if they positioned one of them just a few

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[18] Taken from "The Picture Perfect" 00:14:12-00:14:40.

steps away, they would end up blending into the background. In the scene where they hide within an ornament, the background colour is blue with a red crest which are the two colours used for the fairies. In order to have the scene work, the background is muted, almost dark while the fairies' clothing is bright. Like this, it can be argued that their presence does clash with the colours, but they are distinguishable enough because they are constantly moving.

Usually, the sense of depth in films was acquired through making the distant objects smaller and blurred, but for *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) everything was made to be in focus. It was claimed that by doing it this way, the viewers' eyes can take in all the precise details (Allan 297).

It allows the viewers to really *feel* the setting of each scene. For example, the arrival of King Hubert and Prince Phillip to the throne room shows not only them with King Stefan and the Queen, but also the lavish banquet tables, attenders of the christening, sconces lining the stone walls, the smallest of details on the two royal thrones, the rough, yet extremely thorough texture of the pillars and so much more. And even though it does make the scenes look slightly busy, it also makes the experience of watching it that much more immersive. As if the viewer is transported back in time and exists within the 14th century castle. It can also be felt in all of the forest scenes with Aurora. Each tree has distinguishable barks and carvings, bushes and treetops all have their individually drawn leaves and patterns. It starts to feel like you as an audience member are a part of the movie. If compared to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), which also takes place in a forest, the blunt difference between the two styles is noticeable right away. The earlier film lacks the crisp detailing by blurring the background imagery, and a lot of the colouring is done in sort of a plain and washed-out way which is reasonable because it was their first big feature. It just goes to show the big improvement that the studio has had, and how each film can offer unique ideas that will serve as its signature mark and differentiate it from the rest.

4.3. The Character Design

The female protagonist of the film, Princess Aurora, was seen as the female ideal of the 1950s for a lot of teenage girls, as her story revolved around her 16th birthday with the decisions and maturing that follow along with it (Mollet 37). All the while Maleficent is presented as the most frightening and the most recognizable antagonist in any Disney film at that time. She is both striking and terrifying and it was all achieved through sophistication (Lammin). Marc Davis, an animator working on the film, wanted to shape her into the epitome of terror by making her look more monstrous and less human. He achieves it through her horn-shaped headpiece and a high collar with a long black and purple cloak. Her face is triangular with grey skin that has green undertones and the yellow sclerae which are usually white. With her sharpness, purple makeup, pink lipstick and neatly done eyebrows, she is presented as the *femme fatale* (Allan 299). Marc Davis designed her as a "giant vampire bat". She barely has physical contact with anyone and mostly recites speeches at others (Kalamakurki).

The inspiration provided by Duc de Berry's manuscript the *Book of Hours*, specifically August, May and April, is not present only in the backgrounds of the film, but appears in the costumes as well. Within the opening scenes of Aurora's christening, large groups of people are featured wearing nearly identical styles of clothing as people presented in the *Book of Hours*. Apart from Duc de Berry's work, the designers also referenced the live-action film *Henry V* (1944), where women wore clothes of the Middle Ages, with longer sleeves that touched the ground and draped high-waisted skirts. Those types of dresses are called kirtles which are often paired with cone-shaped headpieces. While men wore either suits of armour or hoses with shoes pointed at the ends (Kalmakurki).

The scene which best showcases all of these costuming instances is the christening. The film deliberately opens up with the arrival of the guests, showing the audience varying floor-length gowns with long sleeves and distinct headpieces. The Queen wears a crown with a veil underneath it, the fairies have cone-shaped hats and coifs that wrap around their chins and among the members of the crowd the viewers can spot how some women have two triangular headpieces or hats with feathers atop of them. Notably, Aurora ends up wearing only a simple tiara, without any lush attachments, possibly to emphasize her modesty.

 Alice Davis, a costume designer, was assigned to work on Aurora's dress. She explained how the dress was meant to be a dirndl, a high-waisted wide skirt shaped like a bell, with the ability to spin along with Aurora's movements, especially during the dancing sequence.[19] Marc Davis, Alice's husband, was the man in charge of designing the film's protagonist and antagonist and doing so in a way that has not been done before. Aurora's early development drawings existed in small amounts, and her final design ended up really resembling them. Unlike Cinderella and Snow White, who both had multiple changes done to their early sketches (Kalmakurki). While Marc drew what he wanted from the costumes, Alice made sure to make it for live-action actresses.[20] Aurora's dress was an x-silhouette style dress with a collar. The simplicity of it was a careful choice, aimed to capture her kindness and to match with the rest of her good personality. The colour and the costumes themselves only served to emphasize and go along with the characters' personalities (Kalmakurki).

Aurora's design captures her princessy nature while still keeping her as a modest and likable character. Her inviting persona is apparent through the gifts provided to her by the fairies. Flora

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[19] Taken from "The Picture Perfect" 00:27:09-00:27:20.
[20] Taken from "The Picture Perfect" 00:27:20-00:27:29.

had given her beauty which is presented through her flawless blonde hair and elegant posture. In some way she almost resembles a Barbie doll. Other than that, her design shows her carefree spirit. She is absorbed in her simple life, and yet, craves to know more about the world around her, especially when it comes to meeting other people. This is seen during her initial meeting with Phillip. At first, she is acting cautious, but quickly starts to like him because he is the first person apart from the fairies that she meets. A similar thing happens at the end when Phillip and Aurora present themselves to their parents. Aurora is quick to embrace her parents even if they are complete strangers to her, and kiss King Hubert on the cheek after he gets confused over hers and Philip's relationship.

4.4. The Colour Analysis

Unlike Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937*)*, where Disney wished to coordinate the colouring and the characters, so that the backgrounds would not take away from the story (Smoodin 68), in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) the idea was completely opposite. Disney valued the work of Eyvind Earle so much that his input went above everyone else's. He refused to see what the others were seeing, and some of Earle's choices did not benefit the film. "Walt didn't back them on this. He wanted the design to carry the picture,".[21] Eyvind's work consisted of layer painting, beginning with a simple darker shape to which he would add a brighter colour on the top. He stated how he once had to present the way he did his backgrounds, and he proceeded to do so through panels. They ranged from a black square to a completed piece and helped the others understand his way of painting.[22]

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[21] Taken from "The Picture Perfect", Canemaker 00:15:01-00:15:07.
[22] Taken from "Eyvind Earle", 00:05:46-06:27.

As previously mentioned, a lot of the scenes tended to look over-crowded with a lot of colours appearing all at once. However, in some scenes colour served to add visual interest. For example, all of the scenes inside Maleficent's castle have the same ogre-green and greyish walls and feature her lackeys who are painted brown and black. So, when a character such as Maleficent comes out wearing black and purple, she stands out. She becomes the centre of each scene. Additionally, when she uses her lightning on her servants, the magic is light purple which attracts the attention of the viewers' eyes. In contrast to the dim backdrops, a bright colour really pops out and gives the scene the much-needed interest. Another example of the colours guiding the scene is after Aurora pricks herself. The fairies realize that the entire kingdom will be mourning their princess, so they make the decision to put everyone to sleep until she wakes up. The vibrant colours of all of the guests, the rooms, the clothes and the castle itself are suddenly replaced by a green hue, symbolizing the curse and the stale state of the kingdom. It presents the dire situation in which evil forces seem to thrive and win. But then Phillip arrives into the scenes. He is not affected by the spells, so the colouring on him is still bright. He serves as the key factor because when he kisses Aurora and she awakes, the kingdom gets revived and the colours return to the scene, representing the awakening, a new beginning and the win of the protagonists.

4.4.1. The Colour Symbolism

Choosing a colour palette and applying it to a specific character has been going on since the early films in colour. Not only did it serve as that character's staple, but oftentimes it served to show some of their personalities too. So, the viewers could note how darker and bolder colours were chosen for the villains, and pastel and soft ones for the protagonists.

McGuire conducted research of the most frequently used colours for Disney characters and what they can represent about them. Her and her coworkers singled out around forty villains and

heroes from whom they picked out prevailing colours. For this part, the paper will focus on purple, blue, black and red (McGuire). In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), the usage of stark colours for the character of the Evil Queen was meant to set her apart from the protagonists and emphasize her evil nature. So, when the viewers compare her to Snow White, they are met with a much calmer tone and a completely opposite character type (Smoodin 70).

Contrary to the vibrant colours which were once used only for intensity of a single character, *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) uses them all throughout the film. Right from the beginning, it can be noted that the characters in the background are dressed in lavish, bright shades. And while the colour black is still connected to the antagonist, the colour red, once used for the Evil Queen, has been appointed to one of the main characters, the fairy Flora.

According to McGuire, the colour red is connected to passion, persistence and rage which mostly represent the antagonist characters, like Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* (1953) and the Evil Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).

However, it can also be the case for heroes, such as Prince Phillip and Flora from *Sleeping Beauty*, as both of them show determination and passion throughout the film. Phillip by going against his father's wishes to marry a princess and by fighting Maleficent to reach Aurora. And Flora by coming up with the plan to raise Aurora in the woods and being presented as the decision-maker who wants to do anything to find the best outcome for an uncertain situation.

The introduction to Snow White's character is done in a way that completely sets her apart from the Evil Queen. While the scenes with the Queen are all in intense colours of red, white, black and blue, the ones with the princess are a watered-downed version with soft and pale colouring. Snow White is dressed in almost boring brown clothes compared to the Queen's. It is only after

that the audience sees her in her signature blue and yellow dress. And regardless of the major difference in their backgrounds and clothing colours, the two characters are still connected through red, blue, yellow and black. This way the audience can note that they are connected, but still differentiate that the Queen is evil, and Snow White is good (Smoodin 70).

A similar connection through colour palette can be noticed in *Sleeping Beauty*, but instead of it connecting the main protagonist with the antagonist, it connects the main female and the main male character, Aurora and Phillip. Each character besides them has their unique colour palette which stays consistent throughout the film. Their connection lays in more than just on-screen interactions, it happens in the choices of their clothing colours as well.

When Prince Phillip is introduced, he is a mere child who is being forced into an arranged marriage. It is his duty as a Prince to get engaged to a girl, whom he has never met. He has no knowledge as to why this action is necessary, but he has to obey due to his royal status as the heir to the throne, and therefore, obligation to continue the family line. For this occasion, he is wearing blue.

The colour blue is the colour of heroes, often regarding the positive traits of loyalty and stability (McGuire). In this scene, Phillip is being loyal to his father, and with that to his kingdom, offering them stability in a sense that their family legacy will continue just as they had planned.

Similarly, the first time Aurora appears in blue is after the fairies reveal to her that she is a princess meant to marry a prince and that they have to return her to the castle and reunite her with her parents. To symbolize her transition into the high-class society, she is dressed into a blue gown and this is the first change of her colour palette. After being confronted by the fairies, she is forced to accept her role as a part of the royal bloodline without being given much choices in the matter.

And even though she has been shown crying, ultimately, she accepts her new path and follows the fairies back towards the kingdom. Not long after, Aurora is at last forced under the sleeping curse and laid into a bed while still wearing her blue gown. Taking the circumstances in which the two characters wear blue into account, it can be hypothesized that the colour blue signifies royal duty which is similar to McGuire's claim of it symbolizing loyalty.

Phillip's second scene shows him riding his horse towards King Stefan's castle when he gets distracted by the sound of Aurora's singing and decides to find its source. This time he is wearing a cloak and a hat, both of which are red. It is the colour which has been used to symbolize love and passion for decades. Coincidently, the following sequences of scenes are the ones during his meeting with Aurora whom he falls in love with at first sight. Aiming to find the source of the singing, he accidentally falls into a pond, leaving his red attire soaked. Underneath the cloak, his clothes are brown and black. Similarly, while she is living disguised as a peasant in the middle of the woods, Aurora's wardrobe is plain, with dull colours of beige and black that help to emphasize her lower status in society. Colour wise, they are similar to Phillip's, albeit much simpler due to the difference in their status. So, once they meet for the first time, both of them are wearing simple, natural colours. The following events show them starting to fall in love, still completely unaware of who the other is. Phillip does not care that she is a villager, and she does not know he is a prince, but neither knows of their actual relation to one another. Their colour palette at that moment factors as their normalcy, without royal expectations. The similarity and almost matching of colours adds to show that for those couple of moments, they can simply exist as equals, making these colours symbols of equality.

After their meeting, Phillip is captured and later on rescued by the fairies, all while wearing his red cloak over the brown clothes. The fulfilment of his destiny as the prince comes when he

ultimately defeats the antagonist, Maleficent, all while wearing red. The succeeding scene is the second shared moment between Phillip and Aurora which contains the well-known true love's kiss. During the scene Aurora is still not aware that the prince is the same stranger she loves. She is still dressed in blue. And Phillip, who does know her identity and is now simply following his heart, wears red. Upon waking up, Aurora is made aware of the entire truth and chooses to be with Phillip. The two decide to share the news to their families which is when the second change of Aurora's colour palette comes into play. It is of course, the famous switching between the blue and the pink dress done by the fairies. Pink is, of course, just a lighter shade of red, the colour Phillip is wearing. Having all of these scenes in mind, together with what they represented in the journey of the characters, red would be the colour of freedom. To solidify this hypothesis, the closing scene of the film features a kiss between Phillip and Aurora. Now, when they know who the other is, after they have both fulfilled their destinies and when they have the freedom to choose their partners, they still choose each other. The sequence ends with the book closing, but not before showing Phillip in his red coat and Aurora in her pink dress.

Maleficent

As another one of the film's more significant characters, Maleficent's role as the villain is signified by the usage of black clothing along with her inhuman appearance. But, a more interesting part of her characterization is the interchangeability between her green and purple powers. This is barely noticeable while watching the film for the first time because for the majority of the time her powers are green. But during a couple of instances, it can be noticed that they change to purple. The first time that it happens, Maleficent is punishing her lackeys and a purplish lightning erupts from her sceptre. The same thing transpires later on in the film when she is attacking Phillip as he flees the castle. She tries to stop him by summoning deadly thorns, using purple magic. And the

only other time purple is being linked to Maleficent, is during her death, as she disappears into a cloud of purple smoke. This, of course could be just a choice made to emphasize the scenes and create a visible contrast with green, but it could be argued that purple signifies her natural power or the power which arises and/or affects the world of nature.

What supports this theory is that purple is primarily a colour connected to villains, or used for royalty, richness and desire for power. Both the character of Maleficent and of the Evil Queen are represented by the purple in their clothing, both are shown to live in castles with servants, making them rich and both have different ways of wanting to acquire power. While the Evil Queen's desire is for beauty, Maleficent's is for vengeance (McGuire).

In regards to green, it is a colour most often associated with jealousy and the same could be said for Maleficent. The entire reason for casting her curse on a baby is the envy she feels towards the rest of the kingdom who got invited to the christening while she was isolated. As already mentioned, the colour scheme of the sleeping curse is very much green. Maleficent is so fuelled by jealousy and the need for revenge that she transforms into a dragon, adamant not to let the protagonist side win. And instead of her fire being red, like many would expect, it is green, just like her powers in the human form. But, once she dies, her body returns to the ground, evaporating in purple smoke. This is why it could also be theorized that purple is the magic she was born with. Maleficent is still a fairy, regardless of her appearance, and fairy magic usually stems from nature. However, green is for the magic and the spells she has learned and acquired throughout life.

5. The Main Character

The definition of a main character is a simple one. According to Syd, it is a character around whom the main action is centred. They undergo the central conflict and drive the entire story forward. It is who remains once all the apprehensions within the plot are removed (47).

If going by the name, *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora would be the main character of the Disney's 1959 film. She is presented as one in all the merchandise, in the Disney parks around the world, and on Disney's official website. But, when her character is compared to the many definitions of the main character, could she still be considered as one?

Even though she is central to the plot, "she holds the least power in her journey, passive to the point at which she spends a lot of the animation asleep waiting for her prince," the studio made her into a subordinate character whose only purpose is to be a pretty object that the kingdom should desire with only one simple goal of marrying Phillip (Wilde 136).

Unlike Snow White and Cinderella who were prominent in their films and were the ones driving the plot forward, Aurora's role in her own film is particularly different. She is placed in a lesser role while everybody else has more screentime and even more personality than her. All the audience can deduct about Aurora is that she wants to be treated more like an adult now that she is sixteen, and that she is in love with Phillip. That is pretty much everything there is to know about her as a character. Through the entirety of the movie, she only appears in six scenes, one of which is as an infant who cannot speak. But arguably, even as a teenager, her presence is largely overshadowed by everyone else's. When she does speak, she mostly sings and when she talked it was only for eighteen lines. The majority of the film actually follows the fairies who have ten scenes that are largely more significant for the film's narrative. They are the ones gifting Aurora with their magic at the start, it is them who decide to raise her for sixteen years, they free Phillip from Maleficent and Flora is the fairy who casts the spell which ultimately drives Phillip's sword through the dragon's body and kills Maleficent. It can certainly be said that their presence is significant enough to drive the plot onwards.

As neither Aurora nor Phillip has particularly interesting stories, the film shines throughout the secondary characters, Fauna, Flora and Merryweather (Lammin). According to Thomas and Johnston, the fairies served as a delightful addition to the story, making it warmer and sentimental with their distinct personalities. The fairies move the story from just being a set of random scenes to becoming closer to the viewers, grabbing their interest and involvement (404). But, authors like Mollet argue that the fairies, Merryweather especially serve more as sidekicks and underdogs then main characters (40).

Comparing Aurora to the same character in the previous written versions of the story, she does not have the same influence nor prevalence in the film. Maleficent, who is the representation of evil, gets a more significant role than Aurora and the same can be said for Phillip (Birk).

Second to the fairies, the person with the second largest number of scenes is Maleficent. As a character with nine scenes, and the person who sets the story in motion by cursing Aurora, she could arguably be the perfect candidate for the role of the main character. But there is also a really trivial reason as to why she is not. Maleficent is the narrative's villain. And Disney Studios' key goal always was to appeal to children and their parents. Placing an antagonist into the main role would receive a lot of criticism and backlash, especially because the film was produced after the Second World War.

Maleficent, just like all the previous Disney villains, serves as the complete opposition to the kind and virtuous heroes. Oftentimes, people draw parallels between her and Lady Tremaine from *Cinderella*, as both show instances of jealousy and wish to have power (Mollet 39).

And the third potential character who could fit into this role is Prince Phillip. He is the one whom Aurora falls in love with, the character that undergoes both an emotional conflict by

disobeying his father's order to marry a princess, and by being the only person who can wake up Aurora from her curse. As much as the fairies, he can be called a pivotal asset to the story. And even though he fights Maleficent and manages to defeat her with the help of the fairies, his role in the movie is still very simple. He is nothing more than Aurora's love interest.

But, in the early Disney films that is what made him powerful to the story. Without him the film would have had to stop right after Aurora falls into her enchanted sleep as nothing but his kiss could wake her (Davis).

To answer this peculiar debate, one simple question has to be answered. What brings all of these characters into the story in the first place? And as simple as the question is, the answer is even more unassuming, they are there because of Aurora. The entire story of this film begins with Aurora's christening and the conflict happens because of Maleficent's wish for vengeance upon the princess. Underneath all of the other plot points, without the life in hiding, without Phillip's imprisonment, without the need to fight and defeat the villain, what remains is Aurora. She is the one character who connects all of the others. With the curse present, all of the other events fall into place. For the majority of the time, the film follows the other characters, but their actions undoubtedly revolve around Aurora and breaking her curse.

6. Reception and Criticism

Upon its release, many comparisons were made between *Sleeping Beauty* and the other princess films, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella* which criticized the film for being too maladroit (Maltin 42), and that the viewers simply saw the princess movies as fairytale copies of each together and reusing the same elements through different films (Mollet 37). Allan speculated about the possible reasons for the movie's downfall. He attributed it to the lack of appeal, making the viewers disconnected from the story (236). The plot of the film in itself is nothing spectacular,

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but the gorgeous visuals made up for it (Lammin). Despite its bad results, the film still served as incredible finale of the famous "Disney style", because after it the studio made their work a lot more modest (Solomon 200).

Since its release, the film has had new chances to shine, especially since its cinema showing in 1996 and the release of two video versions (Allan 236). Today, it is seen as a marvellous product of Disney's company with a sense of maturity which the prior films lacked (Maltin 42), and some even call it "one of the crown jewels" of the Disney studio. It was able to showcase animation as a form of art, as the backgrounds really were like individual paintings (Lammin).

A well-rounded conclusion on the debate of *Sleeping Beauty's* success can be depicted by using a quote from Eric Larson: "Even if you had the money to make '*Sleeping Beauty'* today, where would you find the talent?" (Solomon 200).

This statement was true for the end of 1970's when it was said, but it also holds true to this day. Times have drastically changed and the ways of film production along with it. Nothing has to be done manually when there is a program and a digital device for everything. And it may be why the films nowadays just do not feel as perfected. Disney has been receiving major backlash for their newly released films with claims that they are not nearly as good as they were before. And while that in itself can be a separate topic of discussion, the key aspect is that nothing will ever be the same as it was over sixty years ago. The crew working at the studio had been a well-accomplished and motivated one with some of the best animators and designers of their time. Today, it is no longer the case and no matter who gets hired, the movies just will not reach the same level of greatness. And the reason is that everyone works differently, especially when given different resources and tools. One could argue that even if the same crew from the 1950's was given the task of recreating *Sleeping Beauty* today, the film would end up looking very differently than in 1959.

This does not have to be a bad thing, as it is only natural to adapt with the world and not get stuck in the past.

7. Conclusion

Sleeping Beauty (1959) has brought about many changes to the classic Disney animation during its long production process. The central person who was responsible for giving this film the look that it has was Eyvind Earle. He had departed from the rounded styling and created a new angular style, based on geometric shapes and sharp edges of the characters. Earle had also produced extremely detailed backgrounds which were along with the characters put into focus. This has never been done before and has resulted in some of the scenes being overwhelming to look at. In order to ease this, he adjusted the brightness of the background to make it dimmer, and put characters into constant movements. If there had not been for Walt's neglect and allowing Earle to take over, we would not have the same style or look that the film has today. The characters were all designed with specific colour palettes in mind, and Aurora and Philip ended up being connected through the colouring of their clothes. This highlighted the evolvement of their storylines, so, when they were wearing blue, they were tied to their royal status and obligations, when they were wearing simple colours, like brown, it was symbolizing equality and once they were both wearing red, they were owning their freedom. Maleficent was tied to her two types of magic, purple which originates from and affects nature, and green that stems from her vengeance and desire for power. Regardless of its lovable set of characters, *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) is one of those movies where the viewers can debate over who is supposed to be the main character as Aurora plays only a small role within the film. Despite their large number of scenes and speaking lines, the fairies, Maleficent and Philip are still seen as side characters, and all because Aurora is the actual catalyst of the film's main events. At the end it is the combination of all of these elements that resulted in the film we get to watch

today. From being presented as innovative and unique to being viewed as a disaster after its release, the film had undergone a lot of positives and negatives. Nowadays, it is famous for its intriguing design, menacing villain and the overall plot. *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) is an original and creative work of art which rightfully proves just how well a film can age in time. It became a classic by showing the world another side of innovative and presenting how things that are different do not necessarily have to be considered bad.

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THE STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF DISNEY'S *SLEEPING BEAUTY* (1959): Summary and Key Words:

This paper revolves around the elements regarded as the stylistic components of the film *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). The body is divided into five segments, the first gives an insight into the origins of the story and the other four analyze factors which affected the films production,

style and reception. The main focus is on the analysis of stylistic, coloring and character aspects that all contributed to the overall look of the film.

STILSKA ANALIZA DISNEYJEVE *TRNORUŽICE* (1959): Sažetak i ključne riječi:

Ovaj se rad fokusira na elemente koji sačinjavaju stilske komponente filma *Trnoružica* (1959). Razrada se dijeli u pet segmenata; prvi daje uvid u nastanak priče, dok ostala četiri dijela analiziraju elemente koji su utjecali na produkciju, stil i recepciju filma. Naglašava se analiza stila, boje i likova koji su doprinijeli cjelokupnom izgledu filma.