



**19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY SLEEPING BEAUTIES: ANALYSIS OF AN ARCHETYPE**

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Physical representation is one way humans understand each other. Historically, portraits have been important for state and familial records, as well as remembrances. Regardless of when a portrait was painted, viewers are able to gain insights into the anxieties and ideals of an age based on visual nuances in portraiture. For example, viewers of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* are offered insights about Renaissance Humanistic ideals and the priority of masculinity in her smile and body. Indeed, the images we project about people matter because they communicate what humans value. Fairy tales also project an image of what it is to be human while weaving that story around gender relations. This research argues the necessity of fairy tales in the Pre-Raphaelite period, when fairy tales and painting together expressed their visions of humanity through gender relations.

When *Sleeping Beauty* reached peak popularity in the late nineteenth century, it impacted the diverse discourses of literature, psychology, architecture, and the political economy of English Victorian society, as well as the fine arts. I argue that the most famous painters of the period, the Pre-Raphaelites, used fundamental conventions of Renaissance art to represent the tale, and in turn, used conventions of the tale to visually represent docile and voluptuous women in painting. The dialogue between Pre-Raphaelite Victorian art and the *Sleeping Beauty* tale that so heavily influenced the period offers us insights into how men understood women in the nineteenth-century. Both art forms have historically played a part in shaping the image we have today of what it means to be a woman. This research reminds its audience that representation is a powerful way for culture to tell its story and exposes gender stereotypes promoted through the Golden Age of illustration.