



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

**Grimm's Rapunzel evolving
into a Disney Princess**

B.A. Essay

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Abstract

In this essay, the author will explore how the environment of different authors and filmmakers shape short fairy-tales like Rapunzel by the Grimm's brothers. The author is a feminist at heart, and for that reason, and because the protagonist is a girl, the focus is on what kind of character Rapunzel portrays. Rapunzel changes from being a daughter of poor parents that have to give her away, into a princess that got stolen from her parents. In order to show some variations on the fairytale "Rapunzel", and to look closely at repeating patterns and changes, the essay starts by looking at the original version by the Grimm's brothers. Then also to clearly show the change that the environment has on "Rapunzel", the essay will cover related fairy-tales from different countries. Following the coverage of the fairy-tales, two full length Rapunzel animations, intended for children, will be closely inspected. After which two books for an older circle of readers will be analysed. By looking firstly at the animations for children, and then at the books for adults, it is possible to see how the role of Rapunzel also changes as the age group being targeted changes. Towards the end there will be some speculation on the strength of women characters like Rapunzel, and how they might be shaping the ideas and behaviour of women all over the globe. The essay will end with a small summary, scrutinizing the protagonist, Rapunzel. Although the author is showing mostly a feminist kind of reading on Rapunzel, she hopes to leave a rather open ending for the reader to build his own opinions on.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Grimm's Rapunzel.....	3
3	Origins	6
3.1	Petrosinella and The Fair Angiola.....	6
3.2	Juan and Clotilde.....	7
4	Animations	9
4.1	Barbie as Rapunzel	9
4.2	Tangled.....	11
5	Difference between authors	14
5.1	Kerriane Coombes	14
5.1.1	Characters	15
5.2	KC Hilton.....	16
5.2.1	Similarities.....	18
6	Strong women characters and the media	20
7	Summarize and last words.....	23
	Works Cited	25

1 Introduction

Rapunzel has grown from being a poor girl that got cheated by her parents, into being a real princess with lots of different powers. The company Walt Disney reconstructs something old and unrealistic at the same time it reflects society in America as it is at present time. This essay will argue that even though Disney makes some subtle changes to the image of old folktale like "Rapunzel" by the Grimm's brothers, that other authors are doing the same thing and are not always aiming for the audience of children, like Disney does, but taking it a step further and making it into some kind of an adult romance. This essay will be approaching the subject through the roles of women in Rapunzel and how they change as the environment of the story changes. It will begin with the story of the poor girl "Rapunzel" by the Grimm's brothers, then look at different origins of "Rapunzel", after which it will go towards the princess Rapunzel in different versions of the story including the movie versions of *Barbie as Rapunzel* from 2002, and Disney's *Tangled*, from 2010.

It is remarkable why Rapunzel has been converted to a princess, even though in the beginning she did not become one until she married the prince. The parents too gained a nobler stance as the years passed. They went from being bad parents giving up their daughter, into being good parents who had their child kidnapped from them. Likewise the character of Rapunzel changes and she gains more depth at the same time she turns into one of the Disney princesses with her identity being questioned.

Today there are numerous princesses emerging to the spotlight and they have become somewhat the role models for the younger generation, where companies like Disney sell products related to the princesses (Disney Princess). Since Walt Disney is as widespread around the globe as it is today and has been for the past years, the focus of the media, parents and others concerned with the younger generation is constantly on the company. For that reason, Disney is trying to meet the demands of everyone, and that can be seen in how the princesses of Disney have evolved since they stepped into the limelight, but that might be a topic for yet another essay.

Instead of taking up Disney as the main topic, this essay will focus more on the original tale by Grimm's brothers and then look at remakes like that by Disney. By doing that it becomes clear that although Disney can have immense affect, it is not the one shaping stories like Rapunzel into a Princess, but rather that it is the society that does it without the help of Disney. Disney can also be said to be "merely following tradition" (Warner 366). For an instance, *Tangled* came after Barbie's *Barbie as Rapunzel*, and there she had already become a princess.

2 Grimm's Rapunzel

Since this essay will be focusing on "Rapunzel" by the Grimm's brothers, it is most appropriate to start by going through their version of the story. "Rapunzel" is a popular children's fairy-tale and has been so for a long time. The first thought that comes to mind when thinking of "Rapunzel" is, a beautiful princess, with very long, blond hair, that falls down the window of a high tower, where she is locked up. The prince must climb up Rapunzel's hair to save her. Other details seem to vary more between versions of the story.

The version the Grimm's brothers stumbled upon was told by a woman in waiting, named Mademoiselle de La Force, who had written it in 1698, when she was bored and waiting for her own prince to come and sweep her away. This version leaves out some magic, and instead makes it more realistic in some ways. In the Grimm's version, Rapunzel resembles a girl in waiting, just like Mademoiselle de La Force was (Lüthi 118).

To make the story short, it is about a couple who are really poor and wish to have a child. The mother then starts longing for some salad called rapunzel, which is in the garden of a witch. Her husband loves her so much that he goes and steals it from the witch. The witch is angry when she finds that out, and makes a deal that she won't fuss and will even allow him to have as much rapunzel as he wants, but in exchange of their unborn child. Then as the mother bears the child, the witch goes to get it and puts it up in a tower so that nobody can have or see her. But even though she had hid her, a prince soon hears her singing to the birds, and he immediately falls in love. The prince then finds out that it is possible to get up to her if he simply enchants "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down thy hair to me" (Grimm). He tries, and "long hair, fine as spun gold" (Grimm) falls down the tower window. He climbs up the hair and meets his princess. She is at first alarmed by him, since she is not used to anyone except the witch, but then they fall in love. The witch finds out, brings Rapunzel to the woods and lures the prince up the tower. He is so shocked that he jumps down the tower, injures his eyes and wanders the woods blind. Later on he finds his princess and twins that she has given birth to. Her tear gives him his eyesight back and they live happily ever after (Grimm).

There are folktales that are not as widespread, but are said to be truer to the original. Those have more magic in them than the Grimm's. In those a witch grows fond of Rapunzel and teaches her some magic. Rapunzel then decides to run away with a boy, so she takes with her three magic elements in order to stall the witch (Lüthi 118, Harries 128, 149).

The little magic that the Grimm's version has are, Rapunzel's hair which seems to have grown unnaturally long and strong and the tears that have some kind of a healing power, giving the prince his vision back (Grimm).

There are two Grimm's versions of the story, one from 1812 and the other from 1857. Because a part of the former version was thought to be too unsightly, a subtle wording needed to be fixed. For example, in the older version they mention that Rapunzel was just happy in the tower with the prince and then later she wonders and asks the fairy why her clothes have become so tight. The fairy realizes she has become pregnant, which means that she has let someone into the tower to her. Therefore she gets so angry as to cut off her hair and send her off to the wilderness. In the more recent version, Rapunzel and the prince had planned to escape and marry. Having the promise of marriage as soon as possible since they were obviously already having sex, must have been what was thought of as the decent thing to do at the time it was written. Rapunzel had also become more innocent, and asked the sorceress, who she calls Frau Gothel, why she is "more difficult to pull up?". The last difference is that in the older version it ends with him getting his eyesight, while in the newer it is the happy ending with him bringing her to his kingdom (Ashliman "Rapunzel by Jacob...").

In both versions Rapunzel seems at first sight to be rather dense and easily controlled. She may perhaps resemble Eve who ate the forbidden fruit and got condemned from the kingdom with Adam. Eve got really strong and bore children etc. That is also what Rapunzel did. She got condemned from the tower to labour alone in the wilderness. For that she is extremely strong and portrays an independent single mother who is able to make a home for her children, even though she had nothing. After portraying such a powerful character, the prince came wandering all broken and she fixed him up and he then seemed to lead the stereotypical patriarchal role and brought her to his castle to take care of her and his children. There is no mentioning of any grudge that Rapunzel

bears against nobody. Not against her parents who sold her off for some meek salad, not for the witch for locking her up, and not even for the prince who knocked her up before trying to help her escape the tower. Even though the script was changed and the prince had promised to marry her, he still left her alone in the tower and might have all the same been bluffing and wanting to have some fun with her and making her suffer for it.

3 Origins

It is said that the origin of “Rapunzel” is really lost. Since it is originally a folktale, it is impossible to know what changes it has undergone. Yet the image of a princess being locked up like that can be found all over the globe. Below is a short overview of other versions of the story, which appear to have some elements that have even survived into recent versions of “Rapunzel”. Moreover, what is remarkable when looking at those stories, is how they reflect somewhat the culture it is told in. The character of Rapunzel, seems to portray what is thought to be, the ideal of a woman in each area and time the story is represented in.

3.1 *Petrosinella and The Fair Angiola*

“Parsley”, or “Petrosinella” like it is also called, was first published by Giambattista Basile in the year 1634 (Basile “Parsley”). “The Fair Angiola” got published in 1885 (Crane “The Fair Angiola”). They are both similar Italian versions of “Rapunzel”. The stories go pretty much the same way as in the Grimm's story, except with the father of Rapunzel being an absent figure, and the females playing a much bigger role than in the Grimm's one. Rapunzel fights the witch alone for the most part, only seeming to be dragging prince charming along instead of being rescued by him (Ashliman “Rapunzel And Other Folktales...”)

In “The Fair Angiola”, there is focus on numbers. There are seven women who steal jujubes from a garden belonging to a witch, who has a donkey watching her garden. The witch catches one of the seven women, who in turn promises to give her baby girl to the witch when she would turn seven. The witch brings the girl, who got to be named the Fair Angiola, to her home and makes her do the chores in the garden. She also teaches her some magic and seems to be somewhat fond of her. The Fair Angiola decides to run away with a boy and stalls the witch by throwing magic balls of yarn behind her. One changes into a soap mountain while another changes into a mountain of nails, and still the witch went on. It was not until a torrent appears that the witch could no longer follow her. Instead the witch wishes that Rapunzel's face would become that of a donkey, so she could not meet the parents of the boy she loves (Ashliman “Rapunzel and Other Folktales...”).

Petrosinella also had three things to stall the ogress and she was also in her seventh year when she was picked up by the ogress who owned the garden from which Parsley's mother stole.

The most noticeable difference between those two stories is that in Petrosinella's story, the ogress got eaten up by a wolf as Petrosinella threw shape-shifting gallnuts at her, while in "The Fair Angiola" the witch actually did a good deed in the end and let her pet cat have a flask of water so that Angiola could reclaim her face and meet the parents of the prince (Ashliman "Rapunzel And Other Folktales...").

The story "The Fair Angiola" is remarkable in a way how it portrays a witch who perhaps was not bad at all and only wanted to keep her little girl safe. Even after having crossed a mountain of nails, the witch forgave Angiola. The Swiss scholar Lüthi claims that there is a reason for there being a witch that has to be overpowered. The witch apparently is there to help children grow up and face obstacles. Throughout life people face obstacles that when overcome become harmless, just as the witch or ogress became immobile after the little girl had faced her own obstacles and become ready to grow up and build her own family (Lüthi 114-115). Today there are also talks about the witches in fairy-tales portraying strong, independent female characters that are undesirable by males. The male dominant society wants to try to hold those witches down so that they cannot come to power or by any means influence the young, innocent girls (Harries, 128, 149)

3.2 *Juan and Clotilde*

The story of "Juan and Clotilde" is the farthest from the Grimm's version, but shows that even though it is in a different culture like the Philippines, the main idea behind the story is similar. This story was told by an old man living in Batangas, and then retold by a Tagalog named Vicente Hilario. It got published in the year 1921 (Fansler).

Instead of a witch, we have a male magician on his deathbed who is not getting his love returned from the princess and therefore decides to lock her up in a tower. He makes it so that if someone is worth having her, he can save her, but she can do nothing except

wait with her three winged horses and two necklaces.

Many princes try saving her, but in vain until a poor man that all the more noble guys thought could not get up there to save her, is the one who climbs the tower by using nails which he stuck to the cleavages between the stones in the tower and could thus climb up the tower. The other men got angry because they thought he were not worthy of her. That is why he has to run away and cannot take the princess with him. The princess gives him one of her necklaces and one winged horse. The magical power of the horse is unstable and brings him to some foreign country that he does not know. Since he does not know where he is and he has no money, it takes him quite some time to get back to the country of the princess. Although he is back, he might think that since he has no possessions or fame, he cannot yet claim the princess. He meets up with an old kind man who helps him getting his own property and is then able to reunite with the princess (Ashliman "Rapunzel And Other Folktales...").

There are some elements that are in this version of the story, but not in the Grimm's one. Those can be seen in later versions like that of the movie, *Tangled*, which will be discussed in next chapter.

4 Animations

By looking at animations it is easy to not only visualize, but really see how the society has shaped the character of Rapunzel. There are a few animations that have retold the story "Rapunzel", but most of them resemble a picture book more than a cartoon. Then there are also versions that have gone further with character building and changed the story, such as *Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002) and *Tangled* (2010). The Barbie movies have gained popularity, but being movies about Barbie, most of them portray girls that think for the most part of appearance and love (Barbie Movies Online). Disney on the other hand tends to portray some kind of stereotypical world with stereotypical characters that are made to reflect the world. Thus in *Tangled*, there is a Rapunzel princess that has been given character that is supposed to portray an ideal princess today. It seems that Disney likes the idea of every girl being a princess and means to put them all on that platform, but then again, should every girl be addressed as a princess, or rather try finding their own independence as a person without a status? It also seems that by making every girl into a princess, it is putting pressure on them to look and behave perfectly at all time (Northup).

4.1 *Barbie as Rapunzel*

Barbie is known to be such an unrealistic figure, that if she would come alive, she would not even be able to hold herself up, but would somehow crawl (Golgowski). The characters in the movie *Barbie as Rapunzel* are also just as unrealistic as Barbie seems to be. The question here is what kind of a message it is sending to children?

In the movie, the main characters might be giving the message that the prettier a person is, the better it must be. Vice versa, the uglier, the more evil. Marina Warner a writer and mythographer also points out in the book, *From the Beast to the Blond*, that Disney is doing the same thing by always having the fight between good and evil (207). Still this statement could be argued since there are animations from Disney like *Tangled* that have characters that look evil on the outside, but are good on the inside.

This movie focuses on revealing the imagination that rests in every girl. It is a story about a princess that was abducted by a jealous witch. The witch had a crush on the father of the princess, and thought that the king and his little princess should be hers.

This princess does not know her past and is told that the witch had, in her kindness, taken her in. The princess lives with the witch, the witch's ferret pet and a big dragon that guards the princess. Rapunzel also has her very own friends, a rabbit and a little dragon. She likes to paint between her chores and has a good imagination. One day her dragon friend accidentally discovers a secret passage in the floor. Barbie goes down and discovers a room and a staircase which leads her outside the castle in which she is entrapped. Once outside she meets a prince and they immediately fall in love, but Barbie asks him not to utter his name. The witch finds out about them and thinks Barbie is lying when she says she does not know his name. The witch conjures a tower and locks her up in it. Then a magic hairbrush turns into a paintbrush, with which Barbie can paint her way out, and meets the prince again. She receives from him an invitation letter to a ball. The sneaky pet of the witch snatches the invitation letter and gives to the witch. She then goes up to the tower, ruins the magic brush and paintings, cuts off Barbie's hair and puts a curse on the tower that a lying heart can never leave. The witch wearing Barbie's hair, hurried to the ball to deceive the prince. While Barbie had never lied, she could leave the room with help of her little dragon friend. The princess got to meet the prince, but not only that, she was also able to lock the witch back up in the tower and meet her parents again.

Barbie's character is like Rapunzel in the Grimm's version, not so deep. She has very little personality and is easily deceived. She seems to be unable to lie and that is what both got her into trouble, and what saved her in the end. Rapunzel in the Grimm's version, in her innocence, accidentally revealed to the witch that she had been seeing someone, and that is why the witch threw her into the woods. Barbie is locked up after the witch finds out about her seeing someone and because of that incident, the magic brush turns into a paintbrush, and she is able to paint her way out. Then because she did not lie, the spell that the witch cast on her about a lying heart not being able to exit the tower, backfired and actually locked the lying witch up in the tower. The virtue of being innocent, pure and not lying is strong in *Barbie as Rapunzel*. It is good to teach children not to lie, but it becomes a bad quality as it makes her so helpless and weak.

The plot itself is similar to the Italian versions of "Rapunzel", except the witch is really a bad witch and is not really fond of Rapunzel, but rather keeps her as a servant and

does not teach her any magic. The witch also instead of luring the prince up the tower with Rapunzel's hair, wears it as if it were her own, and then goes searching for the prince so that she can eliminate him and make nobody find out about Rapunzel.

The king said that he and the witch had just been friends. If that were true, would she then have gotten so much grudge against him that she would have gotten herself secluded with nobody but Rapunzel and some magical animals? She only gained revenge and bitterness from that. Therefore it seems that important plot is left behind. Rapunzel's father might not be as good as he is portrayed in this movie.

4.2 *Tangled*

What is most remarkable about the princess in Disney's movie, *Tangled*, is that she resembles a strong independent woman. She resembles the Italian Rapunzel's more than the Grimm's and is also a much stronger character. She does not need any help to get down from the tower and is quite able to use her frying pan to fight anyone off.

Tangled starts with a healing flower that a witch has been keeping hidden so that she could keep it all for herself and live forever young. When the kingdom's queen became sick, the flower was used to make a medicine for the queen. The queen heals and bears a beautiful baby girl with long golden hair. The witch sees it and decides to steal her hair, but as she cuts out just a tiny lock of hair, that part turns brown, and with it the power there goes away. The witch then brings the child to a tower where nobody will be able to find her. She raises her as her only daughter and forbids her to go out of the tower or to cut her hair. Instead she stays at home and does her various hobbies like painting, reading, cooking and dancing. As Rapunzel grows up, a longing arises to go out to see the origins of lanterns that she has watched every year on her birthday. Those lanterns are lit in hope that Rapunzel will see them and return. Then one day a famous thief named Flynn Ryder appears. He is escaping after stealing the crown of the lost princess, and climbs up the tower by using nails that he pushes between the cleavages of the stones of the tower, just like Juan in "Juan and Clotilde". When he enters the tower, Rapunzel smacks him on the head with a frying pan. Rapunzel realises that people outside are not as scary as her "mother" had told her and decides to lock Flynn up.

When her “mother” comes back on her daily visit, she only wants the power from Rapunzel’s hair and exclaims that Rapunzel is really weak and could never handle the outside and will never be allowed to leave. From there the adventure begins. Rapunzel uses the crown to bribe Flynn to escort her to where the lanterns are. On the way she turns out to be much stronger and cannier than the famous thief. She makes friends with a group of ribalds who later help her instead. In town she sees a picture of the little lost princess, but not knowing it is her, the witch is able to get Rapunzel back and make her think that Flynn has stood her up. Then as Flynn is on his way to face a death sentence and Rapunzel seems to be going to be with the witch forever, everything takes a turn. Rapunzel, just like Barbie, is saved by her paintings. Her subconscious has painted the sun of the kingdom repeatedly on the walls inside the tower, and when she realizes it, it dawns on her that she is in fact the little girl in the picture in town. The witch tries all she can to tie her down, but what the witch did not know is that Flynn was on his way to save his princess. When the “prince” appears, he gets a blow from the witch that nearly kills him and the witch promises Rapunzel that she can save him, if she will never leave her. When Rapunzel bends over him to heal him with her hair, Flynn grabs it and cuts it all off. The power source of the witch having been cut away, she turns into dust and disappears. Rapunzel, sad that her “prince” is about to die, starts to sing the healing song and cries as she does. Although the golden hair is gone, by magic, her tears, filled with the song, are able to save her “prince charming”. After that they go to the kingdom and live happily ever after.

Neither *Barbie as Rapunzel*, nor *Tangled* show Rapunzel as having poor parents that have promised to give her up. Instead, they both portray a princess that has been kidnapped and who loves painting. Rapunzel in *Tangled* also resembles Barbie a lot since they are both good at doing things like cooking, cleaning, baking, reading, dancing and painting, while those are all chores for Barbie, they are portrayed as a hobby for Rapunzel in *Tangled*. In the same way as Barbie, it is her paintings that help Rapunzel. Why they are both portrayed as painters is unclear, but it seems that by painting they can find some kind of freedom outside the small world their locked inside.

In *Tangled*, it is her hair as well that helps her. She uses it to move around places, swings on it etc. She also used it to tie up the “prince” when she bribed him. The prince

was then the one that cut the hair and in some way comes in place of it, while her real parents replace the witch. Hence the obstacles have been conquered just like Lüthi had talked about (114-115). Rapunzel was able to believe in her own strength and go outside the castle. She learnt to trust others, but not believe everything that was said to her. She was even ready to give up her own life for someone else, and therefore the witch could be broken down and she could live on depending on someone else, a male figure, which seems to be really important.

As if the focus on the happily ever after being when Rapunzel and Flynn got to be together was not enough, Disney made a short movie on Rapunzel and Flynn's wedding, called *Tangled Ever After*. There Flynn joked about how his life was ending since he was getting married and would become a part of the kingdom of Rapunzel, exactly like the older Rapunzel in the Grimm's version did when she went to the kingdom of the prince. Therefore it might be wondered if the tables have turned and wives are kind of receiving power over their husbands when they marry?

It is a fact that in all the Rapunzel stories, the princess is not really freed unless there is a guy that has promised to take care of her instead of the witch. Would the princess just wait in her tower forever if the prince would not come? Or would she eventually gather the strength of an individual and go out? There seems to be that she is not really so much locked up in the tower, but rather does not dare to go out unless someone else goes with her. Just like girls in the older time that would not easily move out by themselves. In most cases there would be a boyfriend, or preferably a husband that would free them and put them in another kind of prison.

On that note some remarkable notes have been made on the prison she is in and also on her hair. Marina Warner points out that the hairiness is representing "the place of instinct and nature, fertility and sexuality" (359), and that the maidenhair can be seen as the maidenhead, and therefore when Flynn cuts off Rapunzel's hair, he is symbolically taking away her virginity. At that point the witch lost her power, like a stepmother in the medieval time would after her son would get married and take the virginity of his bride. Furthermore, there is said to be a link between stories like "Rapunzel", and that of stepdaughters that had not yet been married, but would still go and live under the ruling hand of their stepmothers until they would marry (Warner 219-220, 223).

5 Difference between authors

To show how such a short story like Rapunzel by the Grimm's can be portrayed in various ways, it is ideal to look at two authors that portray her story in a surprisingly different way, making it more interesting for teenager and grown women. The first book is Kerriane Coombes kindle-book, *Rapunzel*, published in 2013, and then KC Hilton's *My Name is Rapunzel*, also from 2013. Coombes version is intended as a slightly erotic fantasy novel, while Hilton's is a more fantasy teenage drama type. Even though both stories are built on the original "Rapunzel", the outcome is something else.

5.1 Kerriane Coombes

Kerriane Coombes rewrites the fairy tale and makes it into a novel for grownups in her kindle-book, *Rapunzel*. Although it is an erotic fantasy novel, it is not too sexual and more on the romantic side, but hints throughout the story that the main characters are both emotionally and sexually attracted towards each other. The story itself in some way resembles *Tangled* even more than the original Grimm's "Rapunzel".

In short, we have a long haired princess called Chloe, locked in a tower by a Vulcan demon king. She has been tortured since she was brought to the tower. She is being kept alive because of her gift to read metal as she is a metal fey. As she touches any metal, the history of the metal will surge through her and she will feel it all as if she had been the one experiencing everything that had to do with the metal. Meaning that if she touched a sword, she would know both the owner and anyone who might have been a victim to the sword. In addition she has an extraordinary powerful hair that is stronger than any metal. While she is captive in her cell, her "prince" appears. His name is Blane and he is a rain demon and an orphan searching for eight items as a promise he had made to his mother who was an earth fey that along with his father and sister, was killed by demons that were attacking. Towards this day he had been blaming himself for his family's death. When he meets the princess, he saves her and brings her to see the world outside the tower, and then in order to search for the eighth item, he leaves her at a nearby kingdom with his friends to keep an eye on her. She makes some good friends and gains a lot of strength while she is there and can then return the favour as she goes to Blane's rescue when he is captured by the same Vulcan king they had been captured by before. She gets momentarily captured, but is able to escape and save Blane from

imprisonment and they live happily ever after.

5.1.1 Characters

This is the main storyline, but there is more behind it. The character, Chloe starts off as a fragile young woman wearing a tattered dress. She is shy and always remembers her father's words that she as a woman should speak as little as she could, because it were unladylike to speak up (22). Her brothers had also told her that she were weak and they never wanted her tagging along, since she would drag them down anywhere they would go (61). Even Blane thought of her as being weak until he found out about how long, and in what way she had been tortured in the castle. Then he felt ashamed of himself thinking that way. Still the same he would continue thinking of her as a fragile little thing, and that he should be careful with her and leave her behind while he would go find his eighth item.

After he has saved her and gone back to look for the eighth item, Chloe's character takes a turn around. She learns sword fighting and is known throughout the kingdom for being really strong and able to win many men in battles. It is not that she possesses so much physical power, but rather that she has immense mental power and when she hears of Blane being held captive by the king who had held her in the tower, she goes as quickly as she can to aid her saviour. She is willing to be yet again his prisoner, just for the hope that she could save Blane. She used up all her power to find him and then she killed the mighty king that had been torturing Blane. As this would not be enough, she literally broke Blane's ribs when trying to get his heart to beat for her. In the end when we see him being the weak one and still healing, she appears in trousers and shirt and questions his intentions. Blane tries to woo her and tells her she is his mate. She plainly asks him the meaning behind it. He then claims how she is his, which sounds really egoistic, but is something he was repeatedly thinking throughout the tale. His mind, or beast, as he called it, saying "*mine*" and "*protect mine*" (Coombes 53, 82, 114). He said it towards the end of the book out loud, but then he added "and I am yours" (Coombes 184).

Chloe resembles Rapunzel in *Tangled*, since they are both made to believe that they are weak in the beginning, but then as they start using their strength, they find out that they are quite able to take care of themselves and do not have to be kept somewhere safe

from the world. Even though women are built up to be usually small and fragile looking compared to men, they are the ones that go through pregnancy and have for most part taken care of their household and Chloe is meant to do so much more than that. She looks like she has the future in front of her and that she will be the one controlling it, whether Blane will always be there or not. She feels in no way dependant on Blane and seems to be able to deny love if it hurts. If she could not have done that, it would be unlikely that she would have been as sceptical at Blane as she was towards the end of the movie.

5.2 *KC Hilton*

The fantasy *My Name is Rapunzel*, is a real fairy tale with a happy ending. The story starts in the year 1763 and ends sometime in the year 2013. There are many characters involved in her story, but the focus is mainly on the relationship and characters of Rapunzel and the witch, Gretta. The story itself is given interesting new features that have a lot of potentials.

The plot reveals a seventeen year old girl who lives with her parents and has a neighbour and a friend named Gretta, who Rapunzel had as a child made a promise never to leave. Rapunzel then falls in love with a prince called Henry, and they have decided to run away because his parents do not like her. When they were about to run away, Gretta appeared and cursed them both. She turned the prince into a big dragon and Rapunzel into an eternal beauty that would never die. Rapunzel only remembered the part where a dragon all of a sudden appeared, and for the most part of the story thought it was a pet of Gretta, and that her loved Henry had been murdered. With time she grew fond of the dragon. Rapunzel moved with Gretta and her father into a castle and Rapunzel ended up moving into the room in the tower. Turns out Gretta was her grandmother that had accidentally been cursed by her father. Over her lifetime, Rapunzel got used to technology, adopted a boy and made some friends. Her best friend was a girl, delivering the mail and magazines to Rapunzel. One day Rapunzel stumbled upon an article by a man named John, who claimed that "Fairy Tales are for children" (Hilton 100), and that if there ever was such a girl as Rapunzel, she should donate her hair to charity (Hilton 101). This small article made Rapunzel angry to the point of writing John a letter containing her story. Rapunzel and John become friends after that

and had a night out, met an old man in a bookstore, who said that he wanted to be the hero that would save Rapunzel, and John said he would want to be a dragon. Then as John and Rapunzel had decided on running away together, Henry the dragon finally dared to face Rapunzel. The fact is that he could have talked to her earlier. As long as he did not look at Rapunzel, he would have been in human form, but he was afraid that he might accidentally look at her and she would see that he were the dragon, and then she'd think that he were disgusting. Gretta then threatened to kill Henry and Rapunzel went to her room. She was angry and threw a metal box at the wall. By doing that she was able to open a secret passageway. It led all the way down and outside where Gretta could not see her. She decided she would start by explaining everything to John and then go to Henry. When she had just told him that she couldn't go with him because Henry were alive, the witch appeared and started cursing the both of them in the same way as she cursed Rapunzel and Henry in the beginning of the story. Then the dragon and the old man from the bookstore appeared and threatened to kill the witch. John stopped them and asked a favour from the witch. He got turned into a dragon in exchange of Henry. The witch was dead and the mailman appeared and she and the old man told Rapunzel her story. Apparently Gretta was in love with a man who was the father of the two of them, she could not save him, but managed to save the children and had been keeping them alive with the magic of Rapunzel's hair. Henry then asked Rapunzel to marry him, so they ran away and as they were running, Rapunzel's hair got stuck in some branches, Henry tugged at it and it snapped, and with it the spell had been lifted.

Rapunzel is a self centered, bratty girl, just like a seventeen year old girls can be. She is somehow stuck in the role of a teenager even after reaching the age of 267. While she is this selfish and always thinking about herself, she is still quite conservative and reluctant to any changes in the house. She wants everything to be done the old way. Yet when she has gotten used to things like electricity and running water, she is grateful.

The present trends were all brought in by the witch who seemed to be much nicer than Rapunzel in some ways. Maybe her intentions were mistaken and she got stamped with a bad image because of her appearance. She was said to be "an over-ripe woman who forever withered away" (51). She is cursed herself and so is Rapunzel. What the witch

wants to do is share the life she and Rapunzel, her granddaughter, can have together. Gretta cooks, cleans and goes to town to help the children of the man she used to love. But she also has some mean side to her. She was the one who cursed Henry to become a dragon and was on the verge of cursing John too. That goes to show that she has a weak, selfish side to her like her granddaughter.

5.2.1 *Similarities*

There are numerous similarities to other versions too. It is quite possible that Hilton made reference to many other versions of "Rapunzel" on purpose, to make it look like those had some remnants of the real story, which would then be the story Rapunzel tells in *My Name is Rapunzel*. That actually helps making the fantasy sound more realistic although it is filled with magic.

For starters there is a teardrop which appears and escapes from Rapunzel's eye as she is being cursed by the witch. This tear reminds of the one that healed the prince in other versions like the Grimm's one and *Tangled*.

Then there is also the indication to Mademoiselle de La Force (Lüthi 118). Her name is not mentioned, rather it is hinted that Rapunzel is in fact the woman in waiting, Mademoiselle de La Force. Rapunzel says that she had met Grimm's brothers and thought that they could help her if she told them her story, but they only paid her for using it and altered the story (Hilton 242).

The hidden stair that Rapunzel finds, curiously resembles the stair that Barbie's friend, the dragon, finds in *Barbie as Rapunzel*. It could be said that in same way as Barbie's dragon friend found the stairway, Rapunzel was able to find it because of Henry the dragon. It was because she was thinking of him, that she threw the box at the wall and found the secret passage, or rather, she was actually thinking of herself and the life she could have had with Henry.

Rapunzel's hair does likewise resemble both Rapunzel's hair in *Tangled*, and Chloe's in Coombes *Rapunzel*. She had really strong hair similar to Chloe's, that could not be cut until the spell would break, then Henry could tear it apart, just like Flynn cut Rapunzel's hair in *Tangled*.

There are also the big words of Gretta who says at one point “Rapunzel cannot marry and have a child. If she gives birth, the power is gone from her. Besides, I don't like to share” (Hilton 23). This here resembles the story of the Grimm's, because in that story the witch did not want anything to do with Rapunzel after she gets pregnant of the twins, and therefore she cast her away. The part where she says that she does not share also fits to what is said in professor Harrie's book, *Twice Upon a Time*, that the witch in “Rapunzel” really loved Rapunzel, and lost only because she was too foolish and selfish (128). Rapunzel's friends say as well that Gretta was really selfish, because they thought that she must have had all the power from Rapunzel's hair, but not wanting to share it. There Rapunzel knows that she is to blame, but not Gretta, but Rapunzel does not set it right and never admits that she was at fault (Hilton 295).

After all there is no pure good or evil in this version of Rapunzel, rather that everyone has their good and bad points and those have nothing to do with appearance, experience or age. This can also be seen in Nadia Higgins children book version of “Rapunzel”, where Rapunzel looks more sporty than princess like (Higgins). Many authors of children books seem to have been trying to change old characters like the helpless, pretty Rapunzel, into better role models for children. Also seemingly trying to get closer to a subject that helps children feel that everyone should be equal, follow their own beating heart, but at the same time, eat healthy and exercise. Because of that reason it is possible that parents are increasingly keeping a closer watch on the message the media is sending their children, and therefore it is not out of the ordinary that parents would watch more closely big media companies like Disney, who is targeting children as their main customers.

6 Strong women characters and the media

Does the character of Rapunzel not reflect the society she is in? Like for example in the Italian version of Rapunzel, the father figure is absent, probably working outside, while the mother seems to be the boss of the house. Therefore it is possible to assume that the women characters tend to grow to be strong and important in Italia. Whereas in the Grimm's version she is frail and just sits and waits for her prince. Disney being mainly stationed in America, it mostly reflects the society of America as it is there. Although equality is not complete yet, women are gaining more power, but at the same time the media still portrays a superficial and selfish nation (Sawyer 3) with its aim on diets, cosmetics, fashion and food.

By looking at commercials, magazines, television shows etc. it is possible to see that the focus is on appearance. Women are trying to meet some superficial standard that is quite impossible to reach. There is always the demand for the products that make a girl prettier on the outside. Disney also plays a bit with the standards and tries to change them by making the witch all pretty and superficial, and also by making the guys that are thought of as the villains in the society, show their good points and that there is more than what meets the eye. Still the pretty protagonist is always perfect in both appearance and in everything she thinks and does. Rapunzel in *Tangled* is portrayed as a girl with not a single fault being found. While other characters are allowed to show the whole spectrum of the rainbow.

There is a special Disney princess website which shows the main princesses and gives the girls opportunity to choose which one they like the most and from there they can find out what accessories and such they need to buy in order to become the princess (Disney Princess). This website directly targets young girls and might make them into the ideal consumer that is fixated on appearance and buying things to make themselves prettier.

It is also possible to touch on the matter of race discrimination or plain stereotypical princesses. Kiara M. Hill pointed out, that as a young girl she wanted to look like one of the princesses, but felt she could not become one, because her skin was too dark and she had black short hair (83, 84). Then later there would be other "princesses" like Yasmin,

Pocahontas and Mulan, that would change the stereotype of princesses having to be white with blond hair, but still the same, they all convey some kind of stereotypical girls fitting what seems to be thought of as the stereotype of each race. Like Rapunzel was first supposed to be a dense poor girl that got cheated of life by her greedy mother. The only thing that she got was her pretty figure and pretty, long, blonde hair. Somehow that made her into a real princess in later versions, with the witch stealing her without making any deal with the parents. The way she is traded makes her into something less than a human being but the witches in the Italian versions were good. They taught Rapunzel magic and treated her as a human being, but then they in turn got cheated by Rapunzel who wanted to run away and pursue her own kind of life.

In all versions of the story the witch portrays a strong, but lonely character, whose only weakness is Rapunzel. She is obsessed with keeping her locked up and it is as if her life ends if she does not have Rapunzel. There is a possibility to look at Rapunzel and the witch as the same character. She is a woman that lives secluded and does not allow anyone to come near her, and as soon as a guy comes along, a part of her that is strong, free and has some power, dies or disappears. In the Grimm's version there is no mentioning of what happens to the witch. She is left in the tower all alone. In *Tangled, I am Rapunzel* and "Petrosinella", the witch gets killed in the end of the story. Therefore it should be considered that if the witch is an obstacle to help children grow like Lüthi says (114), what does she then represent? Is she perhaps a warning to little girls that if they do not find a partner and have children, their youthfulness will leave them and they will get old and bitter all by themselves? Or is the witch stuck in the old time, meaning that the witch is still the stepmother that would receive the girl as some kind of helper who she could train before she would reach the ripe age and be handed to her son for marriage? If so, then it is outdated. People have different desires and women today do not need a significant other to have all the opportunities life has to offer. Sometimes it is better to be alone than to be locked up by some significant other without any love. People have been put into different classes to separate their race, gender, sexual desires, style and even way of thinking. As for Rapunzel in *Tangled* she could be classed as a heterosexual, young, blonde, female adult princess, who is artistic, strong and a homely girl. It can be said that those labels can be fair to class people, but they still do not say everything about who Rapunzel is. To know someone, there needs to be more than just

those labels.

Are those labels what makes Rapunzel a strong women character, or do they make her weak? This is the last question to be asked in this chapter. The answer could be no, it does not matter if she is a frail selfish princess like in *My Name is Rapunzel*, or if she has endless of hobbies and is strong like Rapunzel in *Tangled*. To be able to say that the character is strong is if she can be true to herself and follow her heart, and that is what she seems to be doing when she goes to marry the prince. In the end it does not really matter what others think of her, what matters is what she herself thinks, and that is what should be preached to children of all ages. Therefore it is positive that the number of different female characters in books and films are increasing and that old persistent characters like Rapunzel keep on being rebuilt and shown from different angles.

7 Summarize and last words

While Rapunzel is slowly reaching the future, she is becoming some kind of a princess from another world. She is trying to become stronger and have a higher status, but it is hard for her since she is locked up the better part of her life and when her story is told, it is not so much about the life she will have with her prince charming, rather the story of her life in the tower. We see her leaving with the prince, but we do not know if he will take the opportunity and mistreat her as she knows nothing better, or if he will treat her like a princess and let her take her own decisions.

In Kerriane Coombes *Rapunzel*, the “prince” kind of says it indirectly that he will treat her more like a person at the same status as him and show her respect. He lets her know that he is not only thinking of her as his, but rather that he will also be hers. The Rapunzel in this fantasy world is the one that was able to get away from the female oppression the most.

Disney's Rapunzel in *Tangled* may also have gotten quite strong and independent like Coombes *Rapunzel*, but she then seems to have given up the freedom to do what she likes by the end of the movie. She has given in and moved into the castle of her parents. This castle is bound to have rules and standards that she has to meet. As a real princess she won't be expected to be jumping all around on her toes and playing with her lizard friend. She will also have to stop thinking only of herself and start thinking about her new boyfriend, Flynn Ryder, and the whole kingdom. This has been pointed at social media like Feminist Disney at Tumblr, have said things like, „When she has the hair it allows her to do a lot of very independent things (*move around the tower, defend herself, allow herself to escape the tower*) and the replacement is, ‘Well, you have your family and boyfriend now’” (thousand-kisses-deep).

It does not look like the character of Rapunzel is getting more independent with time, rather that she is fitting into the society she is built in. It seems to be almost impossible to make up women and men as equal in the world of the imagination that storybooks, animations and fairy tales are. It is unbelievable how children are targeted when it comes to making specific gender roles. The one who describes it the best is Peggy Orenstein, the author of *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. She focuses on how the society is

pushing girls into the role of the princess. Princesses are rather harmless and cute, they also give out a certain message to girls which they do perhaps not notice themselves and start following. They start thinking that they should behave like the princess and also be treated like one. It can be nice to have everyone trying to be nice and treating you like a princess, but does it not mean that the girls should then become some kind of an image of a girl? If all girls would turn into a real princess, it would be possible to say that they would not have much independence. They would have to be the front of their society and look their best and be at their best behaviour at all times. That would mean that they would always have to be someone that others tell them to be, instead of being themselves. Living as a princess and getting married to the prince does not fit every girl. Perhaps there will someday be a Rapunzel that will not be wanting to leave with the prince, rather leave to meet up with the parents and then go traveling the world by herself, or with the witch.

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