

Fairytales Theory and Explorations of
Gender Stereotypes in Post-1970s
Rapunzel Adaptations

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Submitted for the degree of PhD

De Montfort University

June 2015

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Acknowledgements

Dreams of having a PhD seemed sheer fantasy—a fairytale all my own; for helping me move closer to realising my dreams, I express colossal thanks to Professor Andy Mousley.

Extensive meetings, telephone calls, judicious pruning, and honey! This was a PhD course that I'll always remember fondly. Thank you for championing my project and vision.

For advice and inspiration, and for enabling me to study adaptations at the highest level, commendation must be given to Professor Deborah Cartmell, who invited me to review an article for *Adaptation*, to mark essays and exams, and to present my research at screenings.

Thank you DMU for the funding to do what I enjoy most (lecture), to attend and chair the East Midlands Universities PGR conference at Derby, and to present papers on 'Rapunzel' and fairytales at Leicester and Cardiff (Folklore Society AGM). These adventures took me out of the ivory tower and into the real world—and onto a motorway for the first time!

This PhD has therefore been life-changing on many levels.

Final thanks to the students who listened to my ideas, and to everyone reading this work.

Abstract

Although Rapunzel criticism habitually concerns literary fairytales, this thesis contributes to the field a sustained examination of the feminist and patriarchal uses to which Rapunzel has been put, with close attention to the range of media, forms, and styles into which ‘Rapunzel’ has been adapted, from 1970 onwards. It argues that each adaptation appropriates ‘Rapunzel’ to repeat or disturb gender ideologies, and also extends or contracts the scope of the fairytale and its feminism. Underpinned by memetics, selective adaptation and fairytale theories, and Adrienne Rich’s concept of ‘re-vision’, individual chapters focus upon redrawing the boundaries of what makes a (feminist) Rapunzel adaptation a (feminist) Rapunzel adaptation. The thesis also examines the difficult question of why Rapunzel motifs or ‘memes’ have persisted and whether this is due to the power of cultural ideologies or to certain universal human urges to which ‘Rapunzel’ ostensibly appeals.

As what is meant by feminism changes from the 1970s through to the present day, the selected works are considered in terms of terms of second- and third-wave feminism and postfeminism. Chapter 1 (the Introduction) establishes the approach and rationale. Chapter 2 examines the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ variants of 1812 and 1857 as a prelude to examining the ideological uses to which Rapunzel is put post-1970. Chapter 3 focuses on how four feminist poets subject the memes and morals of ‘Rapunzel’ to different feminist revisions, and thereby challenge the patriarchal meanings invested by the Grimms. Chapter 4 extends this work by examining a feminist moral fable, two complex short stories, a psychological novella, and a graphic novel, in order to draw contrasts between celebratory and darker, more disturbing ‘post-fairytale’ feminist Rapunzels. Demonstrating the many genres and media into which feminist Rapunzels have been translated, several adapters use the tale on behalf of various kinds of individualism and subjectivisation, and suggest a movement toward greater psychological complexity and interiority in their treatment of Rapunzel memes. Chapter 5 focuses on how Rapunzel memes translate to screen in the feminist reworking *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978) and the postfeminist adaptations *Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002), *Shrek the Third* (2007), and Disney’s *Tangled* (2010) and *Into the Woods* (2014). Chapter 6, the final chapter, further extends the analysis by examining Rapunzel’s general prevalence in the cultural imagination, namely in adverts and on television. By assembling and giving fresh analyses of rare and well-known Rapunzel tales, the chapters critique the gender essentialism in fairytales and reinstate Rapunzel as key to fairytale debate. This research has led to the conclusion that post-1970s Rapunzels exemplify how fairytales appropriate or discard memes in accordance with the possibilities of genre and medium, as well as with the changing face of feminism over the last four decades.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Prompted by a critical neglect of female-authored post-1970s re-imaginings of ‘Rapunzel’—a surprising neglect given that Rapunzel has been thrust back into the critical spotlight by Disney’s films *Tangled* (2010) and *Into the Woods* (2014)—this study examines the patriarchal and feminist uses to which Rapunzel has been put, *and* repositions the Rapunzel fairytale as one that is everywhere you look, having filtered into everyday life and every corner of contemporary culture. As the phrase ‘let your hair down’ implies, language itself has been Rapunzeled. This popular story of a long-haired maiden who is kidnapped and imprisoned in a forest tower, because her parents steal herbs from a witch’s garden, has for centuries captured the imagination; but the other key ingredients—a forbidden romance, the cutting of the hair, and a hero who impregnates, frees, weds, and is healed by Rapunzel—also persist in most of the works analysed here, though these memes, as they will be called here, are not exclusive to ‘Rapunzel’ (1812-1857) and its subsequent adaptations and appropriations. The approach of this thesis engages with feminism, adaptation theories, psychoanalysis and memetics to understand the survival of Rapunzel (and her story) from the nineteenth century to the 1970s and beyond—part of which is attributable to certain time-bound, culturally specific and explicitly gendered ideas that masquerade as natural and universal. Slavoj Žižek aptly calls ideology the “eternalisation of some historically limited condition” (Žižek 1994: 4). At the same time, the thesis will examine the possibility that Rapunzel’s survival is also due to its repeated incarnation of perennial (as opposed to eternal) human urges and preoccupations. Žižek himself in *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology* (2012) uses the term “*pre-ideological*” to refer to “*free-floating* elements that open themselves to different ideological fields”. It is difficult to identify these ‘free-floating elements’ precisely because they are always mediated by ideology. Nevertheless, and as I will subsequently discuss at greater length, for ideology to be successful it must arguably appeal to one or another ‘pre-ideological’ human urge or tendency.

But why base an entire PhD on Rapunzel? Given Ruth Bottigheimer’s assertion that “The single most pervasive image evoked in the popular mind by the word *fairytale* is probably that of a maiden in distress leaning from a tower window and searching the horizon for a rescuer” (Bottigheimer 1987: 101), one might assume that work on ‘Rapunzel’ is at

saturation point. However, ‘Rapunzel’ occupies an unusual position in fairytale scholarship in that while an enormous range of work deals with the Grimm variants and their predecessors,¹ less critical attention has been devoted to its most recent incarnations in a range of media. It is this gap that is filled by this present work. Equally, while countless occasions in film see women being rescued by a man, climaxing in her whipping off her glasses and unpinning and letting down her hair to signify her transformation into a new *sexually available* figure, critics have yet to identify the Rapunzel story as being behind these stock liberations of the female. Many of the reworkings herein will be seen to liberate the subversive and emancipatory elements that appear muted by the Grimms in their versions of ‘Rapunzel’, from 1812-1857.

‘Rapunzel’, the definitive and controversial tale of a long-haired maiden in a tower who experiences longing, love, and premarital teenage pregnancy, originates not in 1812 with the Grimm brothers but in Ancient Greece with the tale of Danae, and the birth of Perseus. But it also begins in Persia in 977-1010 AD as the epic poem *Shahnama* [*The Book of Kings*], where Rūdāba is courted atop a palace roof by the white-haired Zāl, “a youth of noble birth” (Edward Warner 1905: 270). Rūdāba transforms her “black tresses” into “a lasso, such as none could plait” (271) and, in a very familiar scene, lets down her hair for her lover. Yet Zāl only kisses rather than climbs it. Unlike the prince in ‘Rapunzel’, this chivalrous lover takes a “lasso from his servant” and throws it up so that he need not hurt Rūdāba by pulling her hair: “The noose caught... he mounted... [Rūdāba] clasped his hand, / And both intoxicate with love descended” (271). Rūdāba is, like all Rapunzels, a metaphor for female imprisonment. Moreover, as Rūdāba and Zāl do not marry until they gain parental permission, readers debatably internalise the message that marriage and obedience to authority are prized virtues. As such, the fairytale that readers claim to know has been steeped in ideology, myth, and magic long before it falls into the hands of the Grimms, who did not invent the Rapunzel tale. Many of their ideas came from stories they had heard or read from others. Indeed, their 1812 and 1857 adaptations of ‘Rapunzel’, far from being sacred or untouchable, can be adapted as one sees fit. However, these tales are examined first because they are treated by adapters as a

¹Key examples used in this thesis are Karen Lang (1995), Linnea Hendrickson (2000), Lindsay Wells (2003), Terri Windling (2007), Alison Lurie (2008), Marina Warner (2010), and Jack Zipes (2014).

master narrative, coerce readers into tacit agreement with their ‘acceptable’ subject positions that treat women as inferior to men, and pass off patriarchal ideologies as natural and eternal.² While most studies of gender in fairytales focus upon literary or film fairytales, for a more comprehensive understanding of fairytales in twentieth- and twenty-first-century culture, this study examines the range of media, forms, and styles into which ‘Rapunzel’ has been adapted.

Utilising fairytale and adaptation studies, with their various positions, this work situates 1970 as a convenient starting point for feminist Rapunzel adaptations, and argues that the variants created in and after this decade arose both as a result of cultural, commercial, and ideological factors, and, contentiously, because of Rapunzel’s long-term human appeal (discussed in terms of memes, below). Just as the term adaptation derives from the Latin “*adaptare*”, “to make fit” or “suitable” (OED), Rapunzel has been made to fit into modern theoretical and cultural contexts. As the 1970s saw a resurgence of critical and cultural interest in feminism(s) and saw the birth of feminist fairytale criticism (Haase 2004: 1), the following chapters examine how feminism has inflected Rapunzel adaptations and methodologies for interpreting them. Although there is no ‘right’, definitive, or totalising critical approach for fairytale adaptations, with application across all genres and epochs, this Introduction will highlight several influential taxonomies *and* key intersections in central adaptations and fairytale debate, as part of the rationale for the choice of topic and feminist texts analysed.

Adaptation and Rapunzel Scholarship

As adaptation studies often concern transitions from one form to another, particularly literature into film and, increasingly, vice versa, this ‘feminist fairytale’ thesis does not think of adaptation as a one-way process, but in terms of a web of Rapunzel reworkings that inform and are informed by each other. As current scholarship on Rapunzel adaptations pays little attention to the many genres adopted by Rapunzel adapters, each chapter discusses a single

²As Althusser (1971) argues, ideology ‘hails’ or ‘recruits’ individuals as subjects. One pervasive view is of “ideology as a ‘thing’ that ‘gets’ its audience. Readers are envisaged as being blindly hit by it” (Rudd 2000: 192). Yet David Rudd in *Enid Blyton and the Mystery of Children’s Literature* (2000: 193-194) critiques this way of thinking about ideology, as something that readers—children especially—are seen as passively consuming.

genre that can be thought of as an individual strand that interlinks with every other strand of that web. The Rapunzel adaptations are arranged and examined according to form and genre because each adaptation (from novel to film or advert) operates according to a set of loosely predetermined generic conventions. At the same time, the thesis explores the intertextual links among each hypertext (which vary in media) and the Grimm hypotext. This work celebrates an ongoing ‘dialogue’ among several Rapunzel tales and considers how ‘Rapunzel’ has evolved into a multi-generic tale that appears in novels, art, poems, short stories, television, film, and advertisements. This cross-generic perspective differs from existing studies of Rapunzel fairytales, which insist on analysing the Grimm version(s), and occasionally its literary predecessors, often at the expense of retellings in various media, from 1970 onwards. The adaptations in each chapter not only adapt the Grimms but variants created in a range of media after ‘Rapunzel’ (1857), itself a product of centuries of maiden-in-the-tower tales, and thus frame “adaptation [as] a ‘hybrid’ construction mingling different media” (Stam 2005: 9).

Jack Zipes (2000) offers a useful conspectus of select ‘genre versions’ of ‘Rapunzel’ but omits in-depth interrogations of these texts and their commercial or industry contexts. Similarly, Gail De Vos (2001) supplies summaries of several feminist Rapunzel hypertexts, which are arranged according to genre. However, these overviews ultimately tend to defer to the ‘canonical’ Grimm ‘Rapunzel’. Linnea Hendrickson (2000), by contrast, is a refreshing exception given her attempt to shift critical debate away from a literary-centred framework, and towards a paradigm based on the popularisation and cross-generic possibilities of the Rapunzel fairytale. The focus of this thesis extends out of this recent scholarly attention given to feminist Rapunzel adaptations, but it builds on this work through in-depth analyses of the ideological uses to which ‘Rapunzel’ has been put in a variety of media. This extension of the existing criticism seemed necessary given the lack of full-length studies of gender ideologies in post-1970s ‘Rapunzel’ reincarnations. While *Tangled* has arguably triggered the present ‘Rapunzel boom’ (of which this thesis is a part), Rapunzel remains a minority voice in

fairytale scholarship, rarely forming the basis of an entire book or essay collection. That said, Linnea Hendrickson's 'The View from Rapunzel's Tower' explores how "'Rapunzel' has captured the imagination of numerous writers and illustrators...in recent years" (2000: 209); Jessica D'Aquin's 'The Motherly Sorceress: Frau Gothel as a Non-Villainous Mother-Figure' (2015) returns to the 1812 'Rapunzel' to argue that Gothel has been mistranslated as a villain (this thesis shares its feminist optimism); and Alison Lurie opens 'The Girl in the Tower' (2008) by professing that "'Rapunzel' involves a heroine with hair at least twenty feet long...But [such] tales live on because they are dramatic metaphors of real life". This is consistent with Maria Tatar's influential view that fairytales address "issues that have a significant social function—whether critical, conservative, compensatory, or therapeutic" (Tatar 1999: xi). Rose Weitz's *Rapunzel's Daughters: What Women's Hair Tells Us About Women's Lives* (2005) even calls Rapunzel a healing figure and central to all cultural stories about (long) female hair. One intervention that this present study makes is to stress that hair can define or supersede the woman to which it is attached, as in Anne Sexton's little-known poem 'The Letting Down of the Hair' (1972), where the speaker accrues fans because of her Rapunzel-length tresses: "I don't answer them, of course, for *my hair cannot speak* and it is the hair they write to". Although Sexton's speaker implies that another kind of the silencing of the female subject is taking place in the idolisation of her voiceless hair, it should nevertheless be noted that there is a certain predictability in gearing a discussion of Rapunzel towards feminism and gender stereotypes—an approach emphasised by the thesis title—as well as a risk of shoehorning the stories into worn-out binaries (feminist/antifeminist). Even so, this focus was necessitated by the retrogressive gender stereotypes that it was genuinely surprising to unearth in the 1812 and 1857 Grimm variants, and across the impressive and surprisingly widespread range of Rapunzel adaptations produced in a range of media.

While adapting a fairytale such as 'Rapunzel' may imperil its canonical status, this thesis does not consider fairytales in terms of reductive fidelity debates, which invariably

privilege a hypotext over its hypertexts, but in terms of a process of recycling or reimagining. To cite and extend a film-based thesis by Robert Stam, adaptations are “caught up in a whirl of intertextual reference and transformation” that creates “other texts” (Stam 2000: 66). Against the tide of elitist thought that sees adaptation as derivative and harmful to the source-text, and which terms maiden-in-the-tower adaptations from 1970 onwards too recent to be canonical or valuable, this study expands the discussion to include creative off-shoots that re-invigorate the ‘original’ Rapunzel narrative. The new readings in this work counter the historical tendency to discount Rapunzel tales that are ‘non-literary’ or not written by the Grimms or other literary greats. Aptly, adaptations theorists Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan have in their work moved beyond the “cultural worthiness” of a film adaptation in relation to its literary source-text (Cartmell and Whelehan 1999: 18). Their rejection of logocentrism and their movement toward a “cultural studies approach” (18) that foregrounds the interrelationships of media and culture is a good fit for this thesis, with its focus on multi-generic adaptations that arose for many reasons in the 1970s and beyond.

The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen (2007) likewise cites Genette’s notion of intertextuality in an attempt to conceive of literature not as urtexts but “intertexts” that are *one* part of a “multiplicity of perspectives” at play in the making of screen adaptations (Cartmell and Whelehan 2007: 3). This emphasis on plural cultural influences—not limited to supposedly canonical ones—can be reworked for new research into various cross-generic Rapunzels. That said, Rapunzel *has* attracted such luminaries as Stevie Smith, Marina Warner, Sara Maitland, Emma Donoghue, Anne Sexton, and Patience Agbabi. Each of these writers transforms the same male-oriented narrative into a female-centred one; this approach to the story design has for over forty years proven resilient. The Grimm variants (themselves ‘borrowings’ from earlier fairytales) offer mutable templates that can be translated into different genres (and contexts) with ease. To offer a variety of genre readings

thus frees adapters from qualms about the gravitas of ‘Rapunzel’—if one can call classic fairytales ‘high art’. And yet while this work embraces diversity and multiplicity, especially since Rapunzel adaptations often *resist* genre classifications and have different adapters, visions, and audiences, there are often unifying thematic and feminist connections.

Having looked at the wealth of Rapunzel criticism and adaptations, the materials that underpin this work are chosen from an informed but ultimately subjective position. One might expect to find Rapunzel’s textual history (pre-1970 and pre-1812) and her other incarnations in literature and the visual arts here, particularly Pre-Raphaelite paintings by John William Waterhouse and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, or even book covers, music lyrics, or loose adaptations that evoke Rapunzel, such as *The Lady of Shalott*. However, while these examples offer intriguing areas for a feminist-oriented examination, they fall outside the parameters of this thesis, which restricts its focus to selected post-1970s feminist Rapunzel adaptations partly for reasons of necessity and pragmatism. A study of all Rapunzel narratives past and present would far exceed the scope of a PhD, but this work also begins in 1970 and ends with present-day scholarship and feminist adaptations of ‘Rapunzel’ because this period saw the rise of ‘Theory’, including new thinking about fairytales; because second-wave feminism inspired Anne Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ in *Transformations* (1970), which adapts classic Grimm tales as feminist poetry and coincides with and registers a shift in approaches to fairytales; and because the decades after the 1970s have seen many theoretical advances and Rapunzel adaptations (emerging from feminism’s renaissance in the 1970s) that exemplify how Rapunzel memes, discussed below, are nuanced in terms of shifting ideologies, and which make it necessary to rethink the either/or binary of feminist/patriarchal.

Fairytales and Anti-/Feminism

Alison Lurie’s essay ‘Fairy Tale Liberation’ (1970) marks the origins of feminist fairytale criticism and claims (as does this thesis) that fairytales are often feminist in that they provide voices for the marginalised and concern self-actualising female characters (Lurie 1990: 16).

This position has proven so influential in feminist fairytale scholarship that *Marvels & Tales* entitled a special edition *Fairy Tale Liberation—Thirty Years Later* (2000). Lurie proposes that while patriarchies have historically edited fairytales to offer inaccurate views of each sex, classic fairytales about females still contain recoverable feminist messages that all can access. Women denied active roles are inclined to turn to fictionalised worlds where female equality and agency already exist and are celebrated. This in part explains the renewal of interest in fairytales, which appeal to feminists because of their ability to transform lived environments, real or imaginary. Lurie intimates that each sex can benefit from their enriching life messages and prioritisation of “wit, boldness, stubborn persistence [and] kindness to those in trouble” (18). This is why Lurie re-reads ‘Hansel and Gretel’ as feminist, for Gretel and other “strong”, “resourceful” females secure their own freedom and victory, herald “women’s liberation” (18), and dominate classic and contemporary fairytales, as in Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) and Alison Lurie’s anthology *Clever Gretchen and Other Forgotten Folktales* (1980).

Lurie rejects the notion that fairytales are stories written by male chauvinists to put women in their place (as in Innocent Persecuted Heroine tales) and to “brain-wash” (18) girls into becoming “gentle, obedient [and] domestic while they wait for their prince to come”. Traditional fairytales may universalise women as passive objects—indeed women throughout the ages have been called physically and mentally weaker than men—but Lurie urges writers to revisit traditional fairytales and to produce feminist adaptations that expose their liberatory potential and their myths about women. A wider community of revisionary feminist fairytales is needed to reinterpret and stand against patriarchal literature. Feminist re-imaginings that champion fluid identities and emphasise inner qualities over beauty include Jane Yolen’s *Sleeping Ugly* (1981), Ethel Johnston Phelps’s *The Maid of the North: Feminist Folktales from Around the World* (1981), and Angela Carter’s *Old Wives’ Fairy Tale Book* (1990). Such multifarious collections accentuate how fairytales circumvent homogenisation and counter prohibitive gender norms in classic tales. In feminist Rapunzel reworkings, which

predominantly concern issues of marginality and gaps in the classic Grimm 'Rapunzel', muted elements and characters are recast and are given voices, while historically submerged life stories are foregrounded in order to expand and problematise the Grimm hypotext. Incorporating feminist messages liberates 'Rapunzel' from a masculine bias that uses narrow images to suppress courageous, independent, and vocal women. Fairytales persist because they arguably express deep-down human desires, but fairytales (or rather their male authors) have not always fully written women into this humanity, or given them extensive expression. To revise or demythologise classic patriarchal fairytales (one goal of this thesis) and imagine alternative worlds for women is to unsettle prevailing attitudes and depictions of the sexes that forever pit women against each other, and so expands and reconsiders female identity.

A related point made by Jack Zipes (one of the world's foremost fairytale theorists) is that while "patriarchal notions flourish" in Grimm tales, there are "subversive tendencies" (Zipes 2014 [1983]: xxxvi). Having dedicated over forty years to fairytale scholarship, Zipes reminisces in his Preface to *Don't Bet on the Prince* about how women "since the late 1960s" have wanted "to express a non-sexist view of the world through [Grimm] fairytales" so as to "critique [the] patriarchal status quo" and its "socialisation process" (xi-xii). If, as Zipes says, "feminist tales...have emerged from the struggles of the women's movement", they are not only "indicators of social [and] psychological...change", but "agents of a new socialisation" (xii) in that they promote egalitarianism. The main body of academic feminist fairytale debate focuses on revising patriarchal content for feminist ends, and on how feminist fairytales allow one to insert oneself into a story, and to read it in terms of one's experiences and life context. The interlacing ideas in this paragraph will be seen to play out in Rapunzel tales, and bear out Adrienne Rich's theory that "re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" exposes the secret "assumptions in which [women] are drenched" and brings "self-knowledge" because "radical [feminist] critique[s]

of literature” are a “refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society” and so allow women to “see and name –and therefore live– afresh” (Rich 1972 [1971]: 14).

How fitting that Julie Sanders notes that “Adaptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re-vision itself” (Sanders 2006: 18).

Lurie and Rich represent one extreme end of the spectrum in feminist fairytale debate. At the opposite end of the scale is Marcia Lieberman’s “Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale’ (1972). Responding to Lurie’s 1970 article, Lieberman’s feminist fairytale ideology critique asserts that “So many of the heroines of fairy stories, including the well-known Rapunzel, are locked up in towers, [in] a magical sleep...or otherwise enslaved, and waiting to be rescued by a passing prince, that the helpless, imprisoned maiden, is the quintessential heroine of the fairytale” (Lieberman 1972: 389). Treating all fairytales as patriarchal, Lieberman says classic fairytales are underpinned by male wish-fulfilment (not female desire) and “acculturate women to traditional roles” (383). Cinderella is a house slave; ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ concerns a spinner; and in ‘Sleeping Beauty’, the maiden’s one task is to sleep. Critics such as Lieberman argue that fairytales perpetuate gender stereotypes so that men ‘naturally’ only choose beauties and so that older women are seen as envious of young beauties, who remind them of their undesirability, infertility, and lost youth. The implication is that the outwardly ugly are ugly inside also. Just as an aged fairy denies Sleeping Beauty love and a life for 100 years, Cinderella’s hideous female family unit attacks her, conspires to lock her away, and envies her glamour; hence girls dissatisfied with their looks might consider themselves evil and unlovable. However, fairytales imply that girls who are passive and suffer silently will eventually be rescued by a prince. Depicted as sought-after prizes for men, fairytale women cannot act or free (or think for) themselves. Though this is arguably a historical reflection of how marriage was for many women the only means of accumulating wealth and status, it is objectionable that fairytales collocate female

authority and evil, as if encouraging active and power-hungry women to change their ways and conform to gender roles, lest men see them as ugly. This is why Lieberman argues that females will internalise the patriarchal messages in fairytales (395), which are ultimately “training manuals” (395) that recruit females into constricting, ‘feminine’ subject positions.

What underpins both Lurie’s and Lieberman’s opposed positions is the implication that fairytales have the psychological and storytelling power to get under a (female) reader’s skin—for ‘good’ (Lurie) or ‘ill’ (Lieberman). If they operate, as Lieberman puts it, as “training manuals”, then they are manuals that take effect because they offer seductive stories about how individuals should be. The ongoing seductive appeal of fairytales, and how this appeal has been theorised, is the subject of the next section. This focus is necessary as a prelude to the thesis’s concern with the survivability and adaptability of ‘Rapunzel’ memes.

Structuralism and Narratology

Structuralism and narratology, two influential twentieth-century methodologies, allow theorists to explore the surviving ‘narrative grammars’ of *all* cultural forms, not just literature, and to examine how fairytales, as depersonalised (context-less) narratives, invite endless re-writings. Laura J. Getty’s ‘Maidens and their Guardians: Reinterpreting the ‘Rapunzel’ Tale’ (1997) uses Vladimir Propp and Max Lüthi to trace the origins of the “hair ladder” motif to Persia, and to show how earlier variants “differ...from the general outline...of...Grimms’ Rapunzel” (Getty 1997: 37). Structuralist thought is brought to bear on fairytales given that they concern family structures, rites of passage, and offer archetypal stories that countless cultures and periods have re-used. Storytelling has historically been used to fulfil an urge to find meaning in the world and explain all that is. Rapunzel arguably derives from creation tales in which humans are not alone but connected to nature. Ancient Egyptians told tales of angry Nile gods flooding land and killing crops, but also ensuring fruitful harvests if appeased with offerings. Max Lüthi calls such rituals a “lasting truth” (Lüthi 1986: xv), arguing that fairytales bear the

imprint of ancient agricultural hunter tribes and initiation and death rites. For Lüthi, “the tower in which the...heroine is imprisoned in tales of the *Rapunzel* type (AT 310) [is] equivalent to the puberty hut of primitive cultures” (69). Mother Gothel claims Rapunzel in her otherworldly garden, pushes her through a window (mouth) to a tower (stomach), and devours her spirit. This symbolic death is needed for Rapunzel’s “resurrection” as “an initiated adult” (115). Joseph Campbell would call Rapunzel’s archetypal quest a “coming of adolescence” and “call to adventure” (Campbell 1993: 51). Rapunzel leaves home (emblemising purity) and experiences the world. While Campbell and the Grimms (a) use towers and forests to represent women as enchained figures awaiting rescue by a man, and (b) gender the call to adventure by gearing it towards men who must conquer the threat women (the unknown) embody, only Rapunzel has the power to heal the prince in the desert. As water replenishes the earth, so Rapunzel’s tears recall ancestral (acculturation) rituals that aim to renew communities.

Structuralist adaptation studies that focus on literary traditions and the preservation and evolution of narrative elements such as ritual have proliferated in the twentieth century, given a widespread view that all fairytales and their permutations are part of a unified tale, and that a giant structure underlies each fairytale. A key example of this historic-geographic approach is Antti Aarne, who tried to collect “all available variations of a [given fairytale]” (however widespread) to re/construct a “pure” “original” (Teverson 2013: 97). The Aarne-Thompson Tale-Type Index gives all extant fairytales worldwide a number and a descriptive title based on plot and themes,³ but the proto-structuralist Vladimir Propp criticises the fairytale subgroups for defining tales by character, motif, and object: “magic adversary; the magic spouse, brother, and the like; the magic task; the magic helper; the magic object” (Propp 1984: 46). Inspired by Julius Krohn in the nineteenth century, Propp decontextualises all fairytales, and orders them not by content but form, which is ‘invariant’. Propp says that

³1-299 ‘Animal Tales’; 300-749 ‘Fairytales’; 750-849 ‘Religious Tales’; 850-999 ‘Realistic Tales’; 1000-1199 ‘Tales of the Stupid Ogre, Giant, or Devil’; 1200-1999 ‘Jokes and Anecdotes’; and 2000-2399 ‘Formula Tales’.

fairytale have up to thirty-one narrative steps that play out in the same order, regardless of when or by whom these plots have been written (Propp 1968 [1928]: 21). Problematic for feminists is that Proppian readings universalise fairytale character functions, discount themes and settings, normalise sex roles, see princesses as passive and “sought for”, and call weddings the final function. Propp lists seven character types—“villain, donor, helper, princess and her father, dispatcher, hero, false hero” (1968: 79-80)—and their traits (86-91), and unhelpfully merges Princess and Father, thus recalling ideas of women as male-owned objects or prizes. Seemingly based on one hundred of Aleksandr Afanasyev’s fairytales, which all have a male hero, Propp’s model argues that fairytale plots can only develop if characters conveniently arrive to interact, see something, pass it on, and set off a chain of events, as in a Rube Goldberg machine. These characters allegedly “perform...the same actions as the tale progresses, no matter how...they differ in shape, age, sex, occupation” (82). Even if characters in multiple tale variants are different, Propp calls characters identical if their actions are the same (69). The weakness or strength of this model is that it can be applied to the majority of literature and art. However, not all thirty-one timeless functions or character types appear in one tale. While the fixed order of tasks does not change if functions are left out, functions “do not always [occur] in direct succession” (71), and many “actions...do not conform to...any of the functions” (64). Propp’s universal structural model is thus not uniform but mirrors the fairytale’s flexibility.

Peter Gilet’s *Vladimir Propp and the Universal Folktale: Recommissioning an Old Paradigm—Story as Initiation* (1998) reflects how twentieth- and twenty-first-century thinkers continue to pare down fairytales, as does Claude Lévi-Strauss with his categories of lack/liquidation. Despite his initial criticism of Lévi-Strauss’s simplification of fairytale plots, Gilet reduces Propp’s 31 unwieldy fairytale functions to five categories that encompass the recurring elements of wonder tales, and argues that oral and literary fairytales from disparate times and places are astonishingly similar (they ‘infect’ each other) because human cultures

have never existed in isolation from each other for extensive periods. As with Antti Aarne, Gilet argues that gathering *all* fairytales (or all surviving versions of a single fairytale), however sparse or ancient, forms a “uniform” story (29). Using Gilet’s model, for example, and applying it to ‘Rapunzel’, the prince hears of Rapunzel and embarks on a quest as a result of a universal “Initial Situation” (Functions 1-11): infertility (lack) and theft (a fault). His next “Interaction with the Helper” (Functions 12-15) leads to an “Interaction with the Prince/ss” (a new category by Gilet). Rapunzel and the prince have an “Interaction with the Adversary” (Functions 16-21), but Rapunzel is cast out. The story ends with the “Return of the Hero” (Functions 22-31), and the reunion of the nuclear family. A betrothed Rapunzel resolves the initial lack and creates a new family by birthing her twins. However, the functions in Gilet’s model “tend to overlap” (57). Its arbitrariness is why this thesis proposes alternative ways of reading Rapunzel fairytales, without prescribing a one-size-fits-all narrative model.

Fairytales and Memetics

Due attention will be given in subsequent chapters to the flexibly recurring narrative motifs of ‘Rapunzel’, which can be thought of as memes—data transmitted through culture by oral, written, or pictorial means (Dawkins 2006: 192)—because they survive by being endlessly adaptable to different contexts and cultures. Biological meme theory begins but certainly does not finish with Richard Dawkins in 1976, for it has become mainstream in adaptation studies. Taking its cue from Gary R. Bortolotti and Linda Hutcheon in ‘On the Origin of Adaptations’ (2007), this thesis synthesises literary and biological work to account for the memetic spread and endurance of fairytales, and ‘Rapunzel’ in particular. Dawkins does not speak of fairytale memes directly, yet relevant here is his idea that adapters use memes to compete for audiences. One of the cohering arguments here and elsewhere is that while the concept of memes is still in dispute (Zipes 2006: 6), certain ideas are still passed on because they ‘hook’ readers and appear to reflect or relate to their human needs and realities. Although it is difficult to argue

unequivocally for the timelessness of such realities, this thesis nevertheless contends that cultural ideologies are effective because they appeal to deep-down human needs and urges.

There are two positions to take on memes—and they are sometimes silently merged. One is that memes are the result of cultural transmission only. On this view, as in games of Chinese whispers, memes passed on by text or speech can deteriorate over time and result in unfaithful replicas; to make a copy that ‘sticks’ in the mind, adapters advertise a meme in ways that make it stand out, relevant, and engaging. To make a meme memorable increases its likelihood of being propagated (Dawkins 2006: 197). Yet Dawkins adds that memes lack agency and are not “mystical” (196). *People* adapt and pass on memes. They are not spread telepathically and are not inherited or passed on by “genetic means” (23). Rather, one remembers or makes mental copies of ideas and transfers them to another person through literature and oral exchange (192). But Dawkins also says that humans pass on memes because of their “psychological appeal” (193). Zipes calls this appeal a “special germ [in] every canonical fairytale” (Zipes 2013: 32) that makes them memorable. Memes are then cultural phenomena, but survive as they appeal to one or another aspect of human psychology.

‘Rapunzel’ is a meme matrix comprised of memorable themes, characters, and ideas that have been refined and pruned over thousands of years. Rapunzel memes include expectant parents, forbidden food, a girl, long (blonde) hair, a tower, imprisonment, a witch, a rescuer, a haircut, a desert, a reunion, healing and marriage. Long hair makes her unforgettable, as does her lost innocence, isolation, love, loss, and her experience of being kidnapped by a witch. Some of these motifs or memes are clearly cultural, especially in a patriarchal world in which women and girls are more vulnerable than men to attack and abuse. The kidnap of Rapunzel is especially disturbing because it could actually happen. New and successive editions of the tale reflect shifting cultural and personal attitudes or values by demonstrating new interpretations of the kidnap and of Rapunzel’s relationship to Gothel—as a daughter, prisoner, and even lover.

They rework the classic Grimm narrative because culturally irrelevant tales become unpopular, stop being passed on, and eventually become mere whispers that die out. At the same time, other motifs persist because they speak to urges which maintain their relevance above and beyond the contingencies of time and shifting cultural values.

Drawing on Dan Sperber's *Explaining Culture* (1996) and 'Culture and Modularity' (co-written with Lawrence Hirschfeld), Jack Zipes uses the term meme "to denote a particular fairytale that has been canonised in the Western world and become so memorable that it appears to be transmitted naturally by our minds" (Zipes 2006: 14). The word 'naturally' here again points in two rather different directions: towards the notion that culture and the memes transmitted by culture become 'second nature'; but also towards the idea that memes survive because 'our minds' are naturally amenable to their reception. Moreover, while Zipes's *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre* (2006) focuses on memes in 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'Cinderella', and 'Bluebeard', he does not apply memetics to 'Rapunzel' or draw out the full *psychological* significance of memes in fairytales. This is because he is largely interested in the work of culture and cultural ideologies. For example, he attributes the spread and 'stickiness' of the memes in 'Cinderella' to a human predisposition towards attachments with biological relatives and a desire to see how other families operate (Zipes 2006: 114). If readers have a step-family, or worry that they will, they might look to tales that depict the interactions and private lives of step-families for guidance. But characterisations of extended families can serve as a blueprint for how readers see step-parents or stepchildren in real life. Zipes implicitly stresses how easily writers distort and ideologise a need for attachment by 'twisting' how readers see family members. For example, while it is "stepfather[s]" rather than "stepmother[s]" who perpetrate child abuse most often in real life (114), Zipes writes that "the stepmother [is] singled out as the wicked character" (114) in fairytales. The Grimms "changed many mothers to stepmothers" because poor medical care before the twentieth

century saw rising numbers of families with stepmothers, and “because they did not want to...disrespect [their] mother or mothers in general” (114). In so doing it has become a truism, at least in fairytales, that stepmothers are evil child-haters. Attachment for Zipes therefore seems to be natural, but the way that it plays out is always cultural.

The key, recurring question that arises from these perspectives on memes, then, and one which this thesis leaves partially open-ended, is whether there are neutral or timeless memes that can exist outside any historical realisation of them. If there are such things as universal memes, is it possible to recognise them independently of their cultural embodiments? This thesis gives a tentative ‘yes’, on the basis that persistent human urges, fears and anxieties are visible through their cultural adaptations. Certain emotions and experiences seem to play out in similar, if not identical, ways universally. If human universals or equivalences *do* exist, is it not possible that certain ideologies would want to—and indeed *do*—appropriate these universals in the service of their own agendas? While this thesis does not claim to solve the existence of universals, each chapter maintains that there *are* certain recurring ideas and value systems that weave their way in and out of each Rapunzel re-vision. Some elements are added and other elements are discarded—again this seems dependent upon the ideological vision of each individual or collective adapter. Rapunzel critics such as Alison Lurie and Terri Windling will also be seen to share the position adopted in this thesis and contend explicitly that ideas pertaining to escape and adventure *are* neutral ones or pre-ideological, but ones that are then warped by men in the service of patriarchal ideologies.

Psychoanalytic Fairytale Scholarship

It follows that as fairytales (akin to dreams) are created by human minds and concern unconscious desires, they support psychoanalytical interpretations. The idea that one can unlock content beneath conscious perception in texts is a cornerstone of psychological interpretations

of fairytales, which have proliferated ever since the advent of psychoanalysis in the 1890s. Post-1970s psychological understandings of fairytales typically draw on earlier work either to integrate or critique and distance themselves from it. This thesis makes selective use of Freudian and (less frequently) Jungian ideas. Chapter 4 uses a Freudian vocabulary to analyse Rapunzel's dream in Emma Donoghue's 'The Tale of the Hair' (1997). Each chapter supports and reflects Freud's and Jung's use of psychoanalysis to explore the personal and collective psychological meanings of fairytale content, including characters' desires and anxieties. I also pursue psychoanalytical readings of the Rapunzel re-visions in order to penetrate their many layers and analyse their manifest and latent content. So too do Freud and Jung share my interest in the meanings behind symbols and individual words and sentences; and both examine content in fairytales that they took to be universal, such as family romances, Oedipal dramas and, in the case of Jung, the Elektra complex. Moreover, both relate universals, in different ways, to individuals and individual case histories whilst allowing for individual experiences that appear more purely personal. Jung, for instance, distinguishes between the personal unconscious, which stores personal experiences, and the "inherited" and "infinite" collective unconscious, which is "universal" and "impersonal" (Jung 1968: 43). Meanwhile, Freud attended to the idiosyncrasies of individuals and their histories, while generating psychoanalytical terms with far more general application. If 'Rapunzel' is then a grand narrative about the human psyche, it arguably derives from and is a vestigial record of primordial beliefs, shared conditions, and endlessly repeated life events such as birth, death, and love. Marie-Louise von Franz, a Jungian theorist, theorises that "all fairytales" bridge the conscious and unconscious (von Franz 1996: 1) and "endeavour to describe [a] psychic fact...so...far-reaching and so difficult for us to realise in all its different aspects that hundreds of tales and thousands of repetitions...are needed until this unknown fact is delivered into consciousness" (2). This implies that fairytales evolve and can be "enriched by the addition [or adaptation] of archetyp[es]" (19).

Freud in his writing on fairytales similarly finds the universal at work in particular case histories. He avers that while they are about or personal to a single individual, they also promote identification by focusing on abstract and unknown figures that could be projections of any reader's psychic dramas. 'The Occurrence in Dreams of Material from Fairytales' (1913) argues that a patient *au fait* with fairytales dreams of a Rumpelstiltskin-like dwarf as a symbolic expression of her anger. Just as Rumpelstiltskin tears himself apart after revealing his name to the Queen accidentally, the patient recalls saying "I could tear [my husband] in two" (Freud 2011: 2597). Freud thus argues that the two are linked, adding that the dream encodes an unspoken fear of her husband impregnating her. Freud calls the brown room a "vagina" and "marriage bed", terms the dwarf a "penis", and dubs a "transparent grey garment" (2597) the condom worn during intercourse. The patient's ego represses violent or sexual wishes and bars these thoughts from her conscious until they transform themselves into symbols in her unconscious and so no longer cause her displeasure. Fittingly, Freud's Wolf Man case study of 1914 attributes a patient's nightmare about almost being eaten by wolves to a childhood fear of a "picture of a wolf in a book of fairytales...the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood'" (2599). When the patient then remembers his grandfather's story of seven grey wolves—one has its tail docked and is defeated by its castration complex—he sees parallels with the woodland wolf in 'Little Red Riding-Hood', and the goats eaten by the grey-pawed wolf in 'The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats' (2600). The patient's animal phobia is only discovered because Freud makes him remember his fairytale picture-books, and his father's playful threats to "gobble him up", akin to Wolf-as-Grandmother in 'Little Red Riding Hood' (2601). Interestingly, Freud's analysis is particularising and universalising at the same time.

A Jungian reading of Andrew Lang's Rapunzel variant 'Prunella' (1900) might call the universe that Prunella inhabits an externalisation of her unconscious, where the witch and her sister represent the shadow archetype. They set Prunella three trials (riddles) that she must

solve or else they will kill her. The use of tests evokes the Sphinx myth and appears in countless fairytales because of a collective need for heroes to prove their worth and distinguish themselves from ordinary folk—by staying calm, collected, and coming to terms with (without being overtaken by) taboo emotions and primitive drives. Bensiabel, the future lover of the angelic Prunella, helps Prunella to complete her quest, to overcome her fears, and to achieve an integrated identity. This embodiment of the masculine principle alleviates her helplessness, represents and satisfies her need for a platonic and romantic human connection, and thus symbolises her unassimilated adult emotions and sexual identity. In particular, Bensiabel (seemingly the voice of the unconscious) imparts secret knowledge that saves Prunella, and gives her items and specific instructions: oil a gate, give a dog bread, hand rope to a woman lowering a bucket into a well by her hair (echoing Rapunzel), and give to a woman cleaning the hearth with her tongue a broom. After Prunella performs these tasks and gives the inhabitants labour-saving devices, she returns with a casket and recites the order in which three cocks crow (black, yellow, white). When Bensiabel then kills his witch-mother (shadow) as a gesture of his love for Prunella, he eliminates the barrier to his romantic needs and the greatest psychological threat for Prunella. Conquering the witch enables Prunella to marry Bensiabel, integrate the male and female aspect, and find her Happy-Ever-After.

Bruno Bettelheim, a follower of Freud, examines fairytales' psychological significances and makes the pertinent argument that "fairytales depict in imaginary and symbolic form the essential steps in growing up and achieving an independent existence" (Bettelheim 1976: 73). *The Uses of Enchantment* contends that 'Rapunzel' is a tale about "sexual maturity" (148) and "growing" and "finding" oneself (150), and that Rapunzel's hair "symbolise[s]" a "transfer" from the union with "a parent to that of a lover" (148). So too does Bettelheim reference the "Freudian slips" in the story, which enact Rapunzel's "guilt" about her "clandestine meetings with the prince" (148). 'Rapunzel' highlights Bettelheim's

thesis that fairytales allow readers to take away from their stories whatever they need to deal with real life because they express unconscious pressures, taboo thoughts, and unmet (un)conscious wishes, and offer symbolic solutions to existential anxieties; such mutable and revelatory tales are psychologically enriching because they and their characters are stimulating and help individuals and societies to grapple with unconscious (developmental) conflicts without harming or “belittling” them (45). I agree with Bettelheim that fairytales are spaces for readers to rehearse adult life, and so are consolatory and transformative. Readers also profit from the cultural lessons in fairytales. Better to know beforehand that those who steal and trespass in a witch’s garden can lose their children or end up in a tower (jail) like Rapunzel. However, Rapunzel overcomes all negative consequences and marries her prince; hence readers might use this tale as a model if faced with similar events. In Richard Dawkins’s words, “no amount of simulation can predict exactly what will happen in reality, but a good simulation is enormously preferable to blind trial and error” (Dawkins 1989: 58).

Propp, Gilet, Freud, Jung and Bettelheim demonstrate between them that the narrative and psychological motifs that they extract from fairytales are not uniform. Propp’s narrative functions are different from Gilet’s. Jung’s psychological approach is different from Freud’s. And both Jung and Freud universalise urges and principles, such as the ‘masculine principle’ in the case of Jung, which many subsequent theorists find objectionable. There have in other words been marked differences of opinion about the nature of the primordial urges, instincts and/or memes to be found in fairytales. Nevertheless, after several decades in which universals have been treated with deep suspicion by cultural materialists and social constructionists, some critics (cited below) are prepared to countenance the possibility, questioningly, of human universals. Jack Zipes argues that fairytales “contain ‘universal’ motifs and experiences that writers [use to offer] commentaries on...their times. They also address common instinctual drives and social problems that arise from the human attempts to

‘civilize’ these drives” (Zipes 2013: 41-42). Marina Warner also suggests that fairytales “prised loose from their historical context [can be] viewed as unchanging repositories of eternal wisdom with application across time, place, culture, and history” (Warner 2012: 6). These claims echo the thoughts of many adapters themselves, including adapters of ‘Rapunzel’. For example, Terri Windling, who refashions the Rapunzel fairytale in *Black Swan, White Raven* (1997), ends her essay ‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Let Down your Hair’ (2007) by professing that Rapunzel’s themes are “universal and timeless” in that “we’ve all hungered for things with too high a price...felt imprisoned by another’s demands [or been] carried away by love, only to end up blinded and broken”. For Windling, the moral of ‘Rapunzel’ is that “we have to leave the tower [and] weave a ladder or leap into the thorns. We can’t stay in childhood forever. The adult world with all its terrors and wonders waits for us just beyond the forest”. This sounds persuasive, yet not all readers will agree or think of looking for this theme given various other possibilities. This is why it is important for this thesis to make explicit the memes in the (‘infinitely adaptable’) Rapunzel meme pool. The key Rapunzel themes analysed in subsequent chapters are those that tap into the following perennial human needs or urges: a need for security and home; the urge to attach; a fear or an embrace of abandonment, lack and loss; a desire to connect with nature, with nature often though not always associated with replenishment; a calling for adventure and a desire to escape the home as part of a process of sexual and/or psychological maturation. All of these themes are adapted and re-adapted, gendered and re-gendered, according to the several ideological agendas that the thesis will simultaneously explore.

Principles of Selection

The choice of Rapunzel adaptations was argument-driven. My research at the British Library and on the search engines of online academic journals in the United Kingdom, Australia, and America (namely *Lion & the Unicorn* and *Marvels & Tales*) sought to test whether Rapunzel motifs persist because of (a) the power of cultural ideologies or (b) universal human urges to which ‘Rapunzel’ and its re-visions appeal. While this work cannot prove or disprove the existence of universals—or indeed how *all* adapters from 1970 onwards un/intentionally appropriate perennial or universal ideas, the chosen sample of texts has, at the very least, indicated that patriarchal adapters often co-opt ‘Rapunzel’ in order to pass off gender ideologies as eternal and universal. However, locating and refining a list of adaptations was challenging because not all Rapunzel tales do the same thing, call themselves Rapunzel tales, are consciously produced as Rapunzel adaptations, or are widely publicised online or in databases as Rapunzel reworkings. Rapunzel adaptations (acknowledged or otherwise) also tend to be classified in terms of motif rather than theme. The search terms ‘Rapunzel’, ‘hair’, ‘long hair’, ‘Gothel’, ‘Grimms’, ‘adaptation’, ‘fairy tale’, ‘herb’, ‘rapun’, ‘parsley’, ‘scissors’, ‘tower’, and ‘witch’ yielded several results, while ‘security’ and ‘attachment’ produced none. Ideas of escape and unfulfilled longings may seem obvious, but they are rarely used to group Rapunzel fairytales. Even so, I chose Donna Jo Napoli’s *Zel* (1996) because it organises its chapters in terms of universals. Incidentally, radical, *avant-garde*, Rapunzels were perhaps less likely to come across my radar in small magazines, alternative media, and publications that have either fallen out of print or not been digitised. Such difficulties in accessing materials were perhaps inevitable. Electronic communications with The Harvard Library, coupled with face-to-face discussions with other academics and critics at conferences, were therefore helpful in revealing rare and well-known Rapunzels that I might have missed. Online blogs, review sites, forums (especially SurLaLune), and finally Amazon and Google Books also expanded my initial understanding of what makes a Rapunzel fairytale a Rapunzel fairytale, and highlighted how pervasive ‘Rapunzel’ has become in contemporary Western culture.

Nevertheless, despite seeking to offer a pool of Rapunzel re-visions as a resource for future scholars, the mere existence of many Rapunzel tales does not mean that they have any or equal value. Volume does not always mean worth, hence I had to be selective and never presume that every Rapunzel re-vision is significant just because it is a Rapunzel re-vision. Rather, guided by the wealth of Rapunzel scholarship, my main principle of selection was that each text had to *say* something in relation to my argument. In the case of the short stories and poetry, I decided upon adaptations that (a) dealt with a variety of thought-provoking ideas and themes in interesting and new ways, (b) disturbed pervasive gender stereotypes, and (c) demonstrated contrasts between shallow or flat modulations and complex literary rewritings. Consequently, while the specific rationale for the choice of texts in each chapter will be demarcated shortly, I tease out adaptations that open up new ideas and do interesting things with a particular genre, and contrast these, in later chapters, with more commercial reworkings. As such, while I still find more popular reworkings of Rapunzel on an almost daily basis, I have resisted the urge to list them all in the Appendix, lest I unintentionally claim that prolonging the shelf life of the Rapunzel tale is good in itself, or that an adaptation is worthy of analysis purely because it keeps the Rapunzel fairytale alive in the cultural imagination in its own way, regardless of how and whether its treatment of genre or gender ideology is valuable. Instead I have chosen a cycle of texts that best illustrate my argument. Although the process of selection has therefore been subjective, to test my argument, and to accommodate my close readings, much material had to be removed, such as: *Rapunzel and the Seven Dwarfs: A Maynard Moose Tale* (2011); male Rapunzels—namely Quasimodo in the bell tower; and Elora Bishop’s *Braided: A Lesbian Rapunzel* (2012). The texts that I have included are representative of Rapunzel’s position—and of gender ideologies—in Western culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. These adaptations reveal contrasts between commercial Rapunzels and complex literary rewritings, and they show how and why the Rapunzel fairytale, with its age-old themes, is translatable into contemporary contexts. Meanwhile, the chapters will also examine whether the majority of adaptations are feminist, and whether this is a conclusion that can only be drawn because of the texts that I have selected.

Outline of Thesis

Chapters are organised principally by genre and medium. Other structuring principles are of course possible. The chapters could have been organised historically, by decade, and/or by different manifestations of feminism, namely second-wave, third-wave, and postfeminism. Although explorations of postfeminism and how it relates to second- and third-wave feminism are found in subsequent chapters, the term postfeminism is used here to mean contradictory or false visions of female empowerment that reinforce patriarchal ideologies. A popular belief (repeated by several adaptations) is that this is a *postfeminist* age where feminism is no longer needed. However, postfeminism arguably prevents rather than signifies the achievement of feminist aims. Feeding into an individualistic ‘me-me-me’ culture, postfeminism often appears regressive, for it replaces collective aims of consciousness-raising with the gratification of *personal* desires, which are often shallow and consumer-led. To return to the organisation of this thesis, the chapters might have been organised around key memes (such as the call to adventure) or motifs (such as hair). I have opted for medium because this allows not only for concentrated treatment of some of the salient formal characteristics of different media and genres, but because of the close intertextuality that often exists between adaptations within a given medium. This is not to ignore the existence of other, cross-generic kinds of relationship between texts, but to focus on the possibilities and limitations of particular genres and the way these are themselves extended or consolidated. Nor does the organisation of medium preclude some of the other organising principles referred to. Historical perspectives also inform each chapter, with Chapters 2 and 3 devoted, in part, to charting a shift from second-wave to third-wave feminist Rapunzel tales, and Chapters 4 and 5 a move towards postfeminist adaptations of ‘Rapunzel’.

Chapter 2 analyses the early contexts and intertexts of ‘Rapunzel’, arguing that ‘Rapunzel’ is one of *the* best case studies for an examination of the feminism and universalised gender ideologies in fairytales because Rapunzel adaptations exist globally, and because the Brothers Grimm revised and adapted ‘Rapunzel’ (1812) for the second edition of *Kinder und Hausmärchen* in 1819 – which led to the final volume in 1857 – and appropriated or excised memes as needed in order to preserve the conservative morals of their German readership. Jack Zipes states in *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and their Tradition* that

“After 1819 there were five more editions [of *Kinder und Hausmärchen*]” (Zipes 1999: 76). In *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm: The Complete First Edition* (2014) Zipes translates into English and calls the “first edition [as] if not more important than the final seventh edition of 1857, especially if one wants to grasp the original intentions of the Grimms...They are stunning narratives...because they are so blunt and unpretentious [and untouched by a]...puritanical ideology” (Zipes 2014: xx). Relevant to this thesis is that after 1812, ‘Rapunzel’ “is longer...sentimental, and without a hint of pregnancy [in order to] accord with...notions of...decorum” (xxxvii). Zipes thus emphasises the cultural pressures or ideological motivations that inflect adapters. In addition, while the Grimms recorded rather than created ‘Rapunzel’, they softened certain ideas. Ruth Bottigheimer writes that when Wilhelm Grimm “saw pregnancy in fairytales he would have none of it. He erased Rapunzel’s tightening garments and [exchanged] her changing shape [for] ‘friendship’ with the prince” (Bottigheimer 1987: 163). Despite this anaesthetisation, numerous adapters treat the Grimms as the primary authors of ‘Rapunzel’, unaware of the changes made to the ‘original’ fairytale. That the story has been edited means that one must discount or forget its antecedents in order to call the 1857 ‘Rapunzel’ a ‘pure’ ur-text. Each ostensible ur-Rapunzel that is reworked is but one version among many ur-Rapunzels; and each version affects and is affected by its various intertexts. Several Rapunzel adaptations cite the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ as their hypotext, but there are many Grimm Rapunzels, which arguably derive from earlier fairytales, such as Friedrich Schultz’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1790), Charlotte-Rose de la Force’s ‘Persinette’ (1698), and Basile’s ‘Petrosinella’ (1634). These particular fairytales, among many others, were accessed in Heidi Anne Heiner’s *Rapunzel and Other Maiden in the Tower Tales From Around the World* (2010). The pre-nineteenth-century hypotext(s) from which ‘Rapunzel’ springs is thus touched on, to understand how Rapunzel has been subsequently adapted. This research will prepare the way for an examination in the subsequent four chapters of how many post-1970s Rapunzel narratives mine the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ (1857) for feminist meanings and possibilities for feminine emancipation.

Building on the argument that past Rapunzel fairytales inflect future adaptations, Chapter 3 uses Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982) to taxonomise four examples of Rapunzel poems, which are informed by one or more of the poems that precede it, and which reflect Genette’s assertion that “there is no literary work

that does not evoke...some other literary work” (Genette 1982: 9). The 1970s have been chosen as a starting point because this period is the starting point for Rapunzel adaptations and appropriations. Chapter 3 begins with Anne Sexton’s poem ‘Rapunzel’ (1970) not only because it was penned in 1970, but because it is one of the foremost and most influential Rapunzel adaptations, one which offers a feminist poetic treatment of the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’. Beyond Genette’s thesis that transtextuality—“the textual transcendence of the text” (1)—is definitional of poetics, poetry drives this entire chapter for reasons of generic consistency and because the poems raise such queries as ‘when does an adaptation stop being an adaptation?’, and ‘who is this adapter adapting?’. Anne Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1970) has one clear hypotext: the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’. But Olga Broumas’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1977), the second poem analysed, begins with an epigraph: a line from Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’. Broumas’s ‘Rapunzel’ is therefore discussed next, in terms of what Julie Sanders calls “‘hyper-hyper-texts’, allusive not only to some founding original text...but also to other known rewritings of [it]” (Sanders 2006: 107). Broumas thus has two sources: Sexton (who adapts the Rapunzel fairytale) and the Grimms. Which—if any—is then the adaptation and which—if any—is the original fairytale hypotext? The metaphor of a Russian nesting doll might be used to call Broumas’s ‘Rapunzel’ less authentic or original than Sexton’s poem (of the same name) because of the ‘genetic’ distance between them. However, Genette’s concept of a ‘palimpsest’ allows one to discard hierarchies of originality, and to state that each poem is built upon a number of other works that are visible beneath the surface. Just as numerous texts led up to ‘Rapunzel’ (1812-1857), this same fairytale has been overlaid by successive adapters, who use, add to, or modify the same hypotext (canvas), though adapters do often ‘crop’ the frame and excise or blur memes. (Meme theory combined with the notion of adaptation-as-palimpsest will be used to explain why there are many versions of the same fairytale and why certain fairytales outlive others.) Consequently, as Broumas pays homage to yet also writes over the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ and Sexton’s poem to produce her own original version of the story (seven years later), this chapter reconsiders what makes a Rapunzel fairytale a Rapunzel fairytale, and examines the fluid memes and psychological content in each of the four post-1970s Rapunzel poems.

Liz Lochhead’s ‘Rapunzstiltskin’ (1981) and Patience Agbabi’s ‘RAPunzel’ (1995) are the final poems discussed in Chapter 3 because they both appear to channel third-wave

feminism by complicating feminism through colour and sexuality. Innumerable feminisms emerged from the late 1980s onwards, encompassing heterogeneities and complementarities. One tenet of the ‘third wave’ is that women cannot be easily categorised and that the terms woman and feminism cannot connote a common objective or identity. Just as Broumas’s poem (informed by second-wave feminism) highlights differences between a lesbian and heterosexual female identity, Agbabi implicitly stresses how being a black woman is in some respects different to being a white woman. Agbabi and Lochhead are important here because they shift the focus of the Rapunzel story in wide-ranging directions, translate Rapunzel into modern contexts, use colloquial language, and excise key characters and elements of the tale, and thereby disrupt expectations of the Rapunzel tale. Nevertheless, the palimpsest metaphor implies that no matter how obscured the link with the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ or its precursors is, the connection is always there. Though this chapter does unpeel the layers of all four poems (all Rapunzel fairytales in their own way), each new hypertext that is “grafted” onto the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ (the rootstock) is called a new, life-extending offshoot or root bundle for the Rapunzel myth. As Gérard Genette puts it, “Any text is a hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates or transforms” (Genette 1997: ix). With respect to the adaptations in this thesis, their aims vary but they also imply feminist solidarity, validate as well as complicate female experience, and write back to patriarchal ideologies.

All four variously feminist poems also demand and repay extensive treatment because they are multi-layered and complex. Such qualities have often characterised—or been used to characterise—‘serious’ literature, as a means of distinguishing high art from the ‘simple’ pleasures of popular fiction and film. Rapunzel adaptations and fairytales generally can reinforce or confound such distinctions; the term simple can equate to simplistic or depthless but can also mean ‘beguilingly simple’. Such distinctions are partly but arguably not entirely in the eye of the beholder. Even when the Rapunzel tale is anaesthetised or simplified (presumably for young readers) in order to widen access to the story’s themes or ideologies, there can still be complexity, be this in the form of internal monologues, shifts in focalisation,

and telling sentiments that contest gender ideologies and unsympathetic views of women, and which offer a patriarchal ideology critique that reconfigures pre-existing ideas of Rapunzel.

This chapter and the ones which follow it therefore deal with adaptations ranging from (deceptively) simple to complex and experimental. The more complex treatments of the Rapunzel tale tend, by definition, to deepen as well as sometimes challenge how audiences understand the memes on which this thesis focuses, while the less complex may unthinkingly employ them, in ways that are also conducive to the ideological status quo, or in the name of a simplified feminism. Of especial interest here is how poetic treatments rely on the accessibility of fairytales and readers' familiarity with them, at the same time as they estrange and transform the familiar. The fairytale's otherness feeds into and is adapted to suit the four writers' feminist aims of recuperating female voices and disrupting patriarchy. Where Anne Sexton and Olga Broumas represent the complexities and psychologies of characters such as Rapunzel and Mother Gothel, and where they home in on their mother-daughter bond—and implied lesbian attachments—as alternatives to the classic call to male sexual adventure, Liz Lochhead and Patience Agbabi focus on the challenges, frustrations, and frangibility of heterosexual romance (from a female perspective) and find new ways of freeing women from patriarchal bondage and the male gaze, namely by giving their Rapunzels often complex, 'poetic' voices that cannot be easily pinned down.

Chapter 4 scrutinises Rapunzel in short and longer prose fiction, and ends with a discussion of the postmodern graphic novel, *Rapunzel's Revenge* (2008). Because the short story is closest to the form of the Grimm 'Rapunzel', it begins with three examples of short stories: another adaptation entitled 'Rapunzel's Revenge' (1985), 'The Tale of the Hair' (1997) and 'The Difference in the Dose: A Story After 'Rapunzel'' (2010). This does not mean that there is an exact match in formal terms between the Grimm texts (1812-1857) and the post-1970s short stories dealt with here, although in the case of the first story discussed, 'Rapunzel's Revenge' (1985), this thesis argues for a near fit. This is because it is a moral fable and so mirrors the moralistic fairytale qualities of the Grimms. The two other short stories treated in this chapter, 'The Tale of the Hair' (1997) and 'The Difference in the Dose:

A Story After ‘Rapunzel’ (2010), form striking contrasts with ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’, for they both extend the scope of feminist adaptations of ‘Rapunzel’ to include jarring formal effects as well as disturbing content. These two tales are in many ways post-fairytales that challenge the feminist optimism of earlier revisions, especially that of ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’. Focusing intensely on one or only a few Rapunzel memes (mainly abandonment), these two stories seem to deliberately withhold or put off the ‘optimism of transformation’, whereby a condition of lack is overcome through a call to adventure. They draw out—and enact in their form and style—the full gender and existential implications of the motif of lack, and in so doing challenge the forward momentum of many other versions of ‘Rapunzel’.

A more conventional, though still thought-provoking example of longer fiction examined here is Donna Jo Napoli’s *Zel* (1996). This text approximates the psychological complexity often achieved by its longer counterpart, the novel, and is chosen as an example of a protracted feminist novelisation of ‘Rapunzel’. Napoli echoes Bruno Bettelheim by writing that “If [literature] can show [how a] character has dealt with a problem, maybe it will help you to find a way to deal with your world...and to develop empathy for other people”. Finally, the graphic novel *Rapunzel’s Revenge* (2008), which through its use of illustration exemplifies the way Rapunzel has most commonly been adapted (for children), is discussed to demonstrate not only the possibilities of mixed media, but another kind of individualism: ‘rugged’ individualism. The focus of this chapter on individualism anticipates some of the preoccupations of Chapters 5-6.

Chapter 5 centres on film adaptations of ‘Rapunzel’. Having looked at Rapunzel in poetry, in prose fiction, and in graphic novels (visual media), it is important to consider how Rapunzel translates from text to screen, from static or still-life to animation. Though prolific in the world of literature, there are few *full-length* Rapunzel films. Rapunzel first appears on film in Ray Harryhausen’s *The Story of Rapunzel* (1951), but this stop-motion tale is brief, akin to the majority of Rapunzel films created over the past sixty years. Given the brevity of

the majority of retellings still available in the public domain,⁴ these versions are dealt with in the Appendix, which includes a variety of Rapunzel cameos in various films and media, such as Disney's *Frozen* (2013). Chapter 5 focuses on full-length commercial screen Rapunzels—*Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002) and the blockbusters *Tangled* (2010) and *Into the Woods* (2014)—but it also examines the rare avant-garde reimagining *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978) and the loose adaptation *Shrek the Third* (2007). All of these films draw on and are informed by the resurgence of feminism in the 1970s, but what feminism means in each case is strikingly different. *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* uses second-wave feminist theories to engender consciousness-raising. It is chosen here because it opposes patriarchal ideologies and has a sense of a common project—re-reading 'Rapunzel' to validate and complicate female identities. However, this is counteracted by *Barbie as Rapunzel*, *Shrek the Third* (despite it being a 'pastiche' of fairytale tropes), and *Tangled*, which (a) are informed by patriarchy and (b) dilute the feminism in the first film by replacing calls for individual choice and freedom of identity with tales where individual choices *about appearance* are sovereign. These Rapunzels already think themselves free and are oblivious to how they are variously shaped by ideological forces. All that matters to them is that they can be who they want and dress as they want. But since their personal choices (the be-all and end-all) are not entirely of their own making, the individualism they salute is suggestive of a false consciousness. Indeed any feminist ideas and authentic choices are tied to a raft of clichés and gender stereotypes, in hopes of selling a doll and a consumer-led lifestyle. Disney does establish a dialogue between feminism and the commercial film industry, but it co-opts the selective feminist elements that it encodes in its films for its own ideological (postfeminist—or, more specifically, Disneyfied postfeminist) purposes. This chapter therefore feeds into feminist discourse by focusing on the differences and complementarities of the five films at the level of their content and post-/feminist orientations. In particular, it analyses how the particular ideologies that inform the films (including gender ideologies, feminism and post-feminism) are translated to screen.

⁴Harryhausen's *The Story of Rapunzel* (1951) lasts ten minutes; Tom Davenport's *Rapunzel, Rapunzel* (1979) spans 15 minutes; Gustavo Arteaga's *Rapunzel's Flight* (2008) is a mere six minutes and concerns an ant that climbs Rapunzel's black braids to give her magic mushrooms that, when inhaled, will transport her to a beach, at least in her mind; and Fiona Ashe's *Rapunzel: The Blonde Years* (2008) barely exceeds two minutes.

Chapter 6 further extends the analysis of the relationship between popular culture and conservative gender ideologies. Informed by the preceding analyses, particularly Chapter 5, focus is devoted to the gender stereotypes in Rapunzel adaptations in the wider commercial industry—especially television and advertisements. Examined as examples of twenty-first-century postfeminist Rapunzel re-visions, they not only demonstrate what Linda Hutcheon calls the ‘afterlife’ of a story, by way of the multiplicity of forms that the Rapunzel fairytale has come to assume: they are a testimony to the power of American mass marketing, and of Disney especially, rather than to certain Jungian archetypes or to Freud’s prescriptions for sexual development. Given the sheer number of un/conscious Rapunzel adaptations in the public domain, and in order to accommodate close textual analyses of each set of adaptations, Chapter 6 offers a selective examination of Rapunzel in the Western cultural imagination. These readings *are* proof of the afterlife of Rapunzel in the wider media, but this afterlife is even more visible in the Appendix, which proffers an extensive (though not exhaustive) range of Rapunzel reworkings, from magazines to action figurines and board and computer games. Salient, here, is that this final chapter consolidates the arguments of the previous chapters, and emphasises how fairytales contain a kind of narrative ‘shorthand’ and a series of expectations that influence the choices of adapters across various genres. Though adapters may liberate Rapunzel from the tower, give her a voice and a personal history, readers still have narrative expectations based on their knowledge of the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ and other precursor texts. While adaptations seek to say something new rather than repeat a tale verbatim, readers ‘know’ how it is ‘supposed’ to end. Lawrence R. Sipe argues in ‘A Palimpsest of Stories: Young Children’s Construction of Intertextual Links among Fairytale Variants’ (2001)—a study of ‘Rapunzel’ adaptations—that children can identify cohering content in each retelling: “The children [said that] ‘They always lock her up in a tower. It wouldn’t be a Rapunzel story if they didn’t have it’ ...as if [to say] ‘Here is what we have generalised from all these specific cases’” (333). Audiences may well make generalisations about Rapunzel fairytales. However, Chapter 6, framed in terms of postfeminism and retrogressive gender ideologies, demonstrates that Rapunzel adaptations in the wider media can disrupt audience expectations, while *still* reinforcing gender stereotypes. Consequently, this final chapter, as with the ones that precede it, moves towards the conclusion that recent Rapunzel fairytales are testimony to how adapters persistently repeat and disturb gender ideologies for various agendas.

Chapter 2: The Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ (1812-1857)

Western readers may take for granted that ‘Rapunzel’, penned by the Grimms in German, and allegedly deriving from Italian and Persian folklore, has been translated into English. Having consulted the ‘original’ German *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (1812) and the translations by D.L. Ashliman and Jack Zipes, it is apparent that the same fairytale can be translated in radically different ways. One prominent example, as a way into an extended analysis of ‘Rapunzel’ (1812-1857), is the blinding of the prince. D.L. Ashliman’s online translation of ‘Rapunzel’ (1857) states that “the thorns into which he fell poked out his eyes”. The idea of thorns poking out the prince’s eyes could be (mis)interpreted as ‘removed from their sockets’. However, Jack Zipes writes that the prince “fell into some thorns that pierced his eyes [and] became blind” (Zipes 2013: 56). In this translation, the prince has an eye injury as opposed to an extraction. These different outcomes may lead readers to have different understandings and memories of the Rapunzel fairytale, especially if either tale is the first version they encounter. Zipes addresses the issues of difference and ‘losing something in translation’ by stating that he translated the Grimm fairytales “into a basic contemporary American idiom” to showcase “the[ir] frank and blunt qualities” (Zipes 2014: ‘Note on the Text and Translation’). As the fairytales “were published in different German dialects” that are “impossible to match” in “American English”, Zipes (as adapter and translator) confesses that he put his own ‘stamp’ on them by trying “to reproduce the[ir] brusque manner”. This chapter will now explore how ‘Rapunzel’ has been ‘marked’ by memes that have been adapted for anti-/feminist purposes.

The first (1812) and the final (1857) versions of ‘Rapunzel’ demonstrate how the Grimm fairytale has been transformed into a symbolic tale that hosts several ‘universals’ or perennial human preoccupations such as love, desire, family, healing, attachment and joy,⁵ all of which are arguably amenable to feminist and patriarchal adaptation and appropriation.

Both versions begin with “a husband and a wife” who have “long in vain wished for a child”

⁵These versions have been consulted in Jack Zipes’s *The Golden Age of Folk and Fairy Tales: From the Brothers Grimm to Andrew Lang* (2013). ‘Rapunzel’ (1812) appears on pages 52-54 and ‘Rapunzel’ (1857) appears on pages 54-56.

(Zipes [1812] 2013: 52). A key difference is that in 1857, the wife prays to “the Lord” (54). As she does not become pregnant naturally but by invoking higher forces, her baby becomes a blessing from God. Indeed as the couple see from their window a “garden filled with the most beautiful flowers and herbs” (54), the story evokes the Garden of Eden, not least because the plot hinges on the obtainment of a rare herb (rapun or parsley) from a supernatural being’s garden. In Andrew Lang’s ‘Filagranata’, the wife originally completes this quest herself and faces the consequences of her actions. In ‘Rapunzel’ (1812 and 1857), her spouse replaces her as a hero-seeker, surmounts a “high wall”, and faces an enchantress (a “fairy” (52) in 1812 and a “sorceress” (54) as of 1857), just as Eden is guarded by cherubim and a flaming sword that faces all directions; yet there remains an uncanny allusion to Eve tempting Adam to eat of the apple. The husband, persuaded to commit theft, damns his family (who signify all humanity) and makes a deal with the devil, figuratively speaking. His wife is unaware that the price of the sought-after object is surrendering their child and returning to a state of lack. Consequently each version of the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ (1812-1857) begins with and is driven by lack or loss, as a means of punishing female desire.

Intriguingly, while several predecessors of the Grimm story state that the magical herb parsley (used to promote fertility) induces the wife’s longed-for pregnancy, meaning that the child in the tower is created with the aid of Mother Nature, Marina Warner in her article ‘After ‘Rapunzel’’ (2010) argues that parsley was considered “a popular abortifacient” and so was used to “procure a miscarriage” (334). Is Rapunzel then a symbol of abortive abortion? While the mother apparently yearns for a child, she perhaps unconsciously searches for a contraceptive and so prolongs her lack, or implies that having a child will not complete her. Such latent content is unspoken by the characters in this fairytale, but is implied nonetheless. Indeed towards the end of the tale, the witch even banishes Rapunzel to a barren desert or cave: a symbolic return to a dark womb or to death. Unmentioned by many critics is that the

mother's infertility and the Grimms' choice of rapunzel, a herb related to campanula and parsley, recall the proverb "parsley seed goes nine times to the devil"; as the Devil's herb, parsley must be sown ten times before germinating (Watts 2007: 168). Greek mythology even speaks of how parsley derives "from the blood of the hero Archemorus...forerunner of death" (157). In this way, Rapunzel is associated not with growth but death. This supports the view of Rapunzel as an undesired child, as with Hansel and Gretel. But did the Grimms recognise such links with Rapunzel and death, and thus see that she can be read as a child of the Devil? Did they know of parsley's roots or that their fairytale is rooted in ancient agricultural ritual? And did they sense the similarities between Rapunzel and Persephone, another nature-based goddess who is taken from her biological parents by a satanic agent and sent to a dark world? If so, one wonders *why* the Grimms gave their heroine a name with such a contentious history instead of, say, Petrosinella, for *petros*, meaning rock, fuses her with the stones of her tower. Most logical is that the Grimms elect Rapunzel over Parsley because theirs is an adaptation of Friedrich Schultz's 1790 tale of the same name. Nevertheless, while Marina Warner calls the Grimms "eager to avoid sexual innuendo", she adds that 'Rapunzel' is a cautionary fairytale that recalls issues of "unwanted pregnancy [and] teenage motherhood" (Warner 2010: 335). After all, another folkloric adage gives the advice "sow parsley, sow babies" (Watts 2007: 68).

Sex and creation are central to 'Rapunzel'. In the 1812 tale, the mother "saw the most beautiful rapunzel in a bed" (52). These suggestive words underpin how the fairytale operates as a text, for while the mother sees lettuce in a flowerbed, she perhaps foresees her daughter lying in a bed. This foreshadows the sexual union and creation of life, though later versions clarify that the mother sees "a bed of the finest rapunzel lettuce" (54). Besides lengthening and revising sentences, comments are supplied for the psychological states of specific characters. In 1812, the mother "crave[s]" but cannot obtain rapunzel and so "she began to waste away and look wretched" (52). In 1857, her reaction to the sight of the herb is extended: "It looked so

fresh and green that her mouth watered, and had a great longing to eat some. Day by day this desire increased, and since she knew she couldn't get any, she [was] miserable" (54). Even if fairytale characters do not possess the rich, interior, thinking lives of fleshed-out characters in novels, the Grimms make explicit that Rapunzel's mother has human desires and psychic motivations that govern her life. In psychoanalytic terms, her libido is overinvested with psychic energy that is projected onto the green parsley. Her id-driven fantasies of possessing rapunzel swell every day because they are unmet and because the plant attracts the mother in unspecified ways. Seeing and knowing that she lacks the herb inflames her mind. The herb fuels the impulse for adventure and is the cornerstone of 'Rapunzel'. However, the mother cannot achieve wish-fulfilment, or take up the invitation herself, because her censorious superego reminds her that she can only acquire rapunzel through theft. One can then read the witch who catches the mother stealing in the garden in Andrew Lang's 'Filagranata' as a reified censor or superego. This perhaps is why the father performs this taboo task in later variants such as 'Rapunzel': so that the mother is spared the consequences of pilfering rapunzel from Gothel and entering into a contract with a witch (an intervention that uncannily coincides with patriarchal attempts to reduce female actions). At any rate, the text makes apparent that motherhood, and thus Rapunzel, is not the wife's ego ideal: a plant is.

The mother's hyperbolic words "if I do not get any of that rapunzel... I shall have to die" (52) exemplify the herb's importance, even though its properties and mythical associations with death imply that the mother will *die* after consuming it. The herb also means the death of motherhood, for the mother eats rapunzel and loses her child, to a witch. In the 1812 Grimm tale, the mother's desperation occasions the father's determination to find rapunzel at any cost. By 1857, his private thoughts (exposed to readers) disclose a decision to prevent starvation. He thinks to himself: "Before I let my wife die, I'll do anything [so] she gets some rapunzel" (54). But might not the words 'before I let my wife die' indicate an intention for her to perish

and so signify a yearning to escape from an onerous marriage? Possibly, yet the father risks all by plundering herbs from Gothel at night; he uses the rapunzel to *heal* and *fulfil* the mother in ways that he cannot himself. Franz Ricklin, an early Freudian reader of fairytales, amplifies the herbs in ‘Rampion’ as ersatz phalluses and symbols of earth, seed, and creation (Ricklin 1915: 58). In ‘Rapunzel’ (1812 and 1857), devouring herbs has sexual meaning for the appetitive mother, enraptured by the foreign objects penetrating her body. The mouth is read as the mother’s uterus and is filled with the rapunzel, which helps her to produce a baby. Oral fixation is conveyed by her “immediately ma[king] a salad” that she devoured greedily and with “great zest” (52). One learns that the rapunzel “tasted so very good to her that her craving for it became three times greater by the next day” (52). Her insatiableness leads her to eat more forbidden herbs (fruit). On the third occasion, however, Gothel catches the father, and bellows (in the 1857 tale): “How dare you climb into my garden and steal my rapunzel like a thief? You’ll pay for this!” (54). This imposing witch archetype is successful in this story and features in the majority of Rapunzel reworkings because she represents secret knowledge (the shadow, in Jungian terms) and makes characters (readers) confront evil, the ineffable, and the consequences of stealing, even for survival. Richard Dawkins would argue that to steal rapunzel for the sake of survival is fundamentally human, especially if humans are “survival machines” (Dawkins 1976: 66).

A memetic approach might see the surrender of Rapunzel as a risk-reward strategy. Rapunzel (a cocktail of genes) is her parents’ only hope of their genes surviving, but without relinquishing her to quell Gothel, their lives and thus all their genes will be lost. How curious then that they give up their longed-for heavenly blessing and so suggest that survival is made possible through a self-imposed lack. Self-preservation, hunger, lust and narcissism override their ‘unconditional’ parental love. The father saves himself by begging for mercy and agreeing to Gothel’s Faustian contract: “I will permit you to take as much rapunzel as you like but

under one condition: when your wife gives birth, I must have the child” (Zipes 2013: 54-55). The father promises his baby (a part of him and proof of his potency) to Gothel, even though she might kill it and so destroy him and his wife psychologically. His ritualistic (life-for-a-life) exchange sees him choose himself and the mother over his baby; but he is reassured his gene pool will live on. After all, part of the witch’s contract is that “I shall take care of [Rapunzel] like a mother” (55). Gothel challenges readers’ understanding of witches by vowing to keep the child alive. Her capacity for compassion, even love, reinforces this chapter’s thesis that fairytales repeat and disturb (gender) stereotypes. Appropriately, the witch *wants* Rapunzel and may well be justified in taking her, unlike Rapunzel’s parents, who risk her life willingly.

On the other hand, the mother cannot defend her actions as she has sparse dialogue and is confined to the home in her role as a silent vessel for the heroine. One supposes that Rapunzel’s biological mother never loves her and that Rapunzel, while a highly prized asset, is as expendable or as replaceable as her herbal namesake; this conclusion is reached because the abduction of Rapunzel is emotionless, swift, brief and unimpeded. Gothel arrives after the “wife had the baby”; the “sorceress then [gives] the child the name of Rapunzel”, and “[takes] her away” (55). Nowhere in this episode is the mother able to voice her feelings or stop ‘Frau Gothel’. For that matter, how could she oppose her? The mother is presumably unaware of the father’s vow to the witch until the day that she gives birth and sees her, at which point she is understandably dumbstruck. Indeed, the harsh reality is that the mother *must* lose her child to cancel her moral debt, having persuaded her husband to steal on her behalf, as fairytale criminals must pay. A harsher truth is that nothing stops the mother from creating another child, and perhaps she does. Fittingly, ideas of birth or biological and surrogate mothers, as seen in Grimms’ ‘Rapunzel’ (1812-1857), are recreated in every Rapunzel adaptation in this chapter. The special and debatably universal bond between infant and mother (or an absence thereof) has integral psychological effects that play out in the lives of each Rapunzel, as will be seen.

The introduction to the character Rapunzel portrays her loveliness and immurement but speaks not, at this stage, of her trademark meme: her long hair. Aligned with fairytale females throughout history, who are cherished above all for their beauty, Rapunzel is termed “the most beautiful girl under the sun” (55). Additionally, it is said that “when she was twelve years old, the sorceress locked her in a tower located in a forest. It had neither doors nor stairs, only a little window high above” (55). It is significant, therefore, that for eleven years of her life, Rapunzel either lives next door to her parents, without contact, or lives in an unspecified location, until puberty beckons, whereupon she is taken to a tower. Readings of her imprisonment vary considerably. Marina Warner in her 1994 Reith Lectures posits that fairytales aimed to help children grow up ‘correctly’. By imprisoning Rapunzel, the Grimms forestall all knowledge about herself and adulthood, preserve her innocence, and emblematises a moralistic desire to “work our way back to Eden”. Unless hidden from lusty men who might fall in love with her and steal her away, and unless denied knowledge about her origins, her biological parents and the world, Rapunzel may yield to sin and bodily desire. By exiling Rapunzel and blinding the prince after the revelation of their illicit relationship, eroticism is positioned as ‘off limits’ to children and sex and sexual thoughts become wicked. This explains the excision of all allusions to Rapunzel’s intercourse after 1819. Kay Stone agrees with this reading in her article ‘Things Walt Disney Never Told Us’ (Stone 1975: 46) but adds that Rapunzel’s imprisonment and that of related fairytale females is “a reaction of men to the threat of female sexuality” (47). Indeed, Rapunzel’s imprisonment signifies the freezing of her body and of her adult desires, as in ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Snow White’. This recalls how, in most Rapunzel tales, a jealous or hyper-moral figure isolates maidens (from men) in towers so as to uphold propriety, the sanctity of marriage, and prevent the loss of innocence.

The tower is a powerful symbol. It is high and impenetrable like a church or convent. It has stones that provide a human need for security and imply immortality; but this human

need is of course conspicuously gendered. *Women* provide security and are the base to which the (male) wanderer returns, or else the calm that comes as the reward at the end of a quest. For women to function as protectors, they themselves need to be protected, forcibly so in the case of Rapunzel. The tower allows Gothel to protect or control Rapunzel and her virginity until she is to be married; and it isolates Rapunzel and ignores her need for human contact. Still, the tower window lets Rapunzel see and reflect on the world beyond her own head. Rapunzel even contacts the outside world after hearing the password “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, / Let down your hair for me” (Zipes 2013: 55). Gothel’s words cause Rapunzel to tie her hair around a “hook on the window” (56)—a detail inserted by Friedrich Schultz—and thereby alleviate her pain when Gothel pulls on and climbs her “long hair, as fine as spun gold” (55). Inevitably, a prince enters the forest, is enchanted by Rapunzel’s “sweet voice” (55)—a sign of her ethereality—finds Rapunzel, and spies on Gothel to discover how she gains entry to the tower. Crucially, his first interaction with Rapunzel is founded on a lie. Rapunzel hears the password at night (implying poor visibility or confusion) and believes Gothel has returned. On this basis, Rapunzel lets down her hair. And yet she is happy to be deceived, as indicated by her arrangement “for him to come every day and be pulled up” (53). A verbose account of their courtship replaces these words by 1857. Rather than live in sinful pleasure, Rapunzel agrees to “have the prince for her husband” (55) and to leave the tower, provided that he brings “a skein of silk” on each visit, so that Rapunzel might “weave it into a ladder” (56) and escape.

Woven through each version of ‘Rapunzel’ and through the cultural imagination are multivalent and often cohering depictions of Rapunzel’s hair. More iconic than the tower in which she is corralled, Rapunzel’s defining feature has given rise to an array of memorable art and iconography. Hair is a central aspect of Rapunzel—her name itself conjures images of long lustrous tresses—but attached to her and her hair are various symbolic associations that are memorable because of their unashamed gendering. While her hair has feminist potential,

it has become semantically overburdened, over-determined, and represents a conflicting web of feminine signifiers. Rapunzel's hair is traditionally a marker of femininity and loveliness. She most often bears golden hair because it is connotative of inner and outer female beauty. From the Latin '*blandus*' or charming, blondeness evokes the sun and holiness, just as *xanth* means golden, hence Xanthousa.⁶ So recurrent are associations with gold and goodness that one can identify a hero or virginal damsel from her hair alone, as with Aphrodite, Rapunzel, Goldilocks, even Jane Bennett. D'Aulnoy even dictates in 'Fair Goldilocks' that her heroine "was called Beauty with the Golden Hair...no-one could look on her without loving her" (D'Aulnoy 2003: 19). The idea that hair can call to individuals and elicit emotional reactions is central because long hair especially is used to symbolise urges for love, romantic attachments, and eventually sex. The prince's reaction to Rapunzel's hair recalls how women, to be thought a lady, historically pinned up hair they unloosed during girlhood. Only harlots dared display untied or wild hair, for women who 'undressed' their locks may as well have been naked. Indeed straight-laced women reserved letting down their thick and profuse hair for a lover or husband because this was an arousing activity—a form of foreplay. That Rapunzel then lets down her hair reveals her naïveté. Hair is a largely positive symbol but patriarchal narratives have used 'free' hair as a pejorative emblem of unrestrained desire, flirtation and sexual availability, and as a lure or a lasso for men (even Mother Gothel uses Rapunzel's hair to enthrall and catch the prince).

What hair means to the central characters in 'Rapunzel' thus requires consideration. Hair is, to Mother Gothel, the ultimate signifier of control, and chains Rapunzel to the tower. When it is visible, Gothel knows that her prisoner is still held captive inside her stone prison. Pulling on and climbing the hair as a ladder is the only way of entering the tower, yet Gothel uses Rapunzel's body in a dehumanising way that likens her to a tool or to a beast of burden.

⁶Xanthousa appears in the Greek 'Rapunzel' variant 'Anthousa, Xanthousa, Chrisomalousa, or Anthousa the Fair with Golden Hair'.

As Rapunzel must be a pulley and not attract or ‘pull’ suitors, she is punished for possessing and indulging in her desires. Although this archetypal blonde maiden can only occupy herself by combing her locks or singing, she desires to be taken outside of herself and rescued from the life she knows. Her hair is a casualty of her pursuit of freedom and love, for she speaks of her existential issues to the wrong person. Rapunzel’s mind has gaps, akin to the tower, and she blurts out her secrets to Gothel, by pleading “tell me [why] my clothes are...too tight. They don’t fit me anymore” (Zipes [1812] 2013: 53). Her scandalous revelation is sanitised for children by 1857 and is exchanged with the plea to tell her “[why] you are so much heavier than the Prince? When I pull him up, he’s here in a second” (56). Both cases alert Gothel to the prince’s visits and are tied to Rapunzel’s hair, for they each culminate in Gothel venting her fury by clutching “a pair of scissors” and cutting Rapunzel’s “beautiful hair” (56). Gothel’s violent act is a reassertion of her authority, for *she* controls Rapunzel’s hair and appearance. Since Rapunzel betrays her adoptive mother (cuts out her heart) by electing a male over her, Gothel cuts out a part of Rapunzel: castrating her figuratively, defeminising her, and stripping away her sexuality and allure so the prince and all men will lose interest in her. This echoes Elizabeth I’s attempt to restore her virginity (‘cutting that man out of her hair’); *and* it nods to ‘The Rape of the Lock’ (1712), where Belinda’s lock is a signifier of sexual disempowerment and of a lost reputation; hence the loss of hair has psychological import, for how it looks or is treated affects the characters’ (and potentially readers’) states of being.

Furthermore, it is possible that Rapunzel’s above disclosure is either inadvertent or an act of negation—perhaps Rapunzel *wants* to let Gothel know that another human loves her—yet unbeknownst to the naïve Rapunzel, her clothes do not fit because she is with child. Then again, if Rapunzel is aware of her ‘interesting condition’, her words imply a feminist rebellion that disturbs female stereotypes. Rapunzel is not as passive as she appears but is challenging Gothel by rather pointedly calling her rotund (heavier than the prince) and hinting

that she herself needs new, larger, clothes due to her sudden ‘growth’ spurt. Rapunzel asks these contentious questions because she seeks answers; yet Rapunzel rues Gothel’s reaction. Rapunzel’s haircut connotes the umbilical cord, the apron strings, the mother-daughter bond, being severed, for Gothel then removes Rapunzel from the world (or Eden) by sending her “to a desolate land where she had to live in great misery and grief” (56). That Gothel violates the Faustian contract, condemns Rapunzel to a solitary existence and leaves her bereft of hair is a shock, for bald (short-haired) Rapunzels recall a vulnerable baby. Aptly, while the haircut evokes abortion (it is a bitter pill to swallow, and purges Rapunzel of sex the morning after), the infantilised Rapunzel gives birth to twins and, with her prince, carves out a life as a family.

But what does hair mean to Rapunzel—the silent eponymous heroine? Above all else, it signifies hope, connection, and release insofar as grooming herself takes her mind away from her oppressive home (this is made explicit in later adaptations). Her long hair is also an assertion of her femininity. It is her birthright, a rite of passage, and a sign of being a woman, of reaching adulthood. And yet Rapunzel finds escape and emancipation when her hair is cut (even though it offers a physical bridge to the outside world) because she is freed from its weight and can style it as she desires. Often all it takes to lay claim to a new identity and to experience liberation or transformation is to have a makeover and change oneself outwardly. (This will become apparent in the analysis of Disney’s 3D film adaptation *Tangled* (2010)). But surely this is to diminish the hair as Rapunzel’s lifeline to human contact? It is the first part of her to leave the tower and to be touched by a being that is not a witch. It is also the primary sign that Rapunzel is being driven to adventure and to initiation as a neophyte adult. For the prince, her hair certainly represents a ladder to adulthood, a connection to love, and is a bridge or gateway to passion and wish-fulfilment. Vivality, where Rapunzel’s hair invites her to adventure beyond the tower (like feelers testing the outside world), it calls the prince to sexual adventure *within* the tower. Her long, phallic braids potentially arouse the prince, as

indicated in several variants by his bodily ascent and his kissing of the hair. This is a rite of passage for the prince as a man and a doorway to initiation and male sexual adventure. Karen Lang adds that “loose hair communicates to men her impure state” (Lang 1995: 41). Such patriarchal ideas render Rapunzel impure, despite her long locks also implying virginity by concealing her body and preserving her modesty, as with her tower: a chastity belt that protects this marriageable girl from sexual advances. In *Paradise Lost* (1667), while Eve’s waist-long “golden tresses” (4.305) protect her modesty like a “veil” (4.304), her “wanton ringlets” (4.306) also imply flirtation, deception, and that she is destined to fall (or has already) *before* eating the apple. Her “curls” like “tendrils” on a “vine” hint that her path is bent, not straight, and loosely prefigure Satan bending her ear. Eve intoxicates Adam with her vine-like hair (evoking wine) and pulls him towards sin: “her swelling breast / Naked met his under the flowing gold / Of her loose tresses” (4.495-497). It is thus troubling that Rapunzel lets down her hair and surrenders her body not just for love, but because she believes men alone can rescue her. No matter how a calling presents itself to either sex, it is invariably gendered.

Gothel plays on these gender associations by tying Rapunzel’s cut hair to a hook to taunt the prince. After he climbs to the top of the tower, seduced by the sight of feminine hair, Gothel says “Rapunzel is lost to you” (Zipes [1857] 2013: 56) and mocks his feeling of loss, occasioned by Rapunzel’s absence. The prince is “beside himself with grief [and] despair” (56), for while Rapunzel’s hair signifies contact and attachment, a witch is at the other end of it. As Rapunzel does not answer his call, his quest is in vain, hence he “jump[s] from the tower” (56). And this is why Rapunzel’s hair symbolises lost or unfulfilled possibility. Had Rapunzel cut her own hair and tied it to a hook, she could have devised her own escape. As Rapunzel, a woman, is acted upon rather than acts herself, this reinforces the gendering in fairytales.

On the other hand, when Gothel herself is robbed of Rapunzel (the herb and child), she does not attempt suicide but seeks vengeance. As this appears logical, one wonders if the

active prince's self-defenestration is excessive or proof of his love. One assumes the latter as he wanders in a forest for years, where he "did nothing but mourn and weep about the loss of his dearest wife" (56). Obvious then is that the Grimms delete the witch from the narrative following her revenge on Rapunzel, *and* also remove the magical flight as a means of escape. As Gothel has limited power, the havoc she now wreaks is resolved without her intervention, for the story ends with the prince hearing Rapunzel's song, rushing into her embrace, and escorting her to "his kingdom" (56). This wondrous conclusion occurs after "Two of her tears [wetted] his eyes [and] they grew clear again and he could see again [as well as before]" (56). As such, the narrative ends by gesturing towards healing and the achievement of Rapunzel's dreams of rescue, escape, freedom, and reciprocal love. Gesturing rather than *showing* is important because it maintains the status of healing, escape, love, and freedom as ideals about which readers can imagine or fantasise. Yet this is problematised by Ruth Bottigheimer's claims of "textual silencing" insofar as the Grimms do not let Rapunzel "voice...her own reactions and thoughts" (Bottigheimer 1987: 52-53). To bar Rapunzel from voicing these human needs (summons to adventure, love, and security) abets patriarchal attempts to deny females expression of their humanity. Fairytales persist because they seem to express deep-down human desires, but, as already argued, fairytales (or rather their male authors) have not always fully written women into this humanity, or given them extensive expression. That the Grimm fairytale 'Rapunzel' ends with transformation and joy is paramount, for it anticipates subsequent adaptations that compensate for this absence (in a variety of ways). The following chapters will now focus on how twentieth- and twenty-first-century Rapunzel adaptations maximise female voices; how they transform initiations into adulthood; how they aid or thwart female maturation; and how they adapt human urges to attach and escape to include women.

Chapter 3: Rapunzel Poems

I am a woman committed to
a politics
of transliteration, the methodology

of a mind stunned at the suddenly
possible shifts of meaning – for which
like amnesiacs

in a ward on fire, we must
find words
or burn.

Olga Broumas. 'Artemis' (1977) ll.26-35

Female-authored Rapunzel poems have frequently been eclipsed by male writings and critics, and often evade feminist-psychoanalytic criticism. Those poems that *are* visible are subject to a pervading concern for the closeness of an adaptation to its hypotext. The Rapunzel poems in this chapter are analysed according to Geoffrey Wagner's paradigm for adaptations, but rather than a "transposition" or adaptation that adheres to its hypotext with minimal interference (Wagner 1975: 222), Anne Sexton's 'Rapunzel' (1970), Olga Broumas's 'Rapunzel' (1977), Liz Lochhead's 'Rapunztiltskin' (1981), and Patience Agbabi's 'RAPunzel' (1995) are re-read here both as "commentary", where authorial intention in/advertently alters the hypotext (224), and as "analogy", meaning a new work and substantial creative departure from the hypotext (226). All four poems counter the patriarchal ideologies and 'textual silencing' identified in the previous chapter and rework the conventions, structure, and language used by the Grimms. They engage with 'Rapunzel' in new ways by rewriting it as a feminist poem, and extend its survival through repetition and adaptation—updating it to accord with ever-shifting political (ideological) and social agendas. But they also unsettle the primacy of the literary fairytale, for they imply that 'Rapunzel' has no author, despite being deemed a Grimm creation, and belongs to everyone. This 'democratisation' is reflected by an attempt in each poem to restore to Rapunzel a voice, a mind, and the freedom to express her identity. Such feminist ambitions are confirmed by Olga Broumas in interviews and in her anthology *Beginning With O* (1977),

especially in her poem ‘Artemis’, which Broumas contends is a “manifesto” that “articulat[es] my position as a writer” and a need to find new spaces in which new forms of unfettered female speech can exist, unhampered by patriarchies (Hammond 1980: 34-35). Significant here is that the four poems are also linked by lack, which supersedes the forward momentum of the classic Rapunzel narrative, and which are used as an access point to invite readers in and take them beyond themselves—without leaving them there. Readers dwell on the ‘escape’ and ‘lack’ memes and are arguably changed in their thinking, especially since these transformed memes are tied to female identity and/or (lesbian) sexuality.

Poetry and fairytales also share a potentially transformative otherness defined by David Constantine in ‘Aspects of the Contemporary (i): What Good Does It Do?’ as “something...being required of us that all other discourses we engage in or submit to (legislation, the media) do not”. Constantine adds that the psychological shock of strangeness provided by poetry must be uncompromising given the demands it makes of readers’ intellects. While other media can convey otherness and estrange readers, there is an expectation in poetry of metaphor and imaginative content that is at once familiar and defamiliarising. Though diverse, the poems herein all use long, short, lyrical, prosaic, and symbolic language, and employ ellipses, the white space, and parentheses in ways that satisfy David Constantine’s appeals to otherness, *and* Olga Broumas’s calls for new female spaces.

The textual traces that can be discerned in the Rapunzel poetry also explain why Barry Langford hints at the existence of a genre meme pool (similar to the collective unconscious): “When we watch any one genre film, we are if not ‘seeing them all’ then at least perhaps *sensing* ‘them all’” (Langford 2005: 273). Audiences and adapters alike conceivably ‘sense’ (subconsciously) the conventions of a specific form and the past versions of a given narrative. This idea will be expanded to include not just film but all media and ‘genre texts’, and to advance a recent characterisation of the fairytale as a “cultural palimpsest” in the sense that

“even as it speaks of the time in which it is told, it carries the memory of the other times in which it has circulated and flourished” (Teverson 2013: 5). Rather than bemoan what is ‘lost’ during the adaptation of ‘Rapunzel’ into a new set of conventions or another medium, a more profitable consideration is what is ‘gained’ by the expansion of the sourcetext material, as is demonstrated by Anne Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1970). The blending of material, old and new, in each appropriation provokes (feminist) critical interrogation and re-evaluation and affirms that ‘Rapunzel’ and its memes entered the long-term cultural memory store by adapting to the fluid needs of an ever-changing readership. As Richard Dawkins argues, “selection favours memes that exploit their cultural environment to their own advantage” (Dawkins 1976: 199). The following analyses will chart the adaptation of Rapunzel memes under the influence of second-wave feminism and then third-wave feminism.

Anne Sexton: ‘Rapunzel’ (1970)

The confessional writings of Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and children’s author, Anne Sexton, have been influenced by second-wave feminist principles that flourished in 1970s America, namely the revelation and expression of plural female identities, and a resistance to being nudged into restricting categories (woman, wife, poet). Although second-wave feminism has itself been accused of being “dogmatic”, allegedly appealing to a universal idea of ‘Woman’ that favours middle-class white women and excludes women of varying cultures, ethnicities, and sexualities (Reger 2014 [2005]: 92), thus ironically limiting what it means to be a woman, vital and ‘all-inclusive’ aims of consciousness-raising persist in 1970s poetry, such as Sexton’s ‘Housewife’, where the speaker argues that “Some women marry houses” (l.1) and that “she sits on her knees all day, / faithfully washing herself down. / Men enter by force” (ll.5-7). Kneeling in prayer, as if humbled by her role, housewifery is a religion and subservience is sacred. Wedded to a house, she evokes what Betty Friedan (1963) calls “the problem that has no name”, meaning female dissatisfaction with domestic servitude and a lack of equal

opportunities, rights and education. That the speaker equates (all) female bodies and identities with houses that men enter forcibly evokes rape and recalls how women are often asked “What does your house say about *you*?”

It is tempting to read Sexton’s poetry as saying something about her life and mentality. Though mocked as “nonstop diary reading” (Colburn 1988: 167), Sexton defends her poetry’s ‘autobiographicality’: “I [came] to be a confessional poet who vomits up her past every ugly detail onto the page [and] started to write about myself because it was something I knew well. Beyond this is the need to confess...one’s guilt and be forgiven. With every poem it is as if I were on trial...hoping for a pardon” (Salvio 2007: 101). That Sexton calls poetry healing (echoing Bettelheim) explains why she turned to Rapunzel fairytales. In her letters, Sexton calls “‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Rapunzel’...two of my best [poems]” (Sexton 1997: 360), and contends that while these “transformation” poems “are a departure from my usual style...I wrote them...because it made me happy...It would...be a lie to say that they weren’t about me” (362). Reflecting on her role as adapter, Sexton emphasises that

I’ve taken Grimms’ Fairy Tales and ‘Transformed’ them into something all of my own...I do something very modern to them...[T]error, deformity, madness and torture were my bag. But this little universe of Grimm is not that far away. I think they may end up being as wholly personal as my most intimate poems, in a different language, a different rhythm, but coming strangely...from as deep a place. (Sexton 1997: 367)

In keeping with the idea of a palimpsest, Sexton attributes depth to but also re-conceptualises and ‘writes over’ the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’, supplying her own language and modernising it.

Sexton perhaps identifies as a Rapunzel who seeks escape. After all, she implicitly calls her house and the American Dream a metaphorical tower. As Paula M. Salvio puts it, suffering from depression, and facing her daughters’ attempts to leave home, Sexton’s “letters and poetry resonated with the fears of cold war America. Sexton feared being trapped [alone] in a house, as if the rooms would turn on her” (Salvio 2012: 106). Clare Pollard asserts that Sexton’s “suburban house with the all-electric kitchen offered no shelter from the darker side of human experience. Whilst Sexton celebrated [the woman’s role within] the

domestic...she would also use her incarnation as a beautiful, muffin-making, mother-of-two to reveal the nightmare at the core of the family” (Pollard 2006: 1). As Sexton confesses, in her own words,

All I wanted was...to be married, to have children...I was trying my damndest to lead a conventional life, for that was how I was brought up, and it was what my husband wanted of me. But one can't build little white picket fences to keep nightmares out. The surface cracked [and] I had a psychotic break and tried to kill myself.

(Kevles 1971: 160)

America vowed that ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ meant success, yet for Sexton the white picket fence is not the American Dream but isolation, with posts (prison bars) to trap women in the home. In Liz Lochhead’s ‘Rapunzstiltskin’, the hero kills herself when jailed and pursued by a man. By contrast, Sexton writes that her therapist led her to write poems to overcome her suicidal thoughts: “‘Don’t kill yourself’, he said. ‘Your poems might mean something to someone else someday’. That gave me a feeling of purpose, a little cause, something to *do* with my life” (Juhasz in Colburn 1988: 334). Poetry thus forms part of Sexton’s arsenal against patriarchal ideologies that demand female inactivity. As in Sylvia Plath’s ‘Tulips’, where a woman gives her “name and day-clothes up to the nurses / And my history to the anaesthetist and my body to surgeons” (ll.6-7), Sexton dares to write of her alienating numbness and so *does* something.

Sexton herself uses her razor-sharp wit and tongue to perform surgery on fairytales. As Vernon Young observes, “Anne Sexton is out to get the brothers Grimm, armed with illuminations supplied by Freud...she undermines the fairytale with deadly address and a merciless employment of city-American idioms” (Colburn 1988: 255). The Grimms *are* in many respects patriarchy. Sexton’s poetry collection *Transformations* (1970) appropriates their fairytales for feminist ends and merges with second-wave feminism by examining and contesting socially perpetuated ideologies that victimise women and suppress (the growth of) female subjectivities. As with her anthology *Live or Die* (1967), *Transformations* is aimed at adults—as were fairytales originally. Resisting conventional poetic subjects and focusing on

themes of lesbianism, drugs and incest,⁷ each re-vision of a classic fairytale seems personal to Sexton, for, as she argues, “Inherent in the process is a rebirth of a sense of self, each time stripping away a dead self” (Sexton 1974: 84). This stripping away of layers is embodied by the speaker in Emma Donoghue’s short story ‘The Tale of the Hair’ (analysed in Chapter 4), and Sexton’s ‘Her Kind’, where three ‘layers’ (housewife, witch and adulteress) all bleed into one another, register a concern for self-definition, and transgress (male-imposed) boundaries. As such, Sexton perhaps sees her poetry as feminist praxis that renews fairytales and herself.

Written while “reading *Sexual Politics*” (Sexton 1997: 366), and released in the same year as Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* and Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, Sexton’s *Transformations* (1970) writes women back into the cultural memory, presents the untold “other side of the story” (Hite 1989: 4), and subverts and parodies the expectations of her time in regards to women. Opposing male narratives that control her life, Sexton vocalises what women had been forbidden to say. Barbara Kevles in *The Village Voice* contends that “In searchingly painful self-exposures, she had the courage to say socially unacceptable things about herself that I never would” (05 April 1974). In an earlier interview with Kevles for *Paris Review*, Sexton reveals that “Until I was twenty-eight I had a...buried self who didn’t know she could do anything but make white sauce and diaper babies” (Kevles 1978: 3). Feminist poetry is for Sexton a way of excavating this buried self, of asking “Is this all?”, and of confessing that she “did not feel this mysterious fulfilment waxing the kitchen floor” (Friedan 1963: 8).

In keeping with the explosion of feminist poetry in the 1970s, Sexton’s intellectually demanding fairytale poem ‘Rapunzel’ (1970) is a project of feminine myth *un*-making, which retells the Rapunzel tale from a female perspective. Shifting from the third to the first person, Mother Gothel, the implied narrator, tells the Grimm tale through her eyes. Her 158-line prosaic story, with no line breaks, is addressed to Rapunzel. The poem’s title acknowledges

⁷Sexton’s daughter, Linda Gray Sexton, claims that her mother sexually abused her: “To speak publicly of my mother’s sexual abuse of me was agonising...[At that time she wrote] a play about a daughter’s sexual abuse [by]...a loving aunt... ‘Rapunzel’ [also]...wrestled with similar themes...I decided that I must tell this aspect of our story because it enriched understanding of her poetry”. *New York Times Book Review* 18 August 1991.

its 'indebtedness' to the Grimm 'Rapunzel' and recalls how hypertexts often use the same title as their hypotext to make the connection clear. But this also hints at a usurpation in that it is presented as an 'original' work. The poem itself co-opts a human tendency to attach and attacks heterosexism by drafting in lesbian (romantic) and mother-daughter attachments (Fitzgerald 1990: 55). The opening—"A woman / who loves a woman / is forever young" (ll.1-3)—omits males, constructs female relationships (platonic and romantic) as innocent, healing, and enriching, and nods tangentially to the maxim "a daughter is a daughter for life". Women are therefore universalised and associated with creation, love, youth, and eternity. Timelessness is aptly evoked by the words "forever young", which imply that Rapunzel and her mother exist in an unpopulated, non-temporal, non-geographical vacuum. Their bond is termed self-sustaining, for "The mentor / and the student / feed off each other" (ll.3-6). Parent (mentor) and child (student) enjoy a mutually beneficial union in that both parties—young and old, innocent and experienced—gain and continue to learn from each other. The focus on female development recalls Freud's essays 'Female Sexuality' (1931) and 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes' (1925),⁸ which argue that all girls must navigate "oral, sadistic, and finally...phallic impulses" (Freud 2011: 4601). Sexton appears to rework elements of these essays for feminist purposes, for the women (mentors) contain and *protect* girls from all 'unpleasant' impulses by prohibiting contact with and attachments to males: "Many a girl / had an old aunt / who locked her in the study / to keep the boys away" (ll.7-10).

Ambiguities regarding gender and sexual attachments appear in hypothetical scenes that detail mutual (sexual) fondling and bodily contact: "Old breast against young breast... / Let your dress fall down your shoulder" (ll.14-15). Besides the age differential, one is unsure whether the naked female is Rapunzel, though this is most likely, or if she is given commands by her mother or aunt. The private sexual union between student and mentor connotes

⁸The similarities between Sexton's 'Rapunzel' (1970) and Freud's abovementioned essays were first brought to my attention by Margot Fitzgerald's 1990 article.

transformation and initiation into adulthood, especially since Rapunzel loses her maidenhead and hence is exposed to new *adult* experiences. One can argue that Rapunzel is being schooled in sexual intercourse and the intricacies of a lesbian relationship because of such telling lines as “the church spires have turned to stumps” (l.20) and “The sea bangs into my cloister” (l.21). The polyvalent spires emblemise historically male-dominated churches, patriarchal power, the phallus, and long-held Christian ideas about morality—especially sexual morality and acceptable (hetero)sexual relationships. The reduction of the holy spires to stumps signifies a loss of their completeness. One might assume that something dreadful has happened because the priapic spires have surely not collapsed spontaneously but in response to a specific event. Lesbian encounters appear to be the cause. However, the poem does not call for heterosexist judgement of Rapunzel as immoral or sexually deviant. If anything, the collapse of the spires hints at change and the erection of something better (out with the old and in with the new).

New thinking and the tearing down of old ideas are heralded by waves crashing into the speaker’s ‘cloister’, hence the classic call to adventure is now an urge for lesbian exploits. The explicit yet lyrical reference to a private (holy) area alludes to a monastery or analogous place of worship, but also evokes the vagina. That this erotogenic region is penetrated by water (a traditionally feminine symbol) connotes sexual pleasure and sexual knowledge seeping through Rapunzel’s walls or ego boundaries. Her implied homosexual intercourse is arguably one aspect of the liberatory feminism in the poem, and is instrumental in the gradual reconfiguration of her (sexual) identity. However, it is vital to remember that while the poem speaks of psycho-sexual adventure or an escape from heteronormativity, it is an escape that is predominantly aspired to by Mother Gothel and not necessarily (the bisexual) Rapunzel.

Part of the feminist agenda in the poem is manifested by the reclamation of the female sex organs from patriarchal bondage, and an escape from the treatment of men and women as separate species. The above water and uterine metaphors counter the stumps, implying that

females can achieve sexual pleasure without the presence of the vaunted tumescent penis. The initial plea to “Let me hold your heart like a flower / lest it bloom and collapse” (l.30) encapsulates the spiritual nature of their romantic attachment and betrays Gothel’s aim of nurturing Rapunzel and bringing her to fruition. But this desire to hold Rapunzel transitions into a corporeal one, and a graphically sexual one at that, when Gothel begs Rapunzel to “Give me your skin” (l.32) and “let me open it up” (ll.34). The request for her body deepens: “Give me your nether lips / all puffy with their art / and I will give you angel fire in return” (ll.36-38). By moving from water to (Promethean) fire, Gothel aspires to “scoop out the dark” (l.35) and to consequently free Rapunzel’s repressed body and ostensible homosexual desire.

The hypocritical Gothel repeatedly excites and then prohibits Rapunzel’s sexuality. Her suggestion that they are “two birds / washing in the same mirror” (ll.41-42) invites sexual exploration and implies they are one and the same, bathing in the (lesbian) reflection of the other and avoiding “the cesspool” (l.44) inhabited by men. Gothel even praises their uniquely special romance because it defies convention and heteronormativity, which again appear evil. However, Gothel’s argument that men “dance to the lute” (l.53) and are slaves to its song (their phallic urges) is not used to promote a potent lesbian-feminist message, but to state that women are more wholesome and occupy themselves with games that enable Rapunzel to rehearse adulthood by *mothering* and being mothered. Gothel begins one game as follows: “Hold me, my young dear, hold me, / and thus they played mother-me-do” (ll.105-106). Gothel *needs* to be embraced: to have contact and be held by another so as not to feel alone. Yet her hug has overlapping meanings, as do her desires. It *is* a hug between mother and daughter, but Gothel is not Rapunzel’s mother; hence there is an inherent artifice and a high probability that they embrace as lovers. The role-playing game reveals incestuous undertones in the bond *and* conflicting desires to be loved as a mother and a sexual partner. Rapunzel, a

mere child, is forced to play this game evermore, trapped in an unequal (lesser) position and made to satisfy the confused needs of a devouring mother-lover.

But Rapunzel must reconcile her own needs, namely latent heterosexual feelings that are triggered by her first encounter with a man. His presence and phallus arguably cause a rift between daughter and mother. For Rapunzel to individuate and develop as a female, she must reject Gothel (the jealous maternal love-object) in favour of a male lover. This is because Rapunzel feels that she has been denied something by Gothel, be this freedom, sex, or contact with males and her father. Unpleasurable denial results in a fascination with the prince's body: "What is this beast, she thought, / with muscles on his arms / like...snakes?" (ll.117-118). Rapunzel discloses her innermost thoughts and her obliviousness to the differences between her body and his. Rapunzel also examines the prince slowly, from head to toe, and draws on her knowledge of nature to help her understand and describe this compelling creature. She likens his muscles to snakes, unaware of the phallic implications, and likewise speaks of "moss on his legs" (l.120) and a "prickly plant...on his cheeks" (l.121) to denote body and facial hair. Moreover, she is drawn to his "voice as deep as a dog" (l.122) because of its authoritative and primal timbre. Most important, however, is that this sexually naïve Rapunzel is unaware of or unprepared for the sight of male genitalia. After the prince "dazzl[es] her with his dancing stick" (l.124), they "lay together upon the...threads, / swimming through them / like minnows through kelp" (ll.125-127). The return to the marine imagery and the repeated focus on the pole resurrects the spire and religiosity, for "they sing out benedictions like the Pope" (l.128). Rapunzel's sexual euphoria coincides with the cathexis of her suppressed libidinal energies. The prince helps Rapunzel find sexual release and unlocks these energies by giving vent to her need to be seen as an adult and as a female with her own identity. He does not try to conquer Rapunzel but assists her primary ambition of escaping from the witch and tower physically: "Each day he brought her a skein of silk / to fashion a ladder so they could both escape"

(II.129-130). How cruel then that Gothel intervenes and “cut off Rapunzel’s hair to her ears” (I.132). The haircut is a symbolic extension of Gothel’s desire to castrate and hurt Rapunzel for discovering and allowing herself to be pleased by the male member or “dancing stick”.

Equally devastating is that Gothel uses the hair (as in the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’) to lure the prince to his doom. On learning that Rapunzel has been sent to the forest to pay for her sins, the prince throws himself from the tower like “a side of beef” (I.137). This dehumanising term is doubly satirical as the prince becomes little more than meat and is thought a meathead (idiot). But horror then ensues, for the prince is “blinded by thorns that prickled him like tacks” (I.138). This matters because the prince quests for Rapunzel for years, “As blind as Oedipus” (I.139). The reference to Oedipus is interesting because the prince climbs the phallic tower to find not his mate but a mater: mother Gothel. The abjection, the incomprehensible shame or aversion he feels on realising that he has been seduced by this mother causes him to fling himself from (and abandon) the tower/phallus and fall onto the thorns below, thereby castrating himself. Freud speaks in ‘The Uncanny’ of “the substitutive relation between the eye and male organ”, and uses “the self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus” to argue that “the fear of damaging or losing one’s eyes is a terrible one in children...[and] is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated” (Freud 2011: 3684). By the same token, the prince’s bulging eyes are like penile extensions that cause his arousal. When they are rendered inoperable, he ceases to be a man. Only the re-discovery of Rapunzel and the presence of her tears can restore his sight and manhood. This age-appropriate mother substitute helps the prince regain and come to terms with his phallus and heterosexual desires.

In keeping with traditional fairytales, the restoration of the prince’s sight allows him and Rapunzel to live “happily as you might expect” (I.145). It also enables them to prove that “mother-me-do / can be outgrown / just as the fish on Friday, / just as a tricycle” (II.146-149). This implicitly mocking trivialisation of sacred childhood and religious customs speaks of the transition from a mother-daughter and lesbian attachment to a heterosexual one sarcastically. As both are given up easily and can be exchanged routinely for a man, it is as if Rapunzel’s

Sapphic experiences are something that can be forgotten, that one can ‘get over’. In a biting and cynical fashion, the narrator writes that “The world, some say, / is made up of couples. / A rose must have a stem” (ll.150-152). Ideas of female castration and a privileging of the phallus and heterosexuality are reignited, here, for the message is that one needs a penis (stem) for fulfilment and sexual pleasure. After all, without a stem, the rose bloom will wilt; and yet the underlying thesis of the poem is that one can foreground and reposition the vagina as the centre of female sexual pleasure and identity. The rose stays as a rose and does not need a stem in order to thrive and achieve adequate expression. By extension, moving away from sexual organs, women need not depend on males for their identity or their own survival. Indeed, while the closing lines of the poem say Gothel’s “heart shrank to the size of a pin” (l.154), *and* that she withers without her human connection to Rapunzel, it is also revealed that “only as she dreamed of the yellow hair / did moonlight sift into her mouth” (ll.157-158). The poem therefore ends with pleasure and magic. Her happy-ever-after takes the form of a masturbatory act or a sexual dream. The final focus on her open mouth and on the full moon are connotative of a peak, a climax, a literal and symbolic big ‘O’ or orgasm. David Rudd (in another context) distinguishes “between ‘O’, suggesting a gestalt, a whole, and ‘Oh’, emphasising a lack” (Rudd 2013: 154). This is fitting because the light that enters Gothel’s mouth is a sign that she has passed away, thereby suggesting that the tale ends with death. Rapunzel has escaped from Gothel (a homosexual attachment), and now life escapes Gothel.

Though Sexton’s Rapunzel poem is a significant creative departure from its hypotext, it never escapes its affinities with ‘Rapunzel’ (1857). The exposition of “a witch’s garden / more beautiful than Eve’s” (ll.61-62) links Rapunzel with the Garden of Eden and with healing and ritual, for its “magic – / rampion, a...salad root [...] more potent than penicillin” (ll.67-69) becomes the forbidden fruit “locked” (l.72) away from yet desired by “a woman who was with child” (l.73). Pivotal is that Mother Gothel (God) does not merely expel the lovers (Rapunzel’s mother and father) from the garden when they steal rampion. She makes “a trade / typical enough in those times” (ll.83-84). Their bargain is historicised in a way that

evokes a time-bound pastness, as if one would no longer expect a baby to be traded for food. Yet the scars of the 'trade' are eternalised by its name "Rapunzel, / another name for the life-giving rampion" (ll.88-89). So precious is this child to Gothel that she locks her in a tower with a high window and decides "None but I will ever see or touch her" (l.93). This decision is manifested in the Grimm fairytale 'Rapunzel' and Sexton's reworking by the "stone-cold [tower] room, / as cold as a museum" (ll.103-104). This is then a poem of death.

But "to die is an awfully big adventure". This is apt because Anne Sexton not only offers a lyrical tale of erasure but draws attention to the psychological motivations of each character in order to transform an urge for adventure into an urge for psycho-sexual adventure. Rapunzel cannot know where her sexual exploration will take her, but she risks her life to enjoy new horizons and experiences. However, Gothel initiates a tribadistic-cum-maternal relationship that blurs the boundary between love and abuse, and is used to prohibit and call deadly all heterosexual feelings and quests, even though Rapunzel only exists as a result of heterosexual intercourse. Lesbian romance *is* a form of adventure, but Rapunzel seeks to escape it because her mother-lover causes her psychological confusion. Sexton thus fleshes out a quasi-Freudian narrative for Rapunzel (and for Gothel) that *clarifies* the thoughts and needs of its central female characters. This expression of female subjectivity compensates for the textual silencing outlined by Ruth Bottigheimer *and* is a strategy of 'writing back' against the patriarchal male centre. Sexton explicitly Freudianises 'Rapunzel' and its classic motifs, but this occurs in a thought-provoking and sarcastic way that demythologises the essentialist (anti-feminist) model proposed by Freud. One finds in its place a focus upon female subjects, who are raised to the status of universal human subjects and called to human adventure and sexual desire. Despite the conspicuous gendering of a need for adventure and security—women are immured as protectors and bases to which male wanderers return—Rapunzel achieves liberation and reverses the scopophilic male gaze by examining and naming various elements of the male body in her own terms.

Olga Broumas: 'Rapunzel' (1977)

The foreword to Olga Broumas's three-part collection *Beginning With O* (1977) argues that Broumas—a Greek-American poet and feminist translator of myths and fairytales—marks a progressive shift towards female liberty and creativity, for rather than “idle feminist palaver”, *Beginning With O* is “a political document [and] impassioned lyric outburst...[with] several poems [that] pay Sexton the tribute of imitating, though not without significant variation, her adaptations of fairytales” (Broumas 1977: x-xi). As with Luce Irigaray (1977) and Hélène Cixous (1975), Broumas treats the language of patriarchal cultures as insufficient, given that its worldview is filtered through a masculine viewpoint. Stylistically intrepid and published in the same year as Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Broumas plays with form to move towards a new language that can articulate female experience and raise collective awareness of the dilemmas women encounter. The title *Beginning With O* itself positions the personal as political for Broumas, who foregrounds lesbian love as an indecipherable “alphabet” that “consist[s] of vowels, beginning with O” (‘Artemis’ l.22). The refusal to pin down sexuality through orthodox language systems reflects Broumas's feminist politics. But more than this, just as the 1970s saw the birth of a genre of female writing that focuses on marginal voices,⁹ Broumas became one of the first practitioners of feminist ‘re-visioning’. Recuperating Greek goddess myths as symbols of female authority and retelling classic fairytale stories from a first-person female perspective, Broumas dissolves heteronormativity and gender ideologies. This is in part why Darlene Cohn names Broumas as “the breakthrough lesbian voice in contemporary American poetry” (Cucinella 2002: 38). In ‘Demeter’, Broumas acknowledges her key influences: “Anne [Sexton]. Sylvia [Plath]. Virginia [Woolf]. / Adrienne [Rich]” (ll.23-24). Her fairytale poems especially draw on Sexton, to whom ‘Rapunzel’ pays homage through the epigraph “A woman who loves a woman is forever young”. That Broumas's

⁹See Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (1977) and Janet Todd, *Feminist Literary History: A Defence* (2013) [1988].

'Snow White' opens with the quotation "I could never want her (my mother) / until I myself had been wanted. / By a woman" also implies a continuity between Sexton's and Broumas's Rapunzel poetry by blurring maternal and lesbian feelings. Broumas's 'Snow White' even details "A woman / who loves a woman / who loves a woman / who loves a man" (ll.22-25).

Julie Sanders would call Broumas's 'Rapunzel' a "hyper-hyper-text" in that it alludes to an 'original' text (Grimms' 'Rapunzel') and Anne Sexton's well-known rewriting of it (Sanders 2006: 107). Rather than call the Grimm fairytale *the* original because it pre-exists Sexton's poem, this analysis is concerned with how Broumas alludes to yet also 'writes over' the Grimm 'Rapunzel' and Sexton's poem to produce her own 'original' take on the story. The thirty-three lines of 'Rapunzel' add something to the tradition of Rapunzel fairytales, morphing the plot and memes to suit the poem's feminist aims. Part of its feminism involves manipulating syntax and linguistic devices. Just as Broumas's *Soie Sauvage* (1979) is all but absent of punctuation and line breaks, the enjambed lines hint at an outcome, only to change direction suddenly and thereby help readers 're-view' fairytales, denaturalise heterosexuality, and celebrate the 'sacrosanct' lesbian experiences of the speaker (who is debatably Rapunzel). The substantial creative repurposing of the Grimm hypotext is why this poem will be read as a 'commentary' (feminist ideology critique) of 'Rapunzel' (1812-1857), and as an 'analogy', meaning a new work and substantial creative departure from the hypotext (Wagner 1975: 226), not least because its overtly pro-feminist perspective on the Grimm fairytale contests physical and mental female confinement and calls for the expression and plurality of female sexuality.

Rapunzel arguably engages in dialogue, throughout the seven stanzas, with the speaker (Mother Gothel) in Sexton's 'Rapunzel'. Her wistful argument that "You might have been, though you're not / my mother" (ll.5-6) positions the unnamed female as a possible lover. Ann Martin argues that "the nurturer and the sexual partner can be combined into one figure" (Martin 2010: 18). This woman "let[s] loose" her desire "like hair, like static" (l.6), whereas Rapunzel's biological mother experiences a "wish" for sexual pleasure that is unfulfilled and

“stilled” (l.7). Rapunzel acknowledges her “relentless” (l.7) bodily urges and homosexual desires, which are, akin to the “angel fire” in Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’, fuelled by inner rushes of blood, heat, something “tropical” (l.9) within her. The word “static” is used to hint at the mother’s numbness but also implies that Rapunzel’s yearnings are electric and shock her, perhaps as a result of contact with the implied lover or by rubbing up against something. Indeed, while the enjambed opening lines—“Climb / through my hair, climb in / to me, love” (ll.1-3)—bring to mind the prince climbing Rapunzel’s hair and entering the stone tower, these words address an amour whose sex is unstated. If Rapunzel is calling to *and desires* men and women, she thus asserts an expansive sexuality. However, Rapunzel is in fact arguing that “love / hovers here like a mother’s wish” (ll.3-4). The idea of a wish hovering over Rapunzel in a concrete yet unspecific time and place (the tower is unmentioned) is connotative of a protective (or perhaps overbearing) force. Rapunzel is called to sexual adventure, but her words evoke a longing for domestic safety that is provided by a loving maternal relationship.

The ebb and flow of the words on the page reflect the oceanic waves of (sexual) joy felt by the speaker, who reminisces about how “Every hair / on my skin curled up, my spine / an enraptured circuit, a loop of memory” (ll.9-11). The memory of sexual intercourse with its “private touch” (l.12) causes Rapunzel’s hair to stand on end (thus reinforcing the electricity). Goosebumps and shivers run down her spine, her body tenses (sexual spasms) and her circuit is completed. The circuit itself implies a circle or big O (akin to Broumas’s poetry collection) and therefore conjures images of a completed unit. Being conjoined with other parts or persons makes Rapunzel feel like an “enraptured circuit” because it brings her to (sexual) completion. This circularity, combined with the “loop of memory”, thereby implies never-ending ecstasy. This is why Rapunzel questions “How many women / have yearned / for our lush perennial” (ll.12-14). The perennial lush refers to a self-renewing pleasure and suggests that all women are envious of her experience and secretly desire to be touched as she has: a private touch. The verdant plant itself conceivably alludes to the rapunzel herb, but it is used to encode sex and debatably contradicts Sexton’s argument that a rose (woman) requires a stem (phallus).

If Broumas *is* in dialogue with Sexton, she is arguably reflecting advances in female freedoms between 1970 and 1977. This ‘lucky’ Rapunzel achieves sexual wish-fulfilment without a man or getting pregnant afterwards. The women in stanza three are envious as they are all “pregnant, and had / to subdue their heat, drown out their appetite” (ll.14-16). As their personal desires are superseded by those of their children, sexual pleasure ceases. While the mothers drown out their urges “with pickles and harsh weeds” (l.17)—for pickles read phallic substitutes—they become as bitter as the weeds they consume and “grew to confuse greed / with hunger, learned to grow thin on the bitter / root, the mandrake, on their sills” (ll.18-20). The pun on growing hints that the women engender their own ruination by filling themselves with bitter plants that in turn render them bitter emotionally. The pickles and herbs cannot satiate them; hence they become thinner and emptier, and ultimately poison themselves with mandrake (a hallucinogenic—related to deadly nightshade—that can lead to asphyxiation). The rhyming words “weeds” and “greed” confirm that they are neither filling nor fulfilling. As they are left to dry on windowsills, they match the women drying out sexually and bodily, whose regret is encompassed by the italicised words “*Old / bitch, young / darling*” (ll.20-22). These wistful words resemble phallogentric female categories (old = bitch, young = darling) and recall the old witch who snatches the baby of a darling wife, who is greedy for rapunzel.

Yet one wonders if Rapunzel is the speaker or the lover, for the voice of the narrator is filled with bitterness and the wisdom that comes with age and experience. Readers of the Grimm tale know her only as a child and later as a young mother. This vexed speaker reflects on the above words, used to insult or pigeonhole women, and insists “those who speak them / choke on their words, their hunger freeze / in their veins like lard” (ll.22-24). She orders all who use constricting, vitriolic words to choke on them because they make human urges congeal in the veins like lard (more similes and alliteration). The threat is given finality by the word “freeze”, which presages death. However, the frozen and eternal Sapphic love maintains the

sanguinity in the poem. When the sage (if not old) speaker looks back on her past, her words “Less innocent / in my public youth / than you, less forbearing” (ll.25-27) indicate that she accepts her youth, when she was more rebellious and worldly, and less tolerant and forgiving, than her lover-mother. While her memories imply she was on display as a child, scrutinised by onlookers and denied a private existence, she concludes that “I’ll break the hush / of our cloistered garden, our harvest continuous / as a moan” (ll.27-29). She breaks the silence and celebrates their hidden relationship, and with it the pleasure that they derive from each other, just as Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ speaks of the mother and daughter (possibly an aunt and niece) bathing in and being renewed by the lesbian reflection of the other. They revel in their idyllic love without compromising or concealing their identities. The continuous harvest suggests that they perpetually reap the rewards of their toil, the effort they put into the relationship, while the “moan” and “tilled bed luminous” (l.29) recall Sexton’s poem ending with rapture.

The optimistic conclusion to this poem seems appropriate, having been written in 1977, two years after the United Nations declared 1975 ‘International Women’s Year’. The women in Broumas’s ‘Rapunzel’ give voice to their union confidently, and now await a “future / yield” (ll.29-30), meaning sex. Even the soil and bed form a tenuous link with the mother’s ‘vision’ of rapunzel in a flowerbed, and Rapunzel in a bed, in Grimms’ ‘Rapunzel’ (1812). But where the Grimms and Sexton remove Rapunzel from her female companion, Broumas’s heroine maintains a divine relationship. Beyond the assonance (“continuous”, “luminous”), their union is deified through the enjambed, isolated word “Red” (l.31), which connotes romance and surging “tropical” blood. This single colour threads all of the stanzas together and feeds into the closing couplet, which aptly focuses on two lips. Their love is described as red “vows like tulips. Rows / upon rows of kisses from all lips” (ll.32-33). Worshipping and making vows to each other, like the prince and Rapunzel in the tower, they enjoy endless waves of pleasure. Touch and physical senses meld with the intangible and non-corporeal, for there is an aural or

homophonous use of tulips to mean two lips (facial and labial). This wordplay epitomises the depth of Rapunzel's transformative love. Her lesbian feelings, naturalised and venerated here, foreshadow future generations that dispense with pickles (phalluses) and are free to see their genitalia not as stumps but whole. Women can cultivate 'tulips', lesbian love, and not "subdue their heat" (l.16) or be dazzled by a dancing stick, for the classic heterosexual romance is elided, along with the prince, in favour of a celebration of the female body and flesh.

The final two poems in this chapter, Liz Lochhead's 'Rapunztiltskin' (1981) and Patience Agbabi's 'RAPunzel' (1995), are read here as exemplifying third-wave feminist ideas that unsettle a grand vision of feminist solidarity and an 'essential' womanhood, as well as a shared feminist enterprise (implicit in the previous poems). Greater focus is given to the identity of individual characters, whose function is now arguably personal and/or collective, and to aims of diversification. As the following section implies, while feminist morals remain, more recent adapters have treated feminism itself as a palimpsest and overlaid it in order to communicate broader, more complex, more inclusive, and far-reaching messages. Though the borders between second- and third-wave feminism are hazy, and while this thesis has argued against a clear chronological progression from one Rapunzel adaptation to the next, all four Rapunzel poems from 1970 onwards add multiple layers to the story and (variously) seek new spaces and means of expression (tying in with *écriture féminine*) to disrupt patriarchal language.

Liz Lochhead: ‘Rapunzstiltskin’ (1981)

The Scottish poet Liz Lochhead in a 1989 video interview (*Off the Page—Liz Lochhead*) speaks of writing back against a “macho-male” culture. Her ambitions for female equality and multiplicity are evident in her collection *The Grimm Sister* (1981), which interlinks classic fairytales and retells them from a female perspective. Beyond the obviously titled fairytale adaptations—‘Rapunzstiltskin’ and ‘Beauty & The’—poems such as the ‘Storyteller’ celebrate female storytelling communities as alternatives to domestic drudgery. ‘The Father’ (adapting ‘Sleeping Beauty’) also opposes patriarchy and demonstrates the folly of denying women knowledge, while ‘The Mother’ mocks the trope of killing off the heroine’s biological mother, and thereby attacks patriarchal fairytale writers: “she’s always dying early, / so often it begins to look deliberate” (ll.13-14). This attack on patriarchy and gender ideologies is made explicit by the narrator in ‘Harridan’, who (evoking Shakespeare’s Katherina) vows “My sharp tongue will shrivel any man” (l.23).

Dorothy McMillan contends that the “re-visioning of...fairy story that we...take for granted [in] Dahl’s *Revolting Rhymes* (1982) [and] Duffy’s *The World’s Wife* (1999) was far from commonplace in 1981...Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* had come out in 1979, but before Liz Lochhead only Anne Sexton in *Transformations* (1970) had tried to do in poetry anything like the stories, monologues and tales [in] *The Grimm Sisters*” (Varty 2013: 31). Vital here is that Lochhead, as with Sexton, reworks not just one fairytale but many and thus presents a range of simple and complex female identities. The speaker in ‘Spinster’, for instance, undermines her aim to “Depend on nobody” (ll.16-17) by agreeing to “Go in for self-improvement. / Keep up with trends” (ll.18-19), as if transformation occurs to accord with current fashions rather than for deep, meaningful, spiritual, or feminist purposes.

Lochhead has been chosen here, over such poets as Janet Charman and Jane Yolen, because ‘Rapunzstiltskin’ targets both ‘high-brow’ literary and populist (feminist) audiences. Moreover, the description of Lochhead’s work as “naturally streetwise” and as being

“perspicacious and fast-paced poetry rooted in commonplace realities” (Waterman 2012: Web) may well be applied to Patience Agbabi’s ‘RAPunzel’, examined next. By appropriating elements of the Rapunzel fairytale, akin to Sexton and Broumas, and by giving voice to the silenced woman of the Rapunzel mythos—to explore the narrative from a perspective informed by contemporary feminist politics—Lochhead’s ‘Rapunzstiltskin’ subverts gender expectations and provides new and challenging contexts for Rapunzel, thus leading readers to question the sexual politics of a fairytale that has had, historically, a patriarchal focus.

‘Rapunzstiltskin’ asserts its feminism and male-female power dialectic by reversing the traditional roles assigned to each sex, and by subverting the form of classical fairytales. Even the title interweaves ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ and ‘Rapunzel’ (tales about a female and a male) and thereby gestures towards something new. The collapsing of two names into a clunky and unsettling one signifies an identity crisis *and* heralds a desire to escape from gender binaries that are used to pin down and define the hero. Rapunzelstiltskin would be a more enunciable and complete name, but the employment of a jarring and hermaphroditic name reflects an inability and refusal to fit in with gender norms. It is as if Rapunzel and Rumpelstiltskin (and their tales) are combined in hopes of overcoming gender. But the suicidal rupture at the end of the poem re-separates the two names and the characters into two genders, as if it is too much for Rapunzstiltskin to be both fairytale characters at once. In addition, the poem uses (Rapunzel’s) hair as a through-line when reinterpreting the classic call to adventure as a call to *female* emancipation, to self-actualisation and to self-destruction. At the level of the narrative, the poem uses hair to parody gender stereotypes such as the heroic knight-in-shining-armor (enamoured of the hair *and then* the damsel in distress), the spinster, and the old hag who ordinarily cuts the hair. A central focus here is how the hair is tied to ideas of escape from a patriarchal world, and, beyond this, to a sense of escape from the complexities of living.

An escape from orthodoxy is connoted by the tale beginning *in media res*, with an ampersand and irreverent, colloquial speech: “& just when *our* maiden had got / good & used

to her isolation” (ll.1-2).¹⁰ This sentence promotes identification with the initially passive and self-contained heroine (“*our* maiden”), whose tale begins midway as it needs no introduction. Unlike other Rapunzel tales, this heroine has “stopped daily expecting to be rescued” (l.3) but has not *quite* accepted her imprisonment, hence she has “come to *almost* love her tower” (l.4). Acceptance and isolation sit alongside a hopeful desire for rescue that frustrates the unnamed protagonist I will call Rapunzstiltskin. She is discontented with her reality because all of a sudden, “along comes This Prince” (l.5). The capitalisation of this archetypal figure seems sarcastic and hints that, even in a paradisiacal fairytale land, love is problematic, for he arrives “with absolutely / all the wrong answers” (ll.6-7) and is, as expected, far from perfect. However, Rapunzstiltskin internalises gender ideologies that lead her to overlook his flaws: “Of course she had not been brought up to look for / originality or gingerbread” (ll.8-9).¹¹ Taught to desire not an intelligent or original lover but a handsome halfwit, her expectations of traditional princes leave her “undaunted / by his tendency to talk in strung-together cliché” (ll.10-11). Everything Prince says is inauthentic, unclear, unoriginal, or has already been said. His vow “we’ll get you out of there” (l.12) tells Rapunzstiltskin to hold on, but the word ‘we’ either suggests a group effort or the royal we, in which case he will rescue her alone. But this is made laughable when Prince “hollered like a fireman in some soap drama” (l.13). The idea of a scripted drama again implies that he reads from lines (perpetuating orthodoxy) rather than says something that actually means something to him. Rapunzstiltskin tries to change Prince and end his clichés, but she only ever escapes from her own life script, using her hair.

Rapunzstiltskin cannot escape from the fact that she divulges her entire personal story and “confided her plight (the old hag / inside etc. & how trapped she was)” (ll.14-15) because she is smitten: “he did look sort of gorgeous / axe and all” (ll.17-18). That she reveals all to the Prince, grudgingly, aligns her with women who ‘go weak at the knees’ before a ‘hunk’.

¹⁰Lochhead’s poem ‘Stooge Song’ alone has twelve ampersands that stand in for the written word ‘and’.

¹¹This seems to allude to ‘Hansel and Gretel’ or ‘The Garden Witch’, which merges the plots of ‘Rapunzel’ and ‘Hansel and Gretel’.

This is not to call Rapunzstiltskin weak. If anything she has the strength of mind to admit she is attracted to this stranger. For that matter, given her isolation, any man will do—if he will help her to escape.¹² This recalls ‘Beauty & The’, where Lochhead’s hero settles for a beast (Mr. Right Now) because she fears her Mr. Right will never come along. On another level, although Rapunzstiltskin is captivated by images of Prince as a macho fireman with a large ‘hose’ and axe—a nod to ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’—rather than a heroic woodcutter, this prince seems a mere musician in a band, hoping to serenade her.¹³

Music offers Rapunzstiltskin momentary release as she waits for Prince to free her. As she stands “humming & pulling / all the pins out her chignon” (ll.19-20), she lets her hair down literally and metaphorically, as if enjoying and joining in with her supposed rescuer. Music passes the time, distracts her from her predicament, and takes her out of herself and elsewhere (on a flight of fancy). But Rapunzstiltskin also registers growing impatience rather than nonchalance by humming. Her painstaking efforts are futile and are all missed by Prince. Although she is heard “throwing him all the usual lifelines” (l.21), meaning that she throws her hair out of the window for him to climb, and that she spurs him on by flirting with him and delivering ‘chat-up’ lines, he pays no attention to anything other than her external beauty. She derives pleasure from removing the pins from her pinned-up hair (it is an act of freeing), but all Rapunzstiltskin liberates is sexual desire in Prince, who projects his fantasies onto her.¹⁴ Prince forestalls her hoped-for rescue and physical freedom and is seen “shimmying in & out / every other day as though / he owned the place” (ll.22-24). Given the sexual implication of “shimmying” in and out of Rapunzstiltskin’s private domain, Prince takes liberties with her body at the expense of her liberty. Although he *does* climb her hair, he imposes his masculine authority on the site of her captivity and appears to usurp ownership of it. Thus patriarchal power is writ large in the poem and the couple no longer sing from the same hymn sheet.

¹²This particular scene recalls Lochhead’s ‘Bawd’, where the speaker declares “I’ll let my hair down, / go blonde, be a bombshell, be on the make, / I’ll gold-dig. I’ll be frankly fake” (ll.7-9).

¹³The term axe is a common musical colloquialism for an electric guitar.

¹⁴How apt that in Lochhead’s ‘The Beltane Bride’ the Queen’s amorous lover “pu’d the dress from her shooders / And a’ the pins from her hair” (ll.9-10) immediately before making love to her.

When Rapunztiltskin is brought “sexual manuals & skeins of silk / from which she was meant, eventually, / to weave the means of her escape” (ll.25-27), there is a connection with ‘Rapunzel’ (1812), for she weaves her own silken ladder and is expected to free herself. Rapunzel is doubly imprisoned in her tower and in an insipid relationship that reduces her to an object of male gratification. Prince has no intention of freeing the ‘sexbot’ installed in ‘his’ tower and so feeds her false hope. The skeins of silk, when coupled with the sex manuals, exoticise Rapunztiltskin and suggest that she weaves alluring attire to perform for Prince and indulge his fantasies. The sex manuals arguably teach Rapunztiltskin to so please Prince that this gatekeeper takes pity on and rescues her, even though her interests remain immaterial, for she is never asked about what she desires. On another level, one might call the sex manuals symbols of liberated female desires, for it is possible that Rapunztiltskin requests them herself and so learns to take control of and enjoy her body and make the most of her time. However, the arising and troubling image of this everywoman having to use sex to escape from servitude sits in opposition to the feminism in the poem and the clear message that she is responsible for her life and must devise her own escape. Sexual politics certainly underpin Rapunztiltskin’s romantic attachment and her immurement, for Prince is under the archaic delusion that having sexual intercourse makes Rapunztiltskin his property. But the reader is urged to mock the Prince’s attitudes.

Prince is also mocked as shallow because he is unable to process Rapunztiltskin’s simplest queries quickly. His automated responses are extracted from traditional fairytales rather than real life, reinforce ideas of men generally never knowing what to say to women, or what women (in equally universalising terms) want, and explain why Rapunztiltskin tests him by stating that she wants to know the exact time of her escape. She gives her would-be hero until “past the bell on the timeclock” (l.31). Her urgent timeframe echoes ‘Cinderella’, where the romance and enchantment end after midnight. She teases and helps him on in a

coquettish way by “mouth[ing]” and “hint[ing]” (l.32) more “keen[ly] than a T.V. quizmaster” (l.33). This contemporary reference likens Rapunzstiltskin to a zealous TV presenter who is overly keen for her sole contestant to utter the right answer. However, while she is desperate for Prince to “get it right” (l.34) and to win the prize—her—his oaths are false. He grins as he says “the impossible might / take a little longer” (ll.36-37) and so betrays his shadow aspect.

The feminism in the poem is exposed if not betrayed in part when Rapunzstiltskin “pull[s] her glasses off” (l.38). This removal occasions a re-visioning, for she sees Prince’s reluctance for her to leave the tower, loses her rose-tinted perspective, and pierces through his empty gestures. However, while this stock image of the liberation of the repressed, bookish female is reinterpreted as the liberation of a new, autonomous, feminist hero, Rapunzstiltskin does not realise that whipping off her glasses and unpinning her hair merely serve to entrance Prince rather than free her. So distracted is Prince that although he delivers the right answer in the end, he does so too late and always responds to the question before. The correct answer escapes him when needed most. When he says “All the better / to see you with, my dear?”, he simply “hazard[s]” (ll.40-41) a guess and says what he thinks Rapunzstiltskin wants to hear. The concatenation of Prince and the big bad wolf suggests sinister intentions and implies that while Rapunzstiltskin finds freedom, he cannot escape from ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and from fairytales generally, including those that marginalise female concerns.

The hypothetical great escape is also marginalised, transitions into a grating escape, and finally ends as an unsuccessful one, for the beleaguered protagonist “cut[s] off her hair” (l.41). This is a new take on tearing one’s hair out and on the cutting in Grimms’ ‘Rapunzel’. Rapunzstiltskin is exasperated by Prince’s lies, imprecision, and (patriarchal) attempts to silence her by only responding to her previous points. When he refers to her “tentatively” as “beautiful” (l.42), she exclaims “No, No, No!” and “stamp[s] her foot so / hard it sank six cubits through the floorboards” (ll.43-44). Indeed his final words “I love you?” are delivered as a question and are not what Rapunzstiltskin expects. His words do not correspond with the

self-assured princes found in traditional fairytales. Then again, perhaps this *is* what a classical Prince is truly like: hapless, vapid, and dissatisfying. Lochhead's protagonist only realises this because she is one of the few fairytale females able to interrogate her suitor prior to being locked in a marriage. Rapunzstiltskin was once undaunted by Prince's noncommittal clichés but now detests them, for Prince uses clichés from and inserts Rapunzstiltskin into multiple fairytale narratives in an attempt to locate, read, define, control, and pigeonhole her.

Although Rapunzstiltskin rejects the cliché-laden language employed by Prince, she cannot fathom a more appropriate linguistic alternative and so obliterates herself. Her suicide ensures that she opposes being something that Prince can define and lock onto. By killing or bisecting herself, she escapes from Prince and her tower after all. Finality and a sense of closure are beckoned by the final end-stopped line: "she tore herself in two" (l.46). A livid Rapunzstiltskin commits suicide (in an identical fashion to Rumpelstiltskin) because Prince, despite all his promises, never answers her 'calls' for escape, romantic love and/or adventure. Intriguingly, while Rumpelstiltskin creates a chasm by stamping his foot and then tears himself in two after accidentally enunciating his name, Rapunzstiltskin remains unnamed. She is an amalgamation of fairytale characters and is a sexless *everyperson* (or everywoman). Without idealising Rapunzstiltskin, by refusing to name herself, she exists outside of and cannot be contained by orthodox language systems or constrictive, phallogocentric, fairytales. One might assume that by obliterating herself she embraces erasure and disillusionment and stifles the feminist ambitions of the poem by denying a resolution and a happy-ever-after. However, Rapunzstiltskin generates her own liberation and presents to readers a shifting and fluid female identity. While the poem ends with unfulfilled longing, Rapunzstiltskin's death (her silence) affords her a choice other than a vapid existence as an insensate housewife of an out-of-touch Prince who is too late and too ineffective to save her. His inability to give her what she needs unstitches his mythologized role as a hero. All he achieves is an expression of his yearning to have her, to subject her to his male gaze, to remark on her pulchritude, and to profess his 'love' for her. His apparent heroism is unmasked as a façade or a persona, just as the authenticity of his love is dismantled by his doubt-laden questions and hesitancy.

Prince leaves his bride to weave the fabric of a romantic relationship, as with her hair, but his lack of effort means that they are not in synch. He is outdated and too far behind Rapunztiltskin's quick mind for her to endure. This is why she embraces her isolation and no longer conforms to her internalised (gendered) expectations of being 'recovered' by a man. Readers hear that "Of course" she was not taught to free herself and make her own decisions. But Rapunztiltskin changes her 'course'. The conclusion teaches that she disrupts the typical order of fairytale plots by abandoning her romantic fantasies and taking her own life. This is her supreme feminist stand against undesired marriages and the phallogentric order that inculcates them. By 'escaping', her life still belongs to and is therefore not taken from her by patriarchal agents or ideologies. And yet one must contend with the tragic realisation that escape can only be found in death. As Dorothy McMillan suggests, "in 'Rapunztiltskin' a satisfying ending is achieved only by self-destruction" (Varty 2013: 32). However, although this reading has (up to now) suggested that to bisect oneself means dying, this is not the only possible reading. To tear oneself in two might also connote rupture, a tension between desire and reality, or even a fracturing that allows Rapunztiltskin to 're-view', to detach herself from gender ideologies, to undergo a splitting of her identity, and to escape into a new form.

Patience Agbabi: 'RAPunzel' (1995)

Patience Agbabi, the only black woman in the 2004 list of Next Generation Poets, moves this discussion into the late 1990s, almost three decades after Sexton published 'Rapunzel' (1970). Agbabi, as with Sexton, contests gender ideologies and female passivity through the physical act of writing, yet also expresses feminist ideas through "hard-hitting" (Bertram 1999: 37) "performance poetry (poetry that is written to be orally transmitted [but] may also stand up on the page)" because "The written must be spoken" (British Council 'Agbabi': Web). 'RAPunzel' (1995), an aural, idiomatic poem, reflects this call to action, to vocalise, by returning 'Rapunzel' to its oral folkloristic origins. The blending of cultural registers allows Agbabi to move deftly from "the establishment" to "the street" (Jenkins in Dowson 2011: 124).

The exuberant language and colloquial syntax are a bridge into Rapunzel adaptations targeted at popular culture, by which is often meant Disney or standard retellings in children's literature. Marking a shift in tone and style from the previous poems, 'RAPunzel' is unlike the other adaptations in this thesis, for here is a Rapunzel translated into contemporary black subculture through a rap, thereby reflecting Agbabi's "strong interest in borders and boundaries [and] the point at which one thing transforms or translates into another" ('Crossing Borders'). 'RAPunzel' indicates that the Rapunzel story is endlessly translatable, and highlights the vitality of Rapunzel memes by moving Rapunzel from a fairytale universe to modern London. It also speaks to a desire for emancipation that is especially accessible for readers who identify as or live as part of a black sub-culture. The use of a black (as with a lesbian) Rapunzel is indicative of cultural change and a third-wave feminist thrust towards the inclusion in the literary canon of racial and sexual minorities. Aptly, Agbabi goes a stage further (as seen in Chapter 6) by producing and starring in a video performance of 'RAPunzel', alongside the black singer Kathleen 'Kat' Pearson Thomas and 'street' performer Benji Reid.

Nowhere in the poem 'RAPunzel' does the speaker refer to herself as a black woman, but Agbabi herself (born to Nigerian parents in England and fostered by a white English family) calls her poetic language "Nigerian English", adding that the rhythms of African speech are encapsulated by her "short, end-stopped lines often omitting...definite or indefinite articles" ('The Wife of Bafa'). The half-rhymes add to this cadence. In 'The Excoriation', Agbabi's speaker laments that she is robbed of her native tongue (Yoruba language) and that her teacher "strips / my vowels, clips my consonants until / my voice breaks in Queen's English" (Agbabi 2012: 27. ll.19-21). The dehumanising idea of being 'broken in' like a horse, a metaphor in Emma Donoghue's 'The Tale of the Hair' (1997), recalls negative stereotypes of black people lacking intellect and proper speech. The irony is that RAPunzel not only 'clips' but elides the final consonant in words such as 'and'. Her intelligence, combined with the low-key conversational diction and topics that resonate with youth ("weavin" and "waxin" (l.10)), gives readers a visual and aural experience. While Agbabi says she did not write *R.A.W.* to promote a 'right-on black people' message (indeed the collection moves beyond racial lines), Ebonics and an impactful use of the negative in the first stanza of 'RAPunzel' jolt readers out

of normality, for a black woman corrects someone unknown, perhaps the reader, and tells them how life is *not*: “Not once but / twice upon a time coz you ain’t heard my speak” (ll.1-2). This tale (‘my speak’) aims to unstitch racial assumptions and to make readers rethink all that they know about life and fairytales. Each brief, uncluttered stanza—shorn of punctuation—hints at a lack of pretension, and reflects Agbabi’s title poem ‘RAW’ with its declaration that raw means “holding up a mirror / cos RAW is / WAR / fighting for rights / in an unjust world” (ll.16-20). This is but one reason why this thesis reads Agbabi’s poems as harbouring a feminist agenda. The character RAPunzel holds up a mirror to her life as a black woman in patriarchal London and extends feminist concerns to include many cultural situations and ethnicities.

RAPunzel’s impassioned language reflects a need to be heard and a fight against being forced into a patriarchal narrative. As Alice Walker suggests, “Resistance is the secret of joy!” (1993: 110). The statement “this ain’t no fairytale this is reality” (l.3) disrupts expectations of fairytale narratives in that the speaker discusses her reality, not a romanticised fairytale world. The estranging spaces, used as pauses instead of commas here, call attention to the rhythm and reiterate that this is a rap, a form used to articulate protests and RAPunzel’s frustrations. The upper casing in her name highlights the word rap, which fuses RAPunzel with music, and is a symbol of her coming to embody the feminist ideals she communicates in the poem (a protest). They are a part of her. Moreover, the rhyming lines “call it hell / my name is RAPunzel” (ll.4-5) feed into an account of a tower block with a broken lift that smells of urine. Her words “it can’t go on like this” (l.7) articulate her rage. RAPunzel *is* surrounded by other people (or so one would imagine), but still feels as cut off from the world as the Rapunzel seen peering out of a window in a block of flats in the film *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978).

One feminist ambition of this poem is to widen access to the fairytale for all cultures. This widening and alertness to issues of class and race are why Agbabi’s poem is read here as more decisively ‘third-wave’ than ‘second-wave’. While Rapunzel has historically been envisioned as a blonde-haired white woman, and so has been implicitly or explicitly closed off to black women with afro-textured hair, the references to weaving hair and using hot wax as a nourishing hair treatment, or for hair removal, speak to how black women can also derive

their identity from their hair. Agbabi addresses this by focusing on the challenges, frustrations, and frangibility of RAPunzel's tresses. RAPunzel tries a "hot comb" and "curly perm" (l.11), but in spite of these rituals, can do nothing with her hair and "dread that I am a baldhead" (l.13). Her felt lack—"I'm so ashamed that my hair is short and frizzy" (l.17)—indicates that RAPunzel seeks to live up to beauty standards and feminine ideals but is disillusioned. Her depressing world, personal experiences, and urge for long hair shatter fairytale illusions and precipitate calls to escape and adventure (and for social transformation).

Heterosexual romance, presented originally as a form of adventure, irks RAPunzel, particularly since "a man on the ground floor" (l.18) "serenades me with Public Enemy" (l.20). Hip-hop is presented as a part of contemporary romance, yet the resistance to fantasy (as seen earlier in the poem) casts doubt over the presence of romantic discourse, as does the mockery of the stranger who woos RAPunzel with popular American hip-hop (rap) music.¹⁵ There appears to be a *trashing* of romantic tropes, for RAPunzel says of this anonymous man, "he's crazy or is he?" (l.21). The tantalising pause suggests RAPunzel is second-guessing herself and that the reader is given partial access to her thought processes. Fittingly, her order to "Come up and see me if you dare" (l.23) reads as if she is threatening him and is testing him to see if he is brave (or 'man') enough to answer her call to romantic adventure.¹⁶ Perhaps she says it out of a need for physical and psychological security—as if daring this man to pursue her will be enough to deter him. While it appears that she *wants* his contact, this potential hero-prince archetype cannot access and rescue RAPunzel, given her lack of long hair. This is another impetus for her call to leave her tower block. That she leaves the tower on her own ultimately negates the need for a male in the poem and appears to poke fun at him, especially since it never occurs to this doomed love interest to use the stairs.

¹⁵Public Enemy is a music group that pioneered or at least popularised so-called Black Atlantic rap music.

¹⁶The line 'come up sometime and see me' is a line made famous by Mae West in *She Done Him Wrong* (1933).

Although ‘RAPunzel’ is not narrative-driven, RAPunzel’s escapist trip from the tower block to Dalston and Brixton has feminist significances and is a psychic symbol of hovering between being somewhere and nowhere. RAPunzel realises she must carve out her own path and rescue herself to fulfil her dreams. That she busks “in the undergoun and rap[s] like hell” (1.28) to pay for hair extensions to transform her appearance marks a departure from the passive Rapunzel mould. Her realisation “gotta use my head” (1.29) is paramount, for while the ghetto confines and chokes RAPunzel, her roots have given her a ‘real’, grounded, poetic voice that enables her to escape. To be displaced from the world is arguably a shared condition, but one RAPunzel overcomes through speech and female companionship. While the dark, enclosing London Underground is another form of tower where RAPunzel must play for liberty, more important than this idea of variable towers, fleshed out in Chapter 4, is a message of sisterhood implied by women “plaitin” her “twenty metre hair extension” (1.30). One wonders if RAPunzel has visited a hairdressing salon or if her friends are engaging in a ritualistic event that hints at RAPunzel coming of age and being initiated as a black woman. Long hair (real or false) seems a rite of passage here that signifies RAPunzel’s maturation.

RAPunzel’s command of rhythm also hints at maturity. She interrupts the fast pace in the last stanza by locating the reader back in the tower: “Home an sittin in my easy chair” (1.34). While the space between the words ‘Home’ and ‘an sittin’ suggests that RAPunzel is at ease in the safety of the tower block called ‘Home’ here, rather than something pejorative, the outside world intrudes on her life and disrupts her rest when she hears the exclamatory command ‘*RAPunzel RAPunzel LET DOWN YA HAIR*’ (1.35). The italicised upper-cased text appears to be said aloud to RAPunzel by her irritating lover, who stands in for the prince in ‘Rapunzel’, who (one assumes) never gives her a moment’s peace, and who shouts for her in an attempt to dazzle her with the romantic fantasies that he thinks that he embodies.

It is left for the reader to imagine the appearance of RAPunzel's suitor, but his love of black raps and his informal words (not 'your hair' but 'YA HAIR') suggest he is a black man. Or perhaps this is just how the narrator recalls events. This is RAPunzel's voice rather than that of a traditional (white) English narrator. Nothing definitively pinpoints the ethnicity of the anonymous hero-prince, just as their ages are never given. All that RAPunzel reveals is that "Urggh he's ugly but he loves me / looks ain't everything can't see him when he hugs me" (ll.38-39). Nothing concrete is said that demonstrates his ugliness, but RAPunzel's instinctive reaction (repulsion) shows that he is no dashing Prince Charming. Nevertheless, the pause between her words 'looks ain't everything' and her forthright disclosure of how she sees him hints at another moment of interiority. RAPunzel has her own rethink—her own 'twice upon a time'—by looking beyond the superficial (his hideousness) and accepts him on account of his mind and spirit. However, RAPunzel only finds consolation because she does not have to look at her lover when they embrace. She still desires a physically attractive mate. But any man will do for RAPunzel right now. She tolerates physical contact with someone who is not the man of her dreams because this is reality, not a fairytale. RAPunzel also learns (akin to Rapunzstiltskin) that she does not need a man and need not 'hold out for a hero'.

Just as Agbabi counters the stereotypical blonde Rapunzel with the black RAPunzel, so the lover's implied impotence (this is explicit in Agbabi's film of 'RAPunzel') and lack of spark or chemistry unsettle and emasculate the hero-prince archetype, who cannot answer the call to sexual adventure. Ritual is evoked when RAPunzel plays a mix tape to mix things up in the bedroom—as does Rapunzstiltskin with her sex manuals—but "nothin hapnin" (l.41). The disappointed RAPunzel thus says he is "all brawn no brain think I'll axe him" (l.42). This is a new use of 'axe', as compared with 'Rapunzstiltskin', for RAPunzel resolves to rid herself of this musical man, who cannot satisfy her sexually and/or satisfy her expectations of what it means to be a man. Though this is purely conjectural, it is clear that despite initially

giving this prince the benefit of the doubt, she realises his ineptitude and spurns his advances. As with so many other Rapunzels, past and present, RAPunzel learns that the flesh-and-blood individual who is enamoured of her cannot accommodate *her* romantic fantasies in reality. In opposition to the textual silencing that Ruth Bottigheimer identifies in Grimms' 'Rapunzel' (1812-1857), RAPunzel voices her opinions about her lover and the heterosexual romance (retold from a female perspective), and controls rather than is made the object of the gaze. Her ability to govern her life and carve out her own voice represents an extension of feminist ideals for she (in part) deflates gender stereotypes and frees herself from patriarchal bondage:

Auntie keep hummin that tune
Mr Public Enemy's comin soon
Get out the scissors now he's there
'RAPunzel RAPunzel LET DOWN YA HAIR'
We gather the hair in a great big bundle
liberate RAPunzel I ain't no damsel
chuck this vanity throw it out the window

(Patience Agbabi. 'RAPunzel' 1995: ll.44-50).

The foregoing indented quotation characterises male courtship rituals in a derisory fashion. This penultimate stanza introduces RAPunzel's Auntie and so confirms that she does not live alone in the tower block. They appear to join forces and laugh at the lover, both anticipating that he will be playing rap music. Indeed the insulting reference to him as 'Mr Public Enemy' suggests that his attempts to seduce are worn-out and ineffectual. So exhausted are these women by his daily recitals of hip-hop tunes that RAPunzel beseeches Auntie to cut her hair. Hers is therefore a willing sacrifice, unlike the non-consensual cutting by the Grimm Gothel. Auntie (echoing Sexton's 'Rapunzel') helps her "wash that man out of her hair" by throwing her braids out of the window. This is how she overcomes her 'vanity' and refuses to play the scripted female role of damsel in distress. While the cutting undoes all of the women's work and presumably returns her to a state of lack (short and frizzy hair), she throws out the artificial hair and with it the gender ideologies she has internalised. RAPunzel removes the man-made extensions (which conceal rather than reflect her authentic identity) and hurls

them at the pretentious lover as a figurative and literal expression of a desire to end all contact (thus ending his access to the tower and her). She refers to herself in the third person, adamant that her actions will ‘liberate RAPunzel’, and she refuses to be interpellated into the role of his vain lover. If anything, she is recruiting women to her consciousness-raising cause.

The poem’s effort to jolt readers out of normality culminates in the male lover being “shaken / think he’s got the message” (ll.52-53). The message is that this is not a fairytale romance but a story where romance primarily means sexual attractiveness. The lack of sexual attraction is clear from the words “Don’t Believe the Hype” (l.55), an allusion to misleading fairytale archetypes and the 1988 song popularised by Public Enemy.¹⁷ This seems to be a mantra for romantic fantasies about men falling short of reality, just as the rapper-lover falls to the ground after climbing the hair. The poem then becomes fully female-centred and diversifies the scope of feminism (as argued already), whilst embracing ‘second-wave’ ideas of solidarity, for RAPunzel and Auntie converse about their shared “sensa rhythm” (l.56), an apt metaphor for authoring and following their own tunes (life scripts). They promise to sustain each other by writing and performing raps that will enable them to “get out the ghetto ain’t no lookin / back you backin me rappin” (l.58-59). RAPunzel quotes Auntie’s words, which position her niece, RAPunzel as a daughter: “we gonna live it happy ever after” (l.61). This assurance of a happy-ever-after paves the way for the words “Twice upon a time check this women” (l.64). This sentence, addressed exclusively to a female audience, forms part of the poem’s closing refrain: “Twice upon a time check this men / does ya hair stand on end?” (ll.66-67). These words reflect Agbabi’s dedication to social justice and her argument that while *R.A.W.* has “a general audience...I knew women would get it more [and] relate” (Bertram 1999: 37). The idea of female self-actualisation is employed here to portray women as powerful, and to estrange or unsettle all males who read the poem. Men are asked to read this hair-raising poem as a model for and proof of (black) ‘sisters doing it for themselves’ and venturing forth

¹⁷This statement is particularly interesting because it follows on from the words “even though I like” (l.55). Consequently there is a dual meaning here. It suggests that while RAPunzel is rejecting the lover she still enjoys the song. Alternatively, this is a potential example of a contemporary insistence on interspersing sentences with the word like (often used to fill gaps or pauses in everyday speech), as in ‘I like ... Don’t Believe the Hype’.

into the world. By the same token, male readers are placed on an equal footing with the expelled male lover, who RAPunzel formerly dared to rise to the challenge of pursuing her. The streetwise RAPunzel now dares *all* males to answer her (metatextual) call to read her poem and heed her feminist message, arguing “this ain’t the endin it’s the beginnin” (l.65).

Conclusions

Inspired by 1970s and 1980s British ‘dub’ poetry,¹⁸ by the likes of Mikey Smith and Benjamin Zephaniah, Agbabi’s ‘RAPunzel’ tackles love, gender, and racial and social issues. The preceding poems have varyingly debunked naturalised myths of heterosexual romance. Though the four Rapunzels (in their various incarnations) express a degree of attraction to a hero-prince, Liz Lochhead and Patience Agbabi ridicule this male archetype, stating that men cannot give women wish-fulfilment (or ‘angel fire’, as Sexton puts it in ‘Rapunzel’ (1970)). Representations of female identity in each retelling also seemingly tie identity to image. Where Sexton and Broumas focus on the virtues of a white Rapunzel, Agbabi places emphasis on black female beauty. This is important because black writing has historically been marginalised and treated as lesser than ‘high’ art (by white male writers). Equally, all four poets in this chapter also devote attention to inter- and intra-sexual dialogue. Their exploration and recuperation of female voices appear to transcend racial differences and therefore exemplify a merging of second-wave feminist ideas of solidarity and third-wave feminist ideas of the expression and acknowledgement of difference and multiplicity. Rapunzels worldwide are rarely listened to, except when they accept marriage proposals or a male’s sexual advances. Though the reader hears much of what Rapunzel thinks or says (some elements are withheld), the male wanderer hears even less—or at least pretends to. Stevie Smith’s ‘The After-thought’ (1950) sees a female refuse to gamble her life away and to be inactive as so many women have before her. The wise yet detached speaker thinks about or *is* Rapunzel, and ends her poetic narrative by delivering a loaded and biting couplet: “What’s that darling? You can’t hear me? / That’s odd. I can hear you quite distinctly” (Smith 2002: 139). Rapunzel is either piercing

¹⁸Dub poetry denotes West-Indian poetry of oral origin, is designed to be spoken as a chant or musical rap, and is occasionally accompanied by backing music or voice effects (ranging from echoes to dramatic emphases).

through the prince's inattention and lies and says that she can hear him distinctly, or the prince is saying that he can hear Rapunzel, whereas she is pretending to be unable to hear him. In either case, as in 'Rapunzstiltskin' and the prose adaptations discussed in the following chapter, the speaker does not want to be thankful to and beholden to a man for her passive existence and for being alive in a world where she is in stasis—in a tomb or tower.

Other Rapunzels

Based on my research, more than thirty post-1970s Rapunzel poems (listed in the Appendix) could have been examined in terms of their varying (yet qualified) sources of pessimism and lack of the hallmark 'feel-good factor' and Happy-Ever-After of fairytales. The majority are pessimistic because patriarchy always survives somehow. However much the prince or other male characters differ from each other in each poem and the Grimm 'Rapunzel', the same inescapable gender stereotyping and pessimistic messages persist. In Brenda Hillman's 'Rapunzel', a male gardener (who has for years sustained the witch) refuses to "climb up" (l.6) to Rapunzel because he claims that she is now "Wanting too much" (l.15). The poem ends with the sombre realisation that "One has the idea of labour, / One has the useless hair" (ll.18-19), meaning that once again a man is positioned as active and purposeful, whereas Rapunzel is characterised as dejected and as suffering from lack—a lack of freedom, a lack of valuable belongings and, more stereotypically, a lack of a man who is available to rescue her.

Another example of pessimism is a pessimism caused by a void that cannot be filled by any kind of politics—and this extends to feminism, itself a politics that aims to change and enrich the world. In Nicola Cooley's 'Rampion' (2002), the speaker remembers her initial reactions to the Rapunzel story, which somehow instil in her a belief that "I will grow up to be that bad mother" (l.11), with a "blistering ache" (l.12). This matters because "the mother drops out of the story" (l.14) as a result of feeling the "wrong, selfish kind" of desires (l.16). The poem ends with isolation and the numbing words: "the girl departs—pure blank horizon"

(l.18). All actions undertaken are ineffectual and hope of change is abruptly cut off, hence the moral: “the rampion’s metallic root splits the tongue like a knife / and...the daughter spends the rest of the story alone” (ll.5-6). In a similar vein, David Trinidad’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1981) ends as Rapunzel imagines committing suicide—“I’d slit my / wrists” (ll.28-29)—as a kind of release. Once more lack cannot be overcome by social or political transformation or solved by human contact. That escape is only achievable through death is made clear by Gothel as she “clasps” Rapunzel’s “throat” (l.21), while holding Rapunzel’s face in front of hers “like a hand-mirror” (l.23)—echoing the mirror metaphor in Anne Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1970).

While there *are* refreshingly upbeat exceptions to this swathe of depressing poems—Lisa Russ Spaar’s ‘Rapunzel Shorn’ speaks of being “redeemed, head light... Years I dreamed of this”—the four poets in this chapter have offered more pessimistic treatments of ‘Rapunzel’ based on overwhelming feelings of confinement (Sexton and Broumas) and on the gendered stereotyping of—unsuccessful—calls to adventure (Lochhead and Agbabi). Although Agbabi’s ‘RAPunzel’ contains optimism about female emancipation, and positions a collective ‘femaleness’ as a source of social and personal replenishment, even if there is a sense of female solidarity and optimism, it is ultimately muted. Despite appropriating the Happy-Ever-After of fairytales for feminist purposes, optimistic endings or moments of euphoria in all four poems are compromised by some sort of bleakness, primarily occasioned by lack or multifarious voids. Even so, there are other causes of pessimism in Rapunzel poetry. It dawns on Rapunzel in Sara Henderson Hay’s Petrarchan sonnet ‘Rapunzel’ (1998) that “I was not the first to twist / Her heartstrings to a rope for him to climb. / I might have known I would not be the last” (ll.12-14). As in Stevie Smith’s ‘The After-thought’ (1950), there is the agony of infidelity and the universalisation or collectivisation of the Rapunzel figure—“I knew that other girls, in Aprils past, / Had leaned, like me, from some old tower’s room / And watched him clamber up” (ll.9-11). Aptly, Rosemary Dun’s ‘Rapunzel’ (2005) outlines

cutting off Rapunzel's "just-for-him hair" (l.37) so that her former hero-lover can no longer "ravish me awake" (l.41). Her screams of sexual ecstasy are superseded by her "howls" (l.42) that fill "my madwoman's attic / with despair" (ll.43-44) during "the birth / of my daughter" (ll.45-46). While the allusions to *Jane Eyre* (1847) and/or *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) imply a feminist undercurrent, this is complicated by the final line "We hold hands and jump" (l.47), which reflects the pessimistic tone of the above examples, and realises the ambitions of suicide so greatly desired by David Trinidad's Rapunzel and several Rapunzels in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Rapunzel Short Stories, Novels, and Graphic Novels

As stated in the Introduction to this thesis, the time span covered in this chapter is considerable (1985 to 2010). The (sub)genres with which it deals are also varied: a feminist moral fable, ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’ (1985); two other (more complex) short stories, ‘The Tale of the Hair’ (1997) and ‘The Difference in the Dose: A Story After ‘Rapunzel’’ (2010); a psychological novella, *Zel* (1996); and a graphic novel, also named *Rapunzel’s Revenge* (2008). The variety of these texts once again demonstrates the multiplicity of genres and media into which feminist Rapunzels have been translated. But they have also been chosen to draw contrasts between celebratory and darker, more disturbing ‘post-fairytale’ feminist adaptations of ‘Rapunzel’. The texts treated in this chapter also suggest a movement towards greater psychological complexity and interiority in their treatment of Rapunzel memes. This is something that prose fiction, and especially first-person prose fiction, naturally gravitates towards, even as the conspicuously fairytale elements of ‘Rapunzel’ transcend the individual in their affirmation of common memes. Nevertheless, the use of the tale on behalf of various different kinds of individualism and subjectivisation is one of the concerns of this and the ensuing chapters.

A. Claffey, R. Conroy, L. Kavanagh, M.P. Keane, C. MacConville, and S. Russell:

‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’ (1985)

‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’ is written in close enough proximity to the resurgence of feminism in the 1970s for the educative function of ‘Rapunzel’ to be reworked for feminist purposes and for there to be an upbeat message. That it reads as a moral feminist manifesto is apt, for it features in a collection entitled *Ride on Rapunzel: Fairytales for Feminists* (1985)—edited by Maeve Binchy and published by Attic Press.¹⁹ The writing of this fairytale itself suggests a collective feminist enterprise and embodies the principle of sisterhood, for it is authored by six female adapters. And yet because this narrative is paradoxically nearest to the Grimms in

¹⁹A publisher of women’s writing that two of the authors, Róisín Conroy and Mary Paul Keane founded in 1984.

its attempt to function as a *simple* moral tale, it necessarily produces simple characters that can also appear shallow. Equally, unlike the poems in Chapter 3, ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’ is ‘simply’ optimistic, lacking any qualification for its optimism. It has a simple moral to rival or supplant that of the Grimms, but its celebratory messages of female solidarity and of women making the world better and helping one another against ‘evil’ men appear naïve and flippant.

Trite, female-friendly episodes are used to placate a principally female readership and to berate men and a *male* villain, Rory Prince, who hinders Rapunzel’s flimsy dreams—one day she wants to be an activist and jazz singer, and then decides on a whim that she will live on a farm to study healing herbs. Although this collaborative story blends the talents of such best-selling Irish writers as Linda Kavanagh (famous for penning romantic suspense novels) and Róisín Conroy, an Irish Women’s Movement activist, it is difficult to attribute individual sentences or ideas to a specific author, or to discern a clear message. What is clear is that rather than recreate the nineteenth-century context of the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ (1812-1857), this update concerns the jobless and depthless Rapunzel Murphy in a shallow urban world of male corporate capitalism. While women are simplistically identified as good if they are in touch with nature and opposed to male capitalism (identified as evil), Rapunzel makes a Faustian pact with a Prince (of darkness) without reading “the small print” (17), and stars in a TV advert for “New Improved Shineon” shampoo (17), because she is “sick of being broke for good causes” (17). Her thesis that all humans compromise their (fad-like) values explains why she is easily compromised, and suggests that the tale is intended as a critique of male corporate capitalism *and* a satire on faddishness and faddish feminism. Indeed this ‘flat’ Rapunzel is, akin to the advertising and capitalism she opposes, all image and no substance.

Rather than extend or complicate the feminism seen in the Rapunzel poetry, this tale of male-bashing and anti-capitalism descends into a farcical caution against greed and desire. Rapunzel prays to a higher power for escape but can only think of “Sister Angela’s warnings about the evils of money” (19). Angela (only mentioned once) is idealised as free from desire and the lure of avarice. More implausible is the fact that Rapunzel thinks herself “mad” (19)

and considers killing herself when her jailers cut her “ever-growing” hair “that was once her dead mother’s pride and joy” (19). Rapunzel’s identity is again tied to her hair, a symbol of her femininity and connection to her mother, who is absent from the story. The references to sheared hair and black bags filled with gold hair also (unconsciously) evoke sheep and the myth of the Golden Fleece, thus positioning Rapunzel as a sought-after prize or commodity.

Rapunzel is at best sheepish and at worst vapid. There is an implicit mockery of her singing rather than freeing herself (a paltry response to being held prisoner). She *is* proficient in “weightlifting” (23) and has taken an “advanced weaving course” (22). Her merging of a traditional female pursuit and an activity as unladylike as weightlifting indicates she is strong and has integrated her feminine and masculine aspects. Nonetheless, Rapunzel’s revelation that “At least she could annoy the [jailers] with a few feminist songs” (19) implies she takes her resistance no further than vexing men. Rather than declare her beliefs or the feminism(s) with which she identifies, she sings “*The Union Maid*” and “*I’m a woman. W-O-M-A-N*” (20), hence her allegiance with feminism appears tokenistic and talismanic. Although Rapunzel’s admirably forthright and self-determining friend, Pauline Hyland, is more stridently feminist and is now the hero instead of the classic prince (a gesture of feminist re-visioning), it is unfortunate that Rapunzel never rescues herself or generates her own healing. But it is also comical that Pauline uses her “oil of herbina” to “counteract” the “chemicals” (23) that make Rapunzel’s hair grow uncontrollably. By advertising her oil, a wise woman archetype meets corporate capitalism and New Age fad, for this overly formulaic scene seems to poke fun at the tradition of fairytale characters arriving just in time with a magical cure-all to hand.

There is, however, one example of a more substantial feminism. Pauline, in a reversal of the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’, spies on Rapunzel and waits for a *male* to leave the tower, before breaking into Rapunzel’s room to exclaim “My God, Rapunzel, what have they done to you?” (22). Rapunzel is not being judged or accused of having done something, but of having been changed bodily by patriarchal agents. Pauline realises that Rapunzel’s hair (though trivial) is controlled by the company, and that Rapunzel is held hostage. This is why Pauline alerts the media and shines a light on the company’s patriarchal ideologies on a national stage. To tell

their story is debatably healing, for vocalising and hearing their story makes it real, just as the validation from being heard by others is a part of achieving justice, letting go, and moving on. Though the title of this fairytale invokes the scorned woman archetype, Rapunzel's revenge is simply to throw her cut hair like a "golden web" (24) over the men that try to kill her, and to hold them still when the media arrive. Rapunzel has always had a voice but, thanks to her supportive female network, she now makes herself heard by the males in this story.

Presumably the writers of this fairytale thought that women teaching men a lesson is an important and above all feminist story to tell; the problem, however, is its biased treatment of the sexes, whereby women are good and men are bad, with the exception of a meek youth named Edward, who is bullied (by Pauline) into weaving Rapunzel's golden hair into a rope. Additionally, it is unclear whether Rapunzel or Pauline changes as a result of their experience, for this adaptation ends with a decision to take a "trip to Donegal" after all (24). It is uplifting to see Rapunzel ride on to happier destinations with Pauline. An escape from their social realities and an adventure in new lands is their golden fleece, but this all seems so lightweight. While this analysis has read depth into the story by considering examples of its *putative* irony towards the female protagonists, irony, in this case, may be in the eye of the beholder. It is possible that 'Rapunzel's Revenge' is seriously intended as a feminist statement, for it is included in a collection called *Ride on Rapunzel: Fairytales for Feminists* (1985). But if it is seriously intended as feminist, it is a diluted feminism that is complicit with the depthlessness often associated with postmodern culture. Emma Donoghue's 'The Tale of the Hair' (1997), analysed next, demonstrates how upbeat feminist messages are not always sustainable, and is a fitting example of short-story Rapunzel adaptations that offer a more imaginatively complex take on the themes of erasure and lack that are touched on briefly in 'Rapunzel's Revenge'. As with Donna Jo Napoli's *Zel* (1996), whose primary readership is probably that recently constructed niche market of 'young adult', it extends and complicates what feminism means, and it offers searching psychological treatments of the themes of security and adventure, even as 'Rapunzel's Revenge' (1985) shears away this psychology.

Emma Donoghue: 'The Tale of the Hair' (1997)

Emma Donoghue, an Irish playwright and novelist, states on her website that Róisín Conroy, a co-writer of 'Rapunzel's Revenge' and a co-founder of Attic Press, "suggested the project", meaning an anthology of thirteen fairytales. Just as Broumas opens 'Rapunzel' (1977) with a line from Sexton's 'Rapunzel' (1970), the Acknowledgements in *Kissing the Witch* (1997) begin: "I want to thank Róisín Conroy of Attic Press for prompting me to write fairytales". There is thus a sense of a continuing tradition, for the baton is being passed on from one series of feminist authors to the next (ten years on), meaning that Conroy is handing on the invitation to write a collection of feminist fairytales, and to rewrite the morality of the Grimm 'Rapunzel' for feminist purposes. However, the baton passes from a member of a feminist collective (collective authorship) to a single writer, hence this is not a collective but what is now the standard scenario of a single-authored text. In addition, that Donoghue offers a more complex interlacing of voices, rather than a simple moral fairytale, suggests that 'Rapunzel' is acting once more as a touchstone for changing feminist concerns, as well as being a touchstone for feminist optimism and pessimism, as this discussion will argue. This story is complexly told and is therefore difficult to fully grasp. Indeed, in keeping with the poetry in Chapter 3, there are various strikingly jarring elements, as well as a denial of escape and an ending that gestures towards irresolvable longings. Consequently, if 'The Tale of the Hair' is a rewriting or overwriting of 'Rapunzel's Revenge', given the similarities in structure, then it is a story that does not just point towards a simple moral message. It shows through an absence of forward movement and through its complex inter-relating between one tale and another that an inner void cannot be 'gotten over' easily. For that matter, just as the collective assembly of voices problematises the sense of sisterhood and a shared feminist enterprise, it is implied that feminism cannot solve an inner sense of lack.

Still, that each heroine in *Kissing the Witch* tells her story to the heroine of the previous tale is key, for the fairytales are not bracketed off from but feed into each other and so actualise Marie-Louise von Franz's view of all fairytales as interconnected. Donoghue calls this a "simple ploy to link the stories and make them more marketable", but this framing device adds

to the psychological complexity of her ‘adult’ tales by creating a rich network of life stories (Donoghue, ‘Kissing the Witch’: Web). Intriguingly, the title *Kissing The Witch: Old Tales in New Skins* evokes Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ and a palimpsest, for new layers are added on top of existing fairytales. ‘The Tale of the Shoe’ even uses a line from Broumas’s ‘Rapunzel’—“You’re not my mother, I said. I’m old enough to know that”—as if to confirm that earlier Rapunzels inform Donoghue’s feminist fairytales.

Donoghue’s tales do not replace Grimm tales (‘old skins’) but expand and make them more dynamic. The same applies to the link between Donoghue’s tale and the 1985 collection, for Donoghue’s work reflects the closures of the feminist moral fable. Her female fairytale characters even ‘speak back’ to one another and their own classic stories. This intertextual dialogue foregrounds differences between the ‘traditional’ hypotext and Donoghue’s feminist adaptations of the same text. The shifting of first-person female perspectives means there is not one dominant narrative voice but a multiplicity of perspectives at work. Each heroine looks back on her naïve acceptance of gender scripts, and seemingly offers snapshots of how she came to be wise and worldly (a strong female role model). Their confessional exchanges not only embrace second-wave feminist calls for sisterhood and consciousness-raising but give Grimm fairytales new feminist significances by making explicit and arguably enabling readers to resist the anti-woman stance in the hypotext(s). Notably, the witch in Donoghue’s revision of ‘The Little Mermaid’ begs the mermaid not to sacrifice her voice or identity for a prince: “Change for your own sake, if you must, but not for what you imagine another will ask of you” (192). Such empowering words are why Ann Martin places Donoghue alongside Anne Sexton (1970), Angela Carter (1979), and Margaret Atwood (1983), as “part of a larger feminist response to the patriarchal canon of Western fairytales” (Martin 2010: 7).

Ann Martin also situates Donoghue within “the context of third-wave feminism”, for “she writes from a different vantage point than...many second-wave writers and theorists, one based on an engagement not just with patriarchal versions of fairytales, but also with

existing feminist variants and ‘critical analyses’ of the stories” (7). If *Kissing the Witch* does possess third-wave feminist “impulses...including an emphasis on the complexities of female identities and sexualities, a foregrounding of interlocking modes of oppression, and a recognition of varied and sometimes subtle modes of political action” (7), then Donoghue’s ‘The Tale of the Hair’ is arguably a mix of second- and third-wave feminism. This feminist fairytale resists a trademark Happy-Ever-After, rejects the primacy of collective values and ideologies over the interests, identities, and views of the minority, and offers interactions with women from different generations. Its revised context and focus on Rapunzel and Mother Gothel (who reflect on their decisions) provide an interactive site of exchange, bridging gaps, and changing (gendered) perspectives. This is important because this retelling deals with multivalent divides between young and old, mother and daughter.

‘The Tale of the Hair’ recalls the mother-daughter dialectic in ‘The Tale of the Shoe’, and strips ‘Rapunzel’ back to some of its core memes: lack, unfulfilled longing, attachment. A nameless, emotionless woman begins by talking in hindsight, with bitter experience, and seemingly from beyond the grave: “You see me now reduced to a skull; I have shed all the trappings of flesh, skin and mane. You’ll look much like this when you’re dead too” (83). Her naked vulnerability engages the reader—whose own mortality is foretokened by references to absence and decay. Her bleak image of a skull absent of flesh and hair suggests erasure or being hardened mentally and physically (given the lack of soft flesh), and feeds into the metonymic reduction in the title, which is fairytale shorthand for Rapunzel (though it could refer to anyone who happens to have hair), just as ‘The Tale of the Needle’ is code for Sleeping Beauty and ‘The Tale of the Shoe’ alludes to Cinderella. The allusive titles, coupled with the often mysterious first-person narrators, invite readers to fill in the gaps or even create their own version of what is occurring, but then there is a risk of making ‘The Tale of the Hair’ a fully explicit tale when its mode is metaphor and suggestion. No tale in the collection

reaches a satisfying conclusion because there is no fixed, absolute message. Each tale ends with the narrator becoming a listener, who hears the story of the next narrator. There is no totalising vision or voice because there is always the possibility that the narrators will be changed in their thinking, as if the narrators are living entities in an ongoing dialogue.

Donoghue reveals online (but not in the book) that 'The Tale of the Hair' reworks the European Grimm fairytale 'Rapunzel'. Her Rapunzel's personal struggle for meaning, human experiences, and a stable identity in a dark and confusing world implies that she is, like the reader, a flesh-and-blood individual. Yet this is a tale where Rapunzel does not know that she is Rapunzel, and so is unaware of her fairytale history and origins. That Rapunzel has a sense of lack, is denied or denies herself adventures, and does not feel human, recalls how classic fairytales rarely call women to adventure, though feminists do write women back into these human adventures. Perhaps not knowing who she is (or what her place in the world is) is the reason why she retreats from the world. Readers likewise do not know how to categorise this speaker who initially seems to evade all human attributes. One minute Rapunzel appears recognisably human, and the next she is dehumanised. This feeds into her felt lack of permanence and real engagement with the world. To not feel a part of one's own life is dizzying and numbing, as exemplified by Rapunzel's words:

the trees were no friends of mine. They slouched on the edge of our clearing, wrapping their arms round themselves...I stood in the door of the hut and shook, in spite of the rabbit skins. Even my hair, wound round and round my shoulders, couldn't keep me warm. By the time the woman had come back from her plot of beans and potatoes, I had climbed up the narrow stone steps and sat by the window. Even if I'd had my sight, the woman said there was nothing but treetops to see. I shook my hair off my shoulders now; it slid over the dusty sill.

(88)

Here nature creates walls (or at least Rapunzel *imagines* walls) as barriers to physical contact. Rapunzel concludes (rightly or wrongly) that she is abandoned by a clique of indifferent trees that hug themselves or hug each other as a group to stay warm. They selfishly move to the margins while she shivers on her own. But perhaps Rapunzel shuts herself off from the trees

that she has personified, opting to watch nature from the safety of the doorway of her shelter. Interestingly, her hair and her rabbit skins neither console nor incubate her because what she craves most, and yet lacks, is unconditional love. Rapunzel waits in vain for human contact, and passes the time by climbing the steps to the cold window, but this activity is pointless because Rapunzel is blind. Even her hope that she might one day see something beautiful is dashed by Gothel's statement that the hut is enveloped by trees—trees already described by Rapunzel as enemies. This is partly why Rapunzel is numb, isolated, and feels as neglected and unfeeling, and as weightless and insubstantial, as the dust on her windowsill.

This anonymous hero wants other humans to know, love, and understand her, but her intertextual dialogue with the Goose Girl reveals competing urges for belonging and isolation: “In my last life I was not a horse, but a woman like you. Or rather, a woman quite unlike you. Where you hunger for attention I sickened of it. You want to be queen over the wide world; I hid away from it” (83). Rapunzel is “like” but “unlike” the Goose Girl, who craves dominion and not the isolation for which Rapunzel yearns. Despite sharing human qualities, Rapunzel uses her dissimilar human experiences and lived reality to set herself apart from the Goose Girl. Rapunzel sees herself as different because she leaves her past behind and reinvents herself. But does she, even now, see herself as dehumanised, namely as a horse or beast of burden? The hero in ‘The Tale of the Handkerchief’ (a reworking of ‘The Goose-Girl’) finds solace in a horse’s head, thereby suggesting that Donoghue’s revision of ‘Rapunzel’ is told by a horse. Moving from images of human hair to a shorn mane, and speaking cryptically of having not been a horse in her past life, without clarifying whether she is a horse now, it is tempting to call Rapunzel animalistic. Downtrodden, submissive, or perhaps uneducated, she is subject to the male gaze and *seen* rather than seeing. This is an apt metaphor for female identity in that Rapunzel’s life is scripted from elsewhere, arguably by men, although this is not clear to her. In the ostensibly simpler world of ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’, everything is visible. Patriarchy as

a source of oppression is named as such. But in ‘The Tale of the Hair’, told by a narrator whose status as a human is ambivalent, and whose vision is literally and metaphorically absent, it does not seem possible to identify clearly the nature of the scripts or the scriptwriter.

It is also possible to see Rapunzel’s non- or semi-human status in more general terms. In Chapter One, this thesis spoke of men writing women out of and deterring them from expressing human identity. Rapunzel’s feelings of not being human and of lacking an identity relate to this previous idea, for this adaptation treats lack and emptiness as gender-specific and universal, and forces on readers the startling recognition that it is paradoxically human not to feel human. Rapunzel bases her identity on the scattered pieces of knowledge she gleans, and this reinforces her feelings of incompleteness. The fragmented style of this piece as a whole reflects this overarching and constant sense of incompleteness and brokenness. Rapunzel’s life lacks meaning, order, fullness, and joy, and her lack seemingly epitomises the human condition here. To lack something means that she is left eternally wanting and is full of desire, for wish-fulfilment. Contentment is easily attained in ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’, it seems, through female solidarity and a sense that feminism makes renewal and replenishment possible. ‘The Tale of the Hair’ goes to a darker place. The narrator’s monotony and depression, and her confusion and fear of a black unknown stem from various lacks that define her and which are all a part of what it means to be human (and arguably what it means to be Rapunzel). Gender oppression *is* of course the source of many of the protagonists’ woes, but her malaise seems sometimes to pass beyond cause and causality.

Donoghue’s Rapunzel is also unlike most other Rapunzels in that she is a female protagonist who *wants* to live in a stone tower, to avoid being seen and to escape her inhospitable world. The Grimm Rapunzel is denied a voice to verbalise such preoccupations. By contrast, Donoghue has Rapunzel declare “I like the feel of [the sun] on my face” (86). Her desire to bask in light atop a high tower is trivial compared to her woeful lack, emptiness,

and sense of the world as insecure and cruel; yet her bursts of vibrancy and her recognition of feeling these (human) feelings mean that she is gradually being ‘humanised’ in a more positive sense. She even comes to ‘see’ the world as capacious, sensuous, and responsive to her needs. Her need for light and security (home) is met by her tower: a “tree of stone” (84). While a ‘stone tree’ might suggest a stultifying or inhibiting extension of Rapunzel, Rapunzel sees this tower more optimistically. Her primary caregiver criticises its crookedness, yet she adores its quirky imperfections, and arguably identifies with or sees herself in it because its flaws mirror her own. This explains the joy in Rapunzel’s following memory: “when I stood at the base and stretched my arms around its jagged girth, I knew it was just what I needed” (87). She hugs and is delighted by her tower because it is a surrogate attachment figure that gives and receives love without comment or complaint. This is evident in her words that “With her...hands [the mother] brought stones from the old mine and took mud and leaves and built a little tower behind our hut where the thorn-bushes grew” (86). Rapunzel’s tower is a labour of maternal love. Its construction recalls birds gathering material for a nest. How apt that Rapunzel “crow[s]” when the round tower’s many rooms and levels are erected “as high as the trees” (87). Towers *are* confining, as seen already, yet hers is a paradoxical emblem of security and freedom that offers her a corner of the universe she can call her own.

Separation from humanity is also ritualised by her forest home, which, akin to the initiation huts discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, removes her from all human contact and offers her a space to pause and look inward: “As the years pulled me toward womanhood my body swelled...My hair began to grow faster” (85). Displayed here is a felt powerlessness against the forces of time and sexuality, as well as a sense of meditative peace and of being in touch with her body and the natural energies of the earth. Her affinity with nature and her unconscious is mirrored by the hut and landscape, and results in a pubertal dream that idealises home as a place of safety and security, but also positions it as a constricting site of unfulfilled longing. Rapunzel therefore faces competing impulses. She is summoned forth to

explore the world and to leave home so as to liquidate her lacks. On the other hand, evacuating the safe, familiar, inside world she calls home means entering an unfamiliar outside world that is symbolic of everything threatening: “the time I first bled I had a nightmare of the hunt. The wood was full of men who were also stags and the dogs that chased them. My hair was caught in a tangle of hedge, my clothes shredded by the thorns. There was no safety. There was no cover” (87-88). Though enclosed by the tower, her dream actualises a primal fear of sex, of being caught, and of men. She mistakes her menstrual flow for being stalked and stabbed by male hunters, themselves cowardly animals being hunted. This repetition and disturbance of gender stereotypes (whereby both sexes are frail) continues when Rapunzel remembers that “The only thing I had from the time before, the only thing I owned that the witch had not given me, was a comb made...of an antler” (84-85). Her comb appears in her dream as a sexual symbol or metaphor for the male principle. Rapunzel carries it with her but she does not tell her mother lest this secret (forbidden) object is taken from her and with it a symbol of contact with humanity (she obtains this comb from the human world). This is not to endorse Freudian views of female shame or castration anxieties, but to state that Rapunzel seeks to keep this comb for herself because it connotes protection and connection. Nonetheless, fear that she or her virginity will be taken by men—the unknown—explain why the hair she combs so ritualistically is caught and why her “cover” (emotional guard) is torn. Her dream ends with her finding the tower, “clubbing my fists on the stone walls to be let in” (88), because of a desperate human need for safety against the dangers of her complex world.

Rapunzel can live without escape and a mate, but her dreams enact latent wishes that could enrich her human existence. Her dream symbols do appear patriarchal—men are strong hunters and Rapunzel is hunted and weak—but they are arguably sexless expressions of a sense of being at the mercy of unseen forces, and are true to Rapunzel’s real-life experiences. That Rapunzel also mulls over her contradictory origins reveals how her non-biological mother “found me growing in a clump of wild garlic” (84). Her herbal creation tales recall

folklore of children deriving from cabbage patches *and* authenticate her fear of parental abandonment. Rapunzel remembers being told that she was “won...in a bet” or “bought...for a handful of radishes” (84). This last scenario is true to Grimms’ ‘Rapunzel’ in that the heroine, a purchasable commodity seized from nature, has no stable upbringing. One might assert that this instability is encoded in her dream in the form of male animals that hunt and are hunted. Rapunzel is told that she was “saved” by a surrogate mother—the tower in her dream—and is perhaps rescued from poverty or unloving parents, but she rejects the world and concludes that she is expendable and unwanted, for she lacks definitive answers about who she is; her dreams, life story, and penetrating concerns are never resolved.

Even childhood is complex for Rapunzel given her fugue and her distorted memories. It is telling that Rapunzel “remember[s] nothing of...early childhood, except the odd glimpse of rust on a gate” (84). She sees mere glimpses of objects and also feels a lack of connection to her early life because “from the day I fell into [Gothel’s] hands I was blind as a mole” (84). This female confuses the protagonist by casting a veil over her life; while “there must have been a time when my eyes were not clouded” (84), this time is forgotten. All Rapunzel knows is that “before there was ever a tower we lived in a stone hut in the woods, near an old mine” (84). Her repetitions and her focus on past dwellings betray a need to recover concrete memories and a sense of time, for her life seems to slip away from her. This explains the following recollection: “The woman came and went, bringing limp rabbits from her traps and the odd handful of berries. We didn’t talk much” (87). As with the objects that Rapunzel passes, Gothel’s presence is limp, fleeting, and insignificant. To refer to her mother as “the woman” exacerbates the coldness and indifference between them and suggests she does not identify with her. If this disconnection is attributable to her all-but-forgotten childhood, it is conceivable that her selective memory is caused by a repression of traumatic life experiences

(encoded in her nightmares). Whatever the case, Rapunzel does not see her mother as able to heal her or as someone who belongs or is linked to her in a significant way.

There are nevertheless moments of tenderness between mother and child. In the dream analysed earlier, Rapunzel “woke only when the woman came upstairs...and took me in her arms as she had never done before” (88). The witch’s latent motherly feelings are awakened by Rapunzel’s nightmare and her pain: “She held me till I slept, whispering in my ear all the names of the herbs” (88). This is important because, although “she had so little to say” (85), the mother soothes Rapunzel as one would a baby. Their silent embrace is magical in that the physical contact is a comfort and sign of love. Yet their words have power too. It is said that “The woman was my store of knowledge, my cache of wisdom” (85). She fuels Rapunzel’s desire to learn about magic and so demonstrates another kind of enrichment, nurture, or love. Still, Rapunzel refuses to submit to the mother’s authority and “trusted nothing but stone” (89) because she knows that “The woman who built [the tower] was not my mother” (84). Any glimmers of love are extinguished by the witch’s deception and the inconsistency in her expression of feeling for Rapunzel. Chapter 1 spoke of how cultures worldwide have certain expectations of parents as archetypal nurturers, something which is absent or barely present in this tale. Rapunzel’s nameless mother furnishes her with “shelled nuts and...roots” (87) and so thinks of her wellbeing, but a wealth of food cannot compensate for emotional poverty. Even on a mental level, their cohering moral philosophies and shared love of agriculture— “She taught me you only have the right to kill a creature when you know its names and ways” (85)—are immaterial to Rapunzel because their contact is transient. This is why Rapunzel makes the following emotionless announcement: “No mother, nor nothing to me” (92).

The greatest and most unsettling revelation in this story is that the witch creates the prince by magic and engineers a purely fantastical and non-existent romance for Rapunzel so that they will have “peace” (96). However, it becomes clear that what the witch gives, she

also takes away. According to Rapunzel, the “prince was all I had imagined” (93). She even confesses that “like an answer to my songs he came...late one night” (91). Yet Rapunzel never accepts the prince—the man of her dreams—is a figment of her imagination, a libidinal fantasy, and is too good to be true. He comes to her rescue because he is literally extracted from her dreams, but Rapunzel takes for granted the prince’s spontaneous arrival and love for her because magic and love at first sight are commonplace in fairytales. The prince’s arrival ‘just happens’ and may be unnoticed by readers because it is supraliminal. The tale includes italicised verses on two separate pages that evoke classic fairytales and courtly romances. Readers see isolated stanzas that seem to exist in isolation from the rest of the narrative, and from each other. However, by assembling the lines, one detects the prince’s arrival, accompanied by sexual suggestiveness, and references to the power of nature: “Sprinkle him with lavender / Gird his throat with gold / For her royal lover rides to see her / On his charger so bold / Weave his shirt in one piece / Polish his silver horn / For he comes to bring ease / To his lady all forlorn” (91-92). The bawdy idea of polishing the prince’s silver horn connotes masturbation and a privileging of the phallus. His movements and bold steed can be read as prefiguring sexual intercourse, while the ‘ease’ he brings Rapunzel implies both sexual wish-fulfilment and a release of tension. How apt then that Rapunzel’s arousal during their first encounter echoes the fairytale poem: “his neck smelt of lavender” and she is charmed by his “royal horn” (96). But the prince is actually a persona adopted by the mother. She shatters his horn (a totem) and thereby destroys her own creation because she is envious of Rapunzel’s love for him, especially since Rapunzel agrees to wed the prince and consummates their union.

The destruction of the prince mirrors the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ in that his death occurs as a punishment for deflowering Rapunzel. The mother detests not only Rapunzel’s love of the prince but her ability to draw pleasure from another human. If she is not everything to Rapunzel, then Rapunzel can have nothing and can never leave her. Just as Mother Gothel

blinds the prince, the smashing of the horn signifies a castration—the loss of the phallus—and the smashing into pieces of patriarchal power. Nonetheless, the patriarchal ideologies found in this fairytale seem indestructible, for Rapunzel internalises and never lets go of a desire to overcome her lack by finding and wedding a prince: a desire absorbed from “stories [I] heard...of the moon and a prince and a ring” (90). The conventional institutionalisation, through marriage, of a human urge to attach is never repudiated or adapted by this tale. Rapunzel is expected to crave marriage above all else. But what if the prince is just make-believe? The witch asserts that Rapunzel has “never even seen a man”. Rapunzel says she “can imagine” (91) one, but this *supports* the argument that the prince, an idealised vision of masculinity, is a projection of Rapunzel’s romantic fantasies, as in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), where Aurora dreams of and later sees Prince Henry, who calls himself the man of her dreams. This is why the prince in ‘The Tale of the Hair’ never enters the realm of particularity. He dies as an abstract or general idea, as the adjectives Rapunzel chooses for the prince indicate: “His hand...strong as a willow...[T]he shirt on his back was clean as water. His voice was rough, but musical, and his lips against my cheek were soft as rabbits’ whiskers” (93). Rapunzel’s clichéd, derivative, almost parodic descriptions bring to mind Mills & Boon novels *and* reveal her naïveté given their generality and lack of detail. Is this really the epitome of passion or a man for Rapunzel: tree-like hands, clean clothes, and soft, whiskery lips? Nothing is said of the prince’s face or body because Rapunzel has never seen a man before. If anything, Rapunzel merely repeats the elements outlined by the magical poem, such as the prince’s melodic voice, which recalls the throat girded with gold. Most telling is that, as Rapunzel tries “to pull off his hunting gloves...he held my hands still” (93). The prince does not allow the gloves to be removed and so stops Rapunzel from unravelling the fantasy and all associations attached to him. His body is never naked, seen, or reified. Rapunzel adds that she “sat like stone” (91) during their encounter and so does not touch him and prove his corporeality.

Indeed, when the prince allegedly takes control of the situation and kisses Rapunzel, she is frozen, insensate, and silent (like her tower). In the end, she sees that he vanishes because he never existed: “I had to remind myself that there was no prince” (98).

Rapunzel ultimately realises that she has been interpellated into a lesbian—as well as incestuous—romance, for the mother cannot sustain the fantasy of the prince forever as it is too painful for her. There is a troubling suggestion that she is not only jealous but enamoured of Rapunzel and so disguises herself as the prince in order to pursue her in the forest, echoing *As You Like It*. The intimations of intercourse mean that if the prince does not exist, Rapunzel loses her maidenhead to her mother (or not at all). Deception and a possible revelation of incest explain Rapunzel’s extreme reaction: “I threw the sharp fragments [of the horn] in her face, calling her witch, monster, carrion, all the words she ever taught me” (96). Negative labels and female archetypes are all invoked to hurt and shame the mother. Although the mother tells Rapunzel that “Everything...you know you have learned from me” (94), this wise woman becomes a canvas onto which dehumanising and demonising images of women are projected. The mother is incarnated as a Lilith figure when she makes another attempt to conceal the truth: “She put her cold leathery hands over my eyes. You see nothing, she said; you are helpless as a lamb still wet from the ewe” (95). The “leathery hands” are just like the prince’s gloves and are used to blind Rapunzel, who cries “I have given my days to keep you from loneliness” (95). Rapunzel declares that she sacrifices her life to keep the mother’s loneliness at bay, and is thus devastated by her treachery. While the mother says that she has “used up my years to keep you fed and warm” (95) and thus has satisfied Rapunzel’s basic human needs, Rapunzel cannot forgive the mother for bringing the prince into her life, only to kill him off.

A feminist message of achieving independence and having autonomy over one’s body is delivered after the prince is cut out of Rapunzel’s life. Rapunzel displaces her anger onto her hallmark feminine locks, which recall “gold thread” (90), and “realise[s] that my hair was

my own to do what I would with” (97). Her attitudinal change causes her to sever her plaits, form a “rope...like a giant snake”, and “let myself out the window” (97). Her rebellion makes her literally and emotionally “lightheaded” (97). She is giddy with excitement and free from the burden of her heavy hair. As in the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ and countless fairytale illustrations, Rapunzel is by the window, loosing hair with a character all its own. Her blonde plaits envelop her in the beginning of the narrative: “I felt its weight pulling at the back of my head; it lolled like curtains over my cheeks” (86). When Rapunzel struggles with losing the prince and her faith in the mother, she admits “I wept into my hair...until the plaits grew heavy and matted” (96-97). Rapunzel’s hair reflects her feeling of being weighed down by tears and depression. Her emotional state precipitates the cutting: “The small paring knife was slow in my hand but it sawed through the plaits one by one. I had never cut my hair before; I expected something like pain or blood, but all I felt was lightness, like a deer must feel at the shedding of antlers” (97). Beyond Rapunzel’s fixation with antlers (which recall her comb), one sees that rather than experience pain, her loss is unexpectedly freeing. Indeed she uses the plaits to escape. While she initially echoes her predecessors by “lean[ing] out the window and let[ting] down ...a rope...woven of old rags” (90), she no longer waits for a prince to come and free her.

At the same time, however, blindness and unfulfilled longing drive the finale of the tale and accentuate the void that captures the lives of the mother and Rapunzel. Perhaps the darkness symbolises the way that human wants and needs (such as the need to attach) can become all-consuming or obsessive. After all, attachment is not always a happy thing and need not lead to a Happy-Ever-After. This is reflected by the telling of the story and the way characters are depicted. It transpires that the witch has pierced her eyes on the thorny trees and bushes below or has been blinded by the shards of the prince’s horn. This is a novel reworking of the traditional patriarchal plot in that her mother pays for her hubris. Still, as the prince is really the mother, both characters *are* technically punished. Mirroring the popular

refrain in the Grimm tale, readers hear that the mother “was at the base of the tower, sobbing. Let me in, she called hoarsely. Let me climb up your hair” (98). This scene is perhaps an actualisation of Rapunzel’s premonition of banging on the tower walls to be let in, and reflects a human fear of being shut out and denied protection from the world. Yet while the mother is isolated from Rapunzel, no quotation marks are used to divide the utterances of each character. Rapunzel mediates the speeches of all concerned, but they all blend into one, as if there are no separations. Marie-Louise von Franz has already argued convincingly that all characters in a given fairytale are aspects of a unified whole and abstract embodiments of the human psyche. The mother comes to embody the extremities of human feeling, through a blind rage that is necessitated by a fear that she has lost Rapunzel: “When she got to the top and [...] the empty room, there was a wail like an animal in a trap” (98). In her primal state, she resembles the wolves that terrify Rapunzel, and the blind mole to which Rapunzel likens herself. The mother is asked “Can you see?” (98), but she despairs: “What does it matter? The hedges may swell, the lavender may bloom, but it will all be wasteland when you’re gone” (98-99). Sightlessness and life are inconsequential compared to the loss of Rapunzel. Demeter and Persephone are invoked by the fructifying lavender and the expulsion from a home that is now a wasteland. They remind readers there is a human need for a home, but this home is plunged into darkness by loss. Where Demeter punishes the earth after Hades steals Persephone away to the underworld, the mother loses her sight and Rapunzel, who is the sole meaning in her life. Losing both is tantamount to death.

Attempts to recover what has been lost are ultimately ambivalent, for Rapunzel is as blind as her mother. Like an infant trying to latch on to its mother’s breast, Rapunzel declares “I felt my way along her body to her face; her eyes were shut, wet with what I thought was tears until I tasted it. I picked the thorns from her lids” (98). A transition from sight to touch ends with the mother scrambling around in the dark to feel “my head, the short damp hair” (98).

At this stage the departure from the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ is greatest because there is uncertainty that Rapunzel’s tears are a panacea for the mother (not the prince): “I took her head on my chest and wept over her, salt in her wounded eyes. It was the only way I knew to clean them. I didn’t know whether they would heal” (99). This ending is heartbreaking as one is never sure of what happens—even in the last sentence—for the blind lead the blind inside the tower: “she [has] to learn the world from me now. We lay there, waiting to see what we would see” (99). The mother and Rapunzel stay together in the end, locked in a cocoon and a coffin: a site of waiting, transformation and loss. Rapunzel (in a role reversal) now assumes the function of primary caregiver. Is this undesired role why Rapunzel appears suicidal? Is Rapunzel now so raw, or so dead inside, that this is why she begins by speaking of a skull and a lack of hair? And does blindness make her less human by halting full access to human sensory experience? While such unresolved questions (and the open-ended conclusion) leave the story open to interpretation for readers, one is likely to leave the fairytale feeling unsettled. Susan Sellers might agree that Donoghue’s fairytales “critique established norms of femininity and alter the traditional power structures within and surrounding the[ir] narration” (Martin 2010: 7). However, Sellers also argues that despite the “feminist” message (Sellers 2001: 98), the stories are full of “uncertainty” (102) and require closure. This is because Donoghue “indicate[s]” a “solution” or “alternative” (106) to patriarchal ideologies, without actually defining one.

Donoghue resists tendencies, evident in moral fables such as ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’, to announce a moral and to portray alternative and transgressive lifestyles as guaranteed pathways to Happy-Ever-Afters. At the same time, Donoghue rejects socially approved life scripts through alternative modes of living that embrace multiplicity and difference. Rapunzel’s ‘incestuous’ union with Gothel is certainly different, but the account of it is not wholly condemnatory. Perhaps being blind can allow her to ‘see’ beyond gender, normality, and the physical body. Aptly, the narrator in Donoghue’s ‘The Tale of the Rose’ (speaking

back to Broumas) also falls for a mother figure. Whilst an understanding of sexuality is not always a given or achievable, pluralised sexualities and identities are implied by her words “This was a strange story, one I would have to learn a new language to read, a language I could not learn except by trying to read the story” (39). For Rapunzel to read this lesbian language (‘an alphabet beginning with O’), she must live it. Her use of the past tense implies that she is now knowing, ‘sees’, ‘re-views’, and understands the path she has chosen.

Re-viewing continues when Rapunzel speaks to the next fairytale character and hears her tale. When ‘The Tale of the Hair’ ends at the base of the tower, there is a sense of a never-ending story, for Gothel recounts her life as a girl—seemingly based on Gerda in ‘The Snow Queen’. Vitally, Rapunzel and Gothel are outside, elsewhere, and step outside of the tradition of exchanging one tower for a prince’s castle. Equally, Donoghue’s Cinderella leaves not with a prince but the fairy who led her to self-actualisation. She knows how she is “meant to behave”, and that “girls are meant to ask for” a man at the palace ball. However, she learns that she has internalised patriarchal ideals: “Nobody made me do the things I did...[but] the shrill voices were all inside [my head]. Do this, do that, you lazy heap of dirt” (2). Such thoughts necessitate a feminist dialogue and turning over of received ideas, without offering confident resolutions.

Emma Donoghue has featured heavily here because ‘The Tale of the Hair’ does not plot a neat progression from one state or theme to another. A messy co-existence of different wants and needs is all that remains. This is true to the complicated reality and the varying life experiences and needs of both Rapunzel and the mother, as well as the irresolvable tensions and overlaps within and across (unstable) categories—old and young, feminism and patriarchy, homosexual and heterosexual. In ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’, memes dutifully succeed one another (though these memes are possibly treated ironically or parodied). There is an initial situation, specifically a lack of money, followed by a conflict that triggers a need for escape, and finally a neat ending where desires for fame, fortune, and perhaps attachment are made possible by

joining forces with the media. No such clear path is followed in ‘The Tale of the Hair’. It has characteristic feminist concerns and implied messages about the possibility and desirability of transformation, but the motif of lack persistently returns and cannot be dispelled magically. Missing here is the feminist confidence of the moral fable, or feminism as a moral fable, in which ‘woman’ is simply located as the site of replenishment and renewal.

Marina Warner: ‘The Difference in the Dose: A Story After ‘Rapunzel’ (2010)

anything could be a poison if given in the wrong dose...[I]n this case it’s parsley juice – and in the first versions of the fairytale ‘Rapunzel’ the witch’s brew is parsley – and the name of the little girl in French and Italian versions means ‘little parsley girl’. It suddenly struck me – and this is very much my argument about fairy tales – they are about women’s things that are being discussed in a kind of code.

(Marshall 2009: Web)

Marina Warner—CBE, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, literary critic, historian, mythographer, fairytale scholar, and author of over thirty books—has dedicated her long and prestigious career to feminism in literature and other art forms. ‘The Difference in the Dose: A Story After ‘Rapunzel’ (2010) resembles ‘The Tale of the Hair’ because it also withholds a definite closure and a hallmark fairytale ending. These are both ‘post-fairytales’ in that the initial situation (lack) is protracted, and threatens to engulf other memes or motifs that normally take characters and readers away from lack and towards quests that bring hope and maturity. Lack is the overarching meme (even if human attachments are formed, they are all broken). Both tales end not with happy-ever-afters but in uncertainty and ask readers to ‘wait and see’.

Warner’s tale is read as feminist here because it involves two females who undertake a searching (international) quest for a biological mother, and who find self-knowledge after they reject the patriarchal authority embodied by an abusive husband. To have two women talk to one another, about something other than a man, signifies progress. But perhaps most encouraging for feminist readers is the tale ending not with a woman acquiescing to or wedding a man, but with self-reflection and the hope, albeit muted, of a positive female encounter. Released in the same year as *Tangled*, this tale first appeared in *Marvels & Tales* alongside

Warner's article 'After 'Rapunzel''.²⁰ The multi-faceted title simultaneously connotes a story (a) named after or inspired by Rapunzel, (b) in search of Rapunzel, (c) that moves on from or leaves Rapunzel behind: a post-Grimm fairytale set in the future. The Grimm 'Rapunzel' is now translated into a contemporary Madison Avenue penthouse—among other settings.²¹ The modernisation and change of characters further imply a revamp or a post-Rapunzel tale, for it opens not with Rapunzel but Daisy (a long-haired ten-year-old) and her mother, Bella. Besides the shifts in focalisation, the almost poetic use of the white space on the page turns the story into a canvas that allows for different, often whimsical, imaginings—as seen on the second page of the story, where Daisy speaks with her mother of having never known her “nanna” (317): a missing part of her identity. A solemn discussion of her absence is punctuated by humorous ideas—all indented and placed in a list—about cravings during pregnancy:

There's a pause as both picture this craziness. Then Daisy's mother goes on:
 “In some cases we want other things, we want:
 coal dust from the scuttle
 the colouring bits inside colouring crayons
 mud and silt from puddles in the road
 mustard and horseradish and ginger
 soap powder and shampoo
 beetles and eggshells and...”

(Warner 2010: 318)

The ellipsis implicitly allows their whimsical exchange to continue off-page, in white space. It is evident to the reader here that Belladonna and Daisy have similar traits and perspectives. Their solidarity is clear when Bella has Daisy listen to “a story [that] will explain everything” (317). Incidentally, the calming words “And she begins” (317) recall the trademark question from *Listen With Mother*: “Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin”. It is possible to read things into the story that are not there, especially since the tale does *not* explain everything or give wholly satisfying answers, but the intertextual allusions seem well placed and are used to lull reader-listeners into an all-too-familiar ‘fairy-story-telling’ mode.

²⁰This article offers insights into Rapunzel's roots and contends that fairytales “encode a deal of experience and knowledge from among the usually unnoticed and the voiceless groups—women, children, and the poor”. Marina Warner, ‘After 'Rapunzel''. *Marvels & Tales* 24 (2010): 329-335 [329].

²¹Towers are mentioned in this tale but are not prominent, again implying, in some senses, a post-fairytale story.

Bella's story-within-a-story seems familiar and reveals aspects of her personal history, yet it challenges the Grimm 'Rapunzel'. Her term *la voglia* isolates her deep-seated, "irresistible" and "unstoppable" (318) craving for herbs when pregnant. She undermines the influence ascribed to the witch in 'Rapunzel' (1812-1857), for the psychological and medical lexicon here and elsewhere in the tale explains urges in pregnancy as "aberrant fantasies of a mind unbalanced by endocrinal urges" (318) rather than sorcery. This feeds into the above idea that this is a post-Grimm and perhaps a post-fairytale fairytale, for while there is still the pleasure to be had from the experience of stories and storytelling, there is no longer a need for anything supernatural. And yet while magical feats do not occur in this short story, the focus on nature and herbal lore harks back to the magical elements of the Grimm 'Rapunzel'. Rarely does one see in fairytales a (likeable) female celebrity, yet Charis Merryll, the best-selling horticulturalist author of *The Difference in the Dose*, is beloved because she rejuvenates the "granite city" with geographical zones of herbs that can "poison" and "heal" (324). This latter-day Fairy Godmother demonstrates that "The only difference between a poison and a remedy is the dose" (317). Her emphasis on balancing measurements conjures up the important ways in which characters are connected to nature and how it can affect their everyday lives. Indeed, "a comfortable pregnancy" or a "miscarriage" depends on "a level teaspoon or a heaped one" (324). Herbs can heal or kill, as is true of the plant belladonna: a mild sedative in small doses, but also a deadly poison.

The names of the characters link all of the characters to nature. Charis is the name of a Greek Grace, associated with nature, beauty, and fertility; Belladonna is most commonly known as deadly nightshade; Daisy suggests daisy chains and femininity; and Piero, which is the Italian equivalent of Peter, means rock. However, readers are denied a sense of how nature is being used in this story and are uncertain as to Charis's motivations in dedicating her life to her gardens. It is true that she brings plants to urban areas where the people have lost contact with nature. In this sense Charis becomes a wise woman and healing figure—who is still at one with nature (and literally down to earth) despite living in a lavish

penthouse, at a remove from her public. And yet readers are not given access to Charis's books and so are denied the herbal knowledge and wisdom these books impart.

'The Difference in the Dose' itself has an allusive quality, for the Rapunzel memes it employs and reworks are vague and difficult to extract. Much of the tale hints at subtext and bitter resentments that have been harboured for years, without attaching them explicitly to any obvious Rapunzel motifs. Similarly, though Warner scatters one or two allusions to maiden-in-the-tower fairytales throughout the story, beyond the literary references that might imply that this tale follows the structures of fairytales, this is not a joined-up, linear narrative. Readers are denied the full story; hence much is unknown or unsaid. This unknowability (which leaves characters insecure) is reflected by the absence of contexts for the characters. This is made more confusing by speeches and scenes that occur randomly and which provoke conjectural analyses, for the narrative teases readers with facts and human motivations but ultimately withholds them. Perhaps this is a gesture of (partial) verisimilitude, given that one cannot always understand the motivations of one's own actions. Frequent shifts in focalisation from first to third person also echo the cluttered complicatedness of everyday human existence and cause the stories to bleed into one another. The manner of narration is thus unlike the other stories (*Zel* included), for readers enter one character's consciousness and past, only to be taken away suddenly. This all heightens the vagueness, the mystery, and leaves plot arcs incomplete for readers. Such textual strategies contrast with some of the other more 'closed-off' texts examined in this chapter. One example of the unfenced nature or texture of this tale sees Charis find her adopted seventeen-year-old daughter, Belladonna, in her penthouse "tower" (319), in flagrante with her naked older lover, Piero, who is Charis's current partner:

She pulled off the sheets—and she saw Piero flung down on his front with nothing on (though she didn't yet know who he was), she saw only a man, a fully grown man with hair on his legs and his buttocks, too, and even on his back, an old man. She realised that he was one of her circle of friends, a man she knew, a successful

businessman with a string of wig makers, costumiers and hire shops, a man almost her own age, someone she had found amusing, pleasant, clever at business, but not, absolutely not...not for her child, not like this, not to sleep with her. Rage began breaking her open, letting fly a swarm of demons. He was lying with one arm over the body of her daughter. His right hand was plunged into her hair, and she was still in a party dress—and one of her own best outfits, Charis realized—though it was all undone and messed up around her. So without even knowing what she was doing, she grasped him by the shoulder and began hitting him as her tears started pouring down.

(Warner 2010: 320)

Charis is trying to work things out in her head here. She finds it unthinkable that her husband and daughter would betray her, but finds herself falteringly having to think the unthinkable.

The shocking nature of the discovery clearly lends itself to ‘shocked’, disoriented expression, but the story in general evokes a sense of the incomprehensible or difficult-to-comprehend.

At the same time, however, age-old motifs occasionally come to the surface or are hinted at.

For example, Charis’s sense of betrayal is expected, for Piero owns “a string of wig makers, costumiers and hire shops” (320) and thus is associated with theatre and artifice. As Charis

pulls off the bed sheets, it is as if the theatre curtain is being lifted to reveal the sexual

performance, with Piero performing the role of predatory older lover (the big bad wolf).

This highly charged scene sees a crying Charis instinctively grasp Piero and hit him, possibly

out of a maternal need to protect Bella. Significantly, the above incident also recalls Jack

Zipes’s argument (in Chapter One) that the majority of real-life child abuse is committed not

by a wicked stepmother (as it is—conventionally—in fairytales) but by a stepfather.

This revelation of infidelity leaves Charis furious with Piero and her daughter for obvious reasons—their romantic attachment is at best unusual and at worst perverse. And yet there is a sense of mystery because neither the reader nor the characters themselves can fully understand their drives and motivations, such as why or if Bella loves Piero. The characters delve into their own pasts, as in *Zel*, and the narrative does give the reader access to one character’s thoughts and past in each scene. However, because the tale is brief and shifts from inside one character’s head and perspective to another, things are thought but are left unsaid in a tantalising way. Bella especially is resentful, having never had a discussion about her

ancestry or her father. One then wonders if Bella makes love to Piero because of genuine romantic feelings or to punish Charis for neglecting her, in which case this becomes a sexual revenge narrative. Piero also hurts Charis with a retaliatory blow and recriminatory remarks: “You don’t deserve Bella [you] dried-up old bitch” (321). He refers to her so-called “mothering” as a “lie” because she has “only ever wanted [a] big career...you don’t know anything about being a mother” (321). By attacking Charis for being a careerist, and by calling her absent from Bella’s life, the ever-present Piero feeds into anti-feminist ideas of ideal women being cookie-cutter housewives. He also positions himself as a panacea by creating for himself the unsettling triadic role of husband, lover and parent. Explanations for such a role are absent yet desired by the reader, especially since Piero is seen possessively “fastening [Bella] to him as if she were now his baby” (321). This patriarchal poisoning of female relationships denies Charis and Bella contact and erects Piero as Bella’s sole parent. Although Bella is seventeen, Piero’s conception of her as a baby (and as *his* possession) jars with his sexual feelings towards her. Equally shocking is that his treatment of the infantilised and romanticised Bella causes her to hate her mother and to indulge and perhaps share his near-incestuous feelings. Piero thus embodies what Warner calls a “traditional warning against the appeal of passing wolves” in ‘Rapunzel’ because Bella (Rapunzel) is seduced by this ravenous male. As Warner argues in *Scheherazade’s Children: Global Encounters with the Arabian Nights*, “Rapunzel...self-absorbedly wait[s] around to be rescued” because such “mythical females of the West could not be smart [...] caring, sexy, and beautiful all at once. If they were caring and smart, they were sexless...If they were beautiful, they were simpering. If they were wise, they were shrivelled” (Warner 2013: 398). One then wonders if Warner is allowing Bella to be manipulated, or if she is using her to challenge traditional gender roles by exploiting the ‘passing wolf’ for her own ends: to escape with but subsequently leave him.

If Bella sleeps with her stepfather to punish her mother, then it is possible that this scenario is fuelled by reality never matching up to Bella’s romantic vision of motherhood. There seems to exist in Bella’s head a psychological idealisation of her attachment to Charis,

which is born out of a desire for a perfect bond; but there is no such thing as a perfect mother, and real mothers cannot live up to fantasies, even in fairytales. For Marie-Louise von Franz, all children face “the tragedy of separation...thrown out of Paradise” and feel a “shock of incompleteness [on] discovering that something perfect has been forever lost” (von Franz 1996: 60). Bella herself feels incomplete, and is conscious of being raised singlehandedly by Charis, who Bella calls “all haggard and witchy...with her long white hair in a frizz” (323). Embarrassment over her age and appearance leads Bella to insist that Charis refrain from collecting her from school. Bella possibly constructs fantasies about Charis and herself that Charis cannot live up to in the flesh. And perhaps this is why she eventually finds solace in the arms of Piero, a strong flesh-and-blood individual.

Bella relinquishes her fantasies when Charis discovers the incestuous union with Piero. This life-changing event causes Bella to verbalise her “pent-up hatred” in the penthouse and vent her greatest anxiety: “You took me from my family. You stole me from my real mother. You thought you could buy me...I am not a slave” (321). Bella knows she was adopted but knows not of her origins and so hints once more at a Freudian (fairytales) romance and dreams of being rescued by her true parents. She asserts her identity and refuses to be a slave or a commodity but she does not expand on what this means in the context of her life. Does she see herself as a kind of doll or pleasure object for Charis? Is she overworked and tasked with maintaining the apartment building? And is she neglected? Such questions are glossed over, but intriguing here is that Bella perhaps unknowingly inserts her adoptive mother into the role of wicked stepmother, and sees herself as a slave. She surely envisions herself as a Rapunzel or a Cinderella, locked away forcibly in an urban tower, but also in a tower that is invisible. Metaphorical towers imply entrapment, and the characters in Warner’s tale are trapped by something unseen, such as their pasts. The references to their troubled history create distance and leave the characters semi-stranded. Readers cannot get at the characters, at least not in a meaningful way, just as the characters cannot reach each other or connect. An invisible tower might symbolise and gratify calls for isolation and safety, but its protective (psychological)

walls might also prevent the fulfilment of a call for human contact. Charis reaches out to Bella but she is stifled and hurt when she is attacked as a mother. She feels cut off from Bella (as implied by her pauses), hence she escapes into her past and thinks of her reproductive history and how much her life has changed (and is changed by her fertility or lack thereof):

In those days, I was so hoping for a child. The streets seemed to me to be crowded with nothing but women displaying their bumps, their navels pertly stuck out like a nipple, the parks teeming with young mothers with Walkmans dangling from their ears, pushing strollers [...] But I, I had had abortions in earlier days when it seemed that every time I went to bed with someone it happened even if I was doing everything to prevent it. Then, when I wanted to have a baby, when I had established my business and had the books done and dusted [...] it stopped happening. Alfred couldn't take my wanting one so much—it wore him out, my crying. It cut him out.

(Warner 2010: 321)

Charis contemplates but cannot be like the women around her. She once saw motherhood as a trap and as a barrier to achieving her goals of entrepreneurial success. Indulging her sexual desires with men has led her to have numerous abortions, all so she could avoid the trend (stigma) of teen pregnancy. However, abortion has left her infertile. The irony of this cautionary tale is that she now wants a child more than anything, and that where Mother Gothel punishes the husband for stealing her herbs (a sin), here Charis pays for her own crimes (against nature?). Charis's struggle to achieve a career and family recalls an array of twentieth-century narratives (and real-life scenarios) in which women want to 'have it all'. Although Warner's story 'The Difference in the Dose' has been published in a so-called postfeminist age, not all of the goals of feminism have been realised by her characters, who still must contend with patriarchal authority. The mismatch between dreams and reality also triggers lack, regret, and causes the breakdown of Charis's marriage. Alfred is "cut out" by her crying because Charis's yearning for a baby undermines his masculine centrality, as does his implied impotence. His inability to satisfy Charis is connotative of lack and disconnection. History repeats itself when Piero weds and flees to Italy with Bella. That he steals the child (the Rapunzel equivalent) enables him to reassert his dominance. He even cuts Charis out of their life, and cuts all contact by blocking her telephone calls. The security of wealth that Piero affords Bella recalls the prince in 'Rapunzel', for Prince and Piero attempt to sever the

maternal bond, and so evoke the cutting of the hair. Again the heroine is forcibly isolated for her own safety by Piero, yet Bella defies him by searching for her birth mother with Daisy.

Bella implies that ‘Happy-Ever-After’ means knowing her mother—not living in a far and distant land (Italy). A battery of tests and legal documents unearth an address in “Danville, California” (325) *and* a photograph of “a thin-faced girl with a mutinous mouth and a back-combed bob” (325). This woman appears to be thirty but is in fact eighteen, aged by the stresses of life. The “mutinous” look on her mouth implies rebellion. Perhaps this is how Belladonna sees her mother, as strong and treacherous. Yet little is seen of Belladonna in terms of her appearance and hair. This is significant, for her daughter, Daisy, appears to be most similar to Rapunzel, given that her hair is “curly and thick and tangles easily” (317). Daisy’s hair does not drive men to sexual conquest and marriage but leads Bella to search for her family. When Bella combs Daisy’s hair, “a song swelled up between them” and Bella thinks of “the rift in the past and a way to heal it” (325). Bella imagines a multitude of hypothetical scenarios in which she and Daisy heal her biological mother. She envisions Daisy and her mother aglow with “golden light” and says that they collectively “beam out love and warmth, cherishing and sustenance. [T]he years of separation...dissolve” (327). Here the narrative seems to assimilate some second-wave feminist ideas, for this is a shared enterprise of overcoming the past and replacing lack and parental abandonment with healing. Echoing ‘Rapunzel’, Bella says the journey ahead “loom[s] tall as a tall tower...difficult to enter and...scale [and] with no doors or windows” (327). Bella undertakes this adventure because the voyage of discovery and even healing is central to her identity. She does not just desire but *needs* to know where she comes from and to form an attachment with her mother. Consequently, when Bella and Daisy “advanc[e] deeper and deeper into the countryside without a sign of human habitation” (327), they undergo a metaphorical movement into the unconscious and transition into another world: the womb. Readers hear that “On all sides” are “thick, rough pelt[s] of [thorny] shrub and undergrowth” (327). As they enter her mother’s garden, with the aid of a Sat-Nav device (technology tantamount to a magic object), Bella is driven forth by the smoky voice of her mother, whose uncanny words “Who is it?” hurt her

stomach: “She does not recognise that voice. Yet she knows it” (328). The mother actualises Bella’s dreams by shining a gold light on herself and Bella. A homecoming at the end of the journey is implied by Bella taking that final step, and connotes a return to the Great Mother:

“I’ve come to see you. It’s been a long time,” begins Bella into the intercom. “I don’t know you,” says the voice. “Come nearer the camera. Intruders aren’t welcome here”. They drive over the rumble of a cattle grid and into a twisting drive, fringed with the same dense ranks of dark trees...At the end of the drive they can now see the house...in the woods, encircled with a palisade, and in the doorway, a tall figure silhouetted against the room behind, holding a torch with the beam pointed [at] them. Bella takes Daisy tightly by the hand and walks toward the house, following the slice of light the beam cuts into the path.

(Warner 2010: 328)

Rather than indulge in clichéd sentimentality, the reader is instead left in suspense as Bella grips her child’s hand and makes her way towards her biological mother. The mother is not yet concretised but remains ethereal. Rather than a quantifiable woman, she is still a disembodied voice and a silhouette (an abstract fantasy and a collective symbol). What is fascinating here is that the tale ends with the two central women being written into and embarking on an adventure (in the New World), and that they enter and seek to free the grandmother from a physical and symbolic tower, where she isolates herself from the world. The tale utilises the liberatory potential in ‘Rapunzel’ and seems to end with a final message of hope. This uplifting revision of a traditionally antifeminist tale accounts for Zipes’s thesis in *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* that Warner’s work is intent on “restoring creative power to women as strong protagonists and authors of their own lives” (Zipes 2000: 545).

But perhaps matters are not as clear-cut as one might hope. There is an implied sadness and feeling of emotional detachment in the style of writing.²² Though Bella looks forward to meeting her mother, she does not know her; and given that this grandmother appears to have retreated into the heart of the forest, without explaining why—or why she has decided to live without her daughter, the suspicion arises that she does not want to be saved.

²²Sara Maitland’s ‘Rapunzel Revisited’ (1988) matches this sense of lack, emptiness, and abandonment and the avoidance of worldly responsibilities. It has “no plot, no narrative” (191), other than Rapunzel returning to her silent tower, which connotes seclusion and a space for reflection. This multi-layered yet directionless reworking teases readers with a narrative, plays with the form of the fairytale by italicising and isolating information, and echoes ‘The Difference in the Dose’ by listing questions that are never asked.

To live in a solitary house in a forest suggests a desire to be cut off from the world and to go back to nature (or a version of it in the form of an uncluttered bucolic existence). Or else it implies a desire to hide and seek shelter among the trees. It is possible that the ‘tower’ is for the biological mother a symbol of protection, as in ‘The Tale of the Hair’. She is guarded by fences and cattle grids, looks at visitors through a security camera—further signs of a desire for protection—and announces through an intercom that “Intruders aren’t welcome”. Her use of technologies typically sold as ‘security devices’ thus implies physical or mental distancing. In the beginning, the tower meant enforced security (and still might), but does the mother want to stay in the tower, perhaps to avoid taking on worldly responsibilities? And what, if anything, is she hiding? Riches? Possessions? Herself? It is not even confirmed whether Bella reveals herself to be the daughter of this woman, just as readers are denied an account of their actual reunion. These are but a few instances of how the tale draws readers in—leaves them wanting more—and, at the same time, reaches towards the complexity of a fairytale novel (as a case in point, the following analysis concerns Donna Jo Napoli’s novel *Zel* (1996)).

Both ‘The Tale of the Hair’ and ‘The Difference in the Dose’ estrange the ‘typical’ working through of Rapunzel motifs and memes. These post-fairytale fairytales also present Rapunzels and other protagonists who are often isolated from one another. Where second- or third-wave feminist Rapunzels manage to combine a focus on self with a focus on solidarity, the characters in Warner’s story seem more broodingly and complexly inward looking. The creation of individualised psychological complexity is also one of the key achievements of Napoli’s *Zel*. There *is* a movement out from the personal to the more general, but the representative function of fairytale characters is not as obvious as it is in other Rapunzels.

Donna Jo Napoli: *Zel* (1996)

Fairytale novels represent a growing trend in literature, as evidenced by the New York Times Number One Bestseller *The Land of Stories* trilogy (2012-2014) by Chris Colfer, and Terri Windling's *The Fairy Tale Series*, which consists of fairytale reworkings by acclaimed writers such as Jane Yolen and Tanith Lee. From *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) onwards, novelisations of classic fairytales (a play in the case of J.M. Barrie) have become a mainstay of children's literature in the twentieth and twenty-first century, perhaps by virtue of charting a young protagonist's struggle for self-knowledge, departure from home, transformation through adventure, and Happy-Ever-After. Donna Jo Napoli's corpus feeds into this tradition and focuses on ancient myth and fairytales to chart the growth of her heroes. The fairytale novels penned by this professor of linguistics include *The Magic Circle* (1993), *Spinners* (1999), and *Beast* (2000), and have won Napoli a multitude of accolades, such as the Society of Children's Books Writers and Illustrators' Golden Kite Award, and the Parents' Choice Gold Award. Depth and complexity are manifested in Napoli's work by her characters' life-changing crises and complications, whilst a drive towards simplification and clarification is evident in hard-won resolutions that impart seemingly universal moral messages.

The universals enlisted by Donna Jo Napoli's *Zel* (1996) are ones to which Rapunzel reworkings return frequently, but they are more intensively and complexly specified to the individual than in, say, 'Rapunzel's Revenge', as the book précis implies: "Based on the fairytale *Rapunzel*, the story is told in alternating chapters from the point of view of Zel, her mother, and the prince, and delves into the psychological motivations of the characters". Besides the misassumption that Count Konrad is a prince, which implies that the publishers could not escape their own memories of 'Rapunzel', the explicitly psychological focus expands the Grimm 'Rapunzel', for Napoli invests characters with psychological depth.

John Stephens argues in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature* that *Zel*:

not only represents Rapunzel and her aristocratic lover as focalising characters, but frames the novel as the Witch's first-person narration. The capacity to present other or multiple perspectives dismantles simplistic good-evil dichotomies and foregrounds the conflicting desires of the characters. Such narrative strategies enable a text to rework relationships grounded on gendered or other hierarchies and to renegotiate the ideologies and values inherent in those hierarchies. (Stephens 2009: 96)

The shifts in focalisation give silenced women voices—whereas the Grimms “removed direct speech from women and gave it to men” (Bottigheimer 1987: 53)—and represent a feminist dismantling of gender hierarchies in *Zel*. The protagonists' tales reveal different perspectives, thought processes, and views of each other. Indeed, instead of a ‘flat’ witch, the mother offers a searching account of *why* she kidnaps Zel and aches to form a relationship with her, and why she must use magic to do so. Her heartrending decision to make a bargain with evil forces is explained when Zel is pregnant, and almost drives her insane: “Oh, God, what savage trick you played, to pick for barrenness a woman who couldn't bear to exist without a child” (205). The mother's emotive and thought-out back-story elicits sympathy, for this former seamstress is not born as but *transforms into* a witch to overcome her infertility. Her first-person narrative reveals her resentment towards her childbearing sisters, and how a voice from within tells her that she *can* have children, but only if she “persuade[s] her daughter...to join the...devils” when she turns sixteen (128). Her telling, lengthy internal dialogue divulges a competition between her Christian values (fear of Hell) and a need to be “Mother and Zel. Forever” (19). Though wracked with guilt and wondering if her internal voice is a delusion, “she needed to be Mother...with every drop of blood, every bit of flesh, every hair [and] breath of her body” (126-127). Her feelings are not explicitly collectivised but personalised and specific, even as her story, akin to the others, reaches towards more general significance.

For example, each character's story has a common trajectory. That they each unmask intersexual inequalities and champion the loving bond between mothers and daughters, and between men and women, underscores the novel's feminist ambitions—as does the mother's talk of lutes that, as with fairytales, pass from mother to daughter with a sense of “history” (15). Each sex seeks equality and contests longstanding gender constraints imposed by patriarchy. Conny Eisfeld in *How Fairy Tales Live Happily Ever After: (Analysing) the Art of Adapting*

Fairytales says that “By giving the once...blank prince a name and attributes...beyond handsome and kind”, *Zel* makes “the fairytale that used to centre on a mother-daughter conflict...more balanced towards gender-equality” (Eisfeld 2014: 52). The peasant girl, *Zel*, leads Konrad to reject patriarchal customs and the bride his father approves. His stargazing mother aids him by decreeing that Konrad “is destined ...to make his own choice” (73). The father yields to his wife because “the stars determine” everything (73) and because of the strength of her arguments. At the level of the structure of the novel, the sense of human lives having pre-given shapes is suggested through the separation of its thirty-one chapters into eight parts, entitled: (1) ‘The Gift’, (2) ‘Rejection’, (3) ‘Lonely’, (4) ‘Obsessed’, (5) ‘The Kiss’, (6) ‘Love’, (7) ‘Departure’, and (8) ‘Reunion’. The progression from one motif to the next implies that all characters and human beings experience each universal or psychological landmark linearly. At the same time, *Zel* embraces variation and individuality by showing how these motifs play out in complex ways in the lives of particular individuals.

Zel is multi-faceted, but the mother curtails readers’ access to her thoughts and feelings. Even when *Zel* “feels absorbed by the throng of people” (11) in town, the mother ensures her interactions are brief and depthless, lest they imperil the “unity of Mother and Daughter” (13). And yet the mother briefly abandons *Zel* to test her loyalty. Her words “As I leave *Zel*...I feel a sharp loss...I am sacrificing our wholeness” (13) imply a fear of being alone and unloved. That *Zel* mirrors these feelings of lack reaffirms their love, at the same time as it precipitates an urge for “adventure” (13). To silence *Zel* and her urges, and distract her from the town’s cultural expectation of her marrying a man, the mother employs food as a pleasurable surrogate attachment for *Zel*, and declares “I will indulge her small desires” (19).

Part of this indulgence is a birthday dress for *Zel*, who is on the cusp of womanhood: “The girl’s body is already changing, and the dress must be cut to accommodate the changes as they exaggerate themselves” (17). Where the Grimm *Gothel* detests *Rapunzel* for reaching womanhood and for swelling during pregnancy, the mother accepts *Zel*’s breasts and adult body. This marks a shift in perspective and a movement towards a celebration of the female body. And yet this body is still placed in a dress to tie *Zel* to nature and accentuate her femininity.

Zel is given a “bodice and skirt [of] yellow cream, the colour of the first saxifrage blooms” (17). The mother adds emerald ribbons as this “is the colour of life and hope. Zel is these things” (18). Colour symbolism is important here but clothing is immaterial to Zel, who prefers to be skylad and unrestricted. This is reflected by her elaborate bodice, which is embroidered with “wings” that foreshadow her transformation. Indeed, “Zel moves...as though she flies” (50). How fitting that when her hair is cut, the “light-headed” Zel feels as if “she could fly” (202).

Zel’s romance with Konrad initiates a flight from the mother-daughter bond(age) and towards self-determination. Emblematising sexual maturation and connection to humans beyond her tower, the romantic attachment forces Zel to re-view her life and stifling mother. After making love, Zel refuses to “die slowly within [this tower]”. Konrad is certain that his “love will restore her” (181). But while he embodies “everything she could want” (201), Konrad patronises, objectifies and fetishises Zel, who feels “the urge to run” (25) from his implacable “gaze” (22). Mirroring the narrative gendering in previous variants, Zel is an object of his romantic and sexual desires *and* is idealised as the sought-after treasure that Konrad must obtain in order to prove his manhood and finish his initiation into patriarchy. By calling Zel “his true love...a miracle; she is woman” (180), her coming-of-age reads as a subsidiary of Konrad’s age-old urge for adulthood and sexual voyages. Even so, Zel follows “her own inclinations” (142) and fearlessly challenges the authority of men and women. Even her nakedness epitomises her hunger for sex, adventure, and drama; she challenges phallogocentric traditions and pursues an exciting life and thereby reawakens her love of life and re-energises her spirit. Despite the above-mentioned gender conflicts, Konrad and Zel are kindred spirits. As testimony of this, he shares her dreams and visions and “rides with Zel’s words in his mouth...His blood runs wild. This is what love is. This is what life is” (191).

Konrad and Zel both dream of a mare called Meta, which operates as a projection of and gateway to their mutual sexual desires. In one dream, “Konrad strips” (80) and watches a naked Zel lure Meta “away with an early fall apple” (81). Zel recalls Eve and The Fall *and* calls Konrad to sexual adventures, enticing him with promises of bodily pleasure. In another

sultry dream, Count Konrad “rid[es] through an orchard and find[s] Zel...in a tree...One leg dangles...smooth and hairless as the tree bark” (80). The rhythm of the steed and the swelling apples (breasts) link Zel with nature in an overtly sexual way, and so imply sexual congress. Indeed, where Konrad remembers “how Meta pressed against Rapunzel’s new breasts” (96), Zel thinks of “the smooth coat on the mare’s back”, and “is overcome with the urge to touch [Konrad’s] dimple” (87). Zel’s sexual awakening is apparent in her thoughts of Konrad: “Heat rises in Zel’s cheeks” (26) and “Something within her lurches...Her skin comes alive as she thinks of him” (47). Thus her words “Dreams are full of horses. And a youth” (155) imply that this Freudian fairytale does use animals to encode characters’ romantic fantasies.

Fertility and *infertility* are centralised by the image of a goose that sits on five rocks, thinking that they are her eggs; she is unaware that her mate has died and her eggs are gone. Mother Goose’s lifeless stone eggs are thus a false promise of growth. They symbolise death, stillbirth, and reflect the mother’s inability to bear a child, for all the mother gives birth to is a stone tower. Aptly, while the mother thinks that she is nurturing Zel, the kidnapped child, she is really just sitting *on* rocks, and later *in* a stone tower. The mother imprisons Zel, halts her growth, and even conjures a vine to hold the goose still until it accepts the egg Zel places in its nest. Her logic is that if the goose and chick accept each other, Zel can love her adoptive mother, who is so desperate to be loved that she uses magic: “When the babe was little, she nursed from my own breasts. I drank a brew my hands prepared from herbs...The milk flowed bluish and sweet” (139). This infant, whose full “name is Rapunzel” (83), is thus nurtured by nature.

Combing Zel’s “golden braids” (18) is the best expression of the mother-child bond. The mother talks of how she uses water to smooth Zel’s “curls” (3). This calming bedtime activity tames Zel’s chaotic hair, but it also hints at a need to control nature *and* the child. Zel’s hair is “strong as rope” but it hampers her and prompts suicidal thoughts in the mother, who sees the hair and has a “sudden urge to...twine it around my neck [like] a noose” (115).

Yet the mother refuses to let Zel cut it, even though Zel's own "neck hurts" as a result of her hair growing "unnaturally" "longer" and "heavier" every day (89). It only stops growing when "long enough to touch the ground", at which point the mother climbs the hair and makes "Zel's temples ache horribly" (157). The hair is therefore a ladder, as in previous variants. But Konrad himself climbs the "golden hair" and later "imagines the girl with her hair loose" (32) because it is, to him, a stairway to erotic pleasure and his first point of contact with Zel.

Haircutting is polyvalent in *Zel*. The mother removes Zel's long hair to mark the end of the mother-daughter attachment, to punish Zel's fertility and sexual transgression, *and* to try to abort the fetuses budding in Zel's womb. The mother cannot bear children and yet cannot "bear to exist without a child" (205); hence she is driven mad when she has a premonition of Zel's unborn "twins" (216) and their father. While the mother does everything to obtain Zel, destiny intervenes, for *Zel still* chooses romantic (sexual) adventure and escape over her mother. Zel also keeps her soul and golden tresses after giving birth, whereas the mother withers away. This is why the deranged and animalistic mother beats Zel and physically *bites* off her hair. Her savage act implies raw, emotional spontaneity and deep personal engagement. The mother does not cut the hair with cold metallic scissors—which physically distance her from Zel—but uses her mouth to eat away at and hurt Zel, as if cutting the umbilical cord: "She grabs Zel's braids and pulls her down. She clamps her teeth and rips" (201). The mother completes this 'abortion' by having "branches" reach "into the tower room...twisting around Zel's waist" (202). Besides constricting Zel and choking off the oxygen supply that nourishes her infants, the mother has the plants that she grows carry Zel away to an impregnable and barren desert.

Zel's psychological deterioration precedes her traumatic expulsion from the tower. While unsettling to read, it illuminates the mental deleteriousness of solitary confinement. This parallels 'The Tale of the Hair' and its blind Rapunzel, for Zel is after two years "reduced" to a mad and "raving girl [who] walks the precipice with eyes half closed" (185).

The mother places Zel in an ivy-covered stone tower, which evokes “an evergreen tree” (115) and Konrad’s dream. Here Zel is tricked into believing that unknown forces from the outside world will “kill you... We must protect you” (63). In order to play the role of hero-rescuer—and to be seen as all and everything to Zel, Zel is put in a round, bare “tower abandoned centuries ago. A safe place” (64). Its petrified wooden door at the base “does not budge” (66) and so keeps Zel “happy” (15-16). However, the mother still runs from Zel and her unbearable screams, for Zel believes she has been “betrayed” by her protector (200). Her anger translates into envy for her pigeon companion’s freedom. Zel uses her braid to catapult him as he outstretches his wings. Zel also hurls food outside and roars until the mother “slaps” her (173). Her bestial behaviour recalls a savage in an initiation hut in that she rubs her “spit” all over her body, convulses wildly, and frequently throws out of the four windows—and allows to accumulate around the immovable tower—“faeces”, “urine” and menstrual “blood” (150).

Blood permeates the tower as Zel feeds lice “blood from her tongue” (153) and kills them when denied her greatest desire: “Freedom” (175). Denial leads Zel to use “the sharp stone [to] dig trenches up... both arms [and] fill her room with blood” (149). Here the tower is a mental and physical cause of pain, and a way of *alleviating* that pain. Her monochromatic paintings on the tower walls are equally therapeutic. Her bleak art mirrors her disenchantment with the world (which loses its colour), yet Zel’s theriomorphic images of goats copulating enact her repressed sexuality: “Mother will not like this picture. She feels her blood heat [and] paints their billy goat mounting a nanny. [She] runs her hands down her body [and] digs her fingers in, leav[ing] the whitest of marks on each thigh” (159). As Zel is now naked (this is how she asserts her non-conformist female identity) and appears to masturbate, her abject art clearly excites her. It gives shape to her madness, her feelings for Konrad, and has personal and collective resonances as a mechanism for the expression of a need to attach and to have sex. Consequently, while Zel’s art hints at a collective unconscious—a ready-made

store of ideas—and implies that “she harbours secrets even she cannot be allowed to know” (89), its *personal* meanings are clear to Zel and lead her out of her insanity.

Three years later the reader revisits Zel, who calls the desert “a thousand times better” than the “stone of the tower” (214) because she has had time to ruminate. The pain and joy of childbirth put everything into perspective. Zel (now a mother herself) accepts her mother’s love. Motherhood also eradicates all “urges she felt to self-destruct”, for her needs are superseded by those of her girls, who rely on her for sustenance. Zel finds closure or healing as a mother, “overcome with the ferocity of her love for these children” (218). Love revivifies her cosmos. As birth reinvests her world with colour, a need to attach is co-opted by Napoli in a way that presents motherhood as magical, transformative, healing. After all, her “madness stayed in that tower. She is here” (218). Creating life makes Zel feel present in the world and makes that world sparkle. A wise Zel now empathises with her mother because “She has lived need. And one in need can do the dreadful, the unthinkable—trade lettuce for a child, lock a child in a tower” (219). Zel has consequently overcome her mother’s ‘bad parenting’, and forgives her confession (a Freudian slip) that “Your mother loved [and] took my rapunzel. I took hers” (197-198). Motherhood brings Zel to a point of understanding, self-knowledge, acceptance: “She believes in life, in all its beauty and fragility. She has her daughters” (218).

Perhaps sacrifice is definitional of being a parent, but here it is used for feminist ends. In an earlier scene, this redemptive-against-the-odds tale sees the mother whip Konrad with Zel’s braids (in response to which he lunges at and tries to stab her) only for the mother to use her magic to make brambles rise and catch him as he falls from the tower, albeit blinding him. Unlike Grimms’ *Gothel*, this witch-mother becomes appreciative of the man who loves and is loved by Zel. Her acceptance comes when she sees Konrad’s dejected face and hears his primal scream. The mother is estranged by his reaction to Zel’s absence and so questions her need to have ever isolated Zel: “He is my soulmate—he loves my Zel. No! What have I done?”

The world is wrong” (207). These confusing words imply that the mother and Zel are one and the same, and that Konrad is her—their—soul mate. Her personal ‘re-viewing’ is arguably why “Mother save[s] his life” (220) by using the last of her own energy: “He lives. I die” (208). Her sacrificial death is necessary for the jubilant and healing reunion of Zel and Konrad.

The conclusion of the novel shows that both sexes are transformed. When Konrad and Zel embrace in the desert, Zel’s tears, “held back for more than five years”, touch and “transform...the man whose head is cradled in the woman’s arms” (227). Yes the healer *is* gendered as female and Rapunzel is again a mother-nurturer, but most pressing is that Konrad “absorbs” her “tears...full of life...they are now his own tears, and, yes, he can see” (227). This is salient because the final words of the novel are euphoric: “And they see each other, and yes, oh yes, we are happy” (227). Given that the mother has called Konrad *her* “soulmate”, her decision to end with the word “we” indicates that, with her last act, the mother lives on in and is assimilated by Rapunzel. Marie-Louise von Franz might add that all three characters are aspects of a psyche healed by an intensively personalistic (eye-opening) psychological call to adventure. *Zel* is consequently ‘fuller’, in some ways, than the other adaptations in this chapter, for it offers more insights, explanations and demonstrations of motivation. This is a departure from the uncertainties of ‘The Tale of the Hair’ and ‘The Difference in the Dose’. Yet while its memes (love, escape, attachment, and security) are spelled out by the chapter headings and the story, *Zel* still delivers complexity and enigma through the fragmentariness of its different focalisations and its concentration upon multi-faceted individual psyches. The following section also focuses on the creation of individualised identity in a text that at the same time moves dramatically away from conventional novelistic representation.

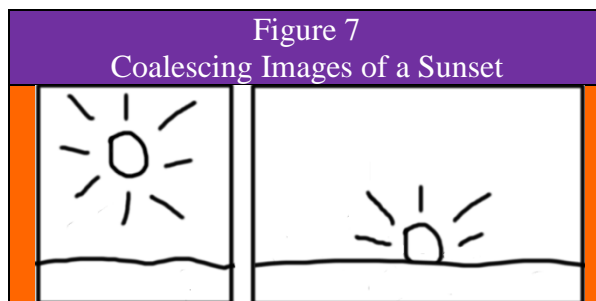
Shannon, Dean, and Nathan Hale: *Rapunzel's Revenge* (2008)

The final text in this chapter, a graphic novel, conspicuously mixes media in interesting ways to deliver a feminist message. While Rapunzel adaptations aimed at children have repeatedly used illustrations, the following example targets a variety of ages and is used to show how form affects the complexity or simplicity of fairytale memes, and how graphic fairytale novels can depict feminism in meaningful ways. A wave of 'all-female' comic books began in 1970 with *It Ain't Me Babe* (Fig. 1), as a counter-cultural reaction to the absence of women, and the perceived antifeminism in mainstream comic book publications (Booker 2010: 213). The underground comic book anthologies *Wimmen's Comix* (1972-1992) and *Twisted Sisters* are two examples of how graphic novels communicate issues ranging from lesbianism to feminism and politics, and exemplify why 'graphic novel' can imply rebellion and adventure. Their front covers alone contest images of women in tight clothing and provocative poses—bent over with arched heads and tossing their hair back, for male pleasure. A wave of cartoon super-heroines that save (and are not saved by) men also surged in the 1960s and 1970s, including She-Hulk, Mary Marvel, and Jean Grey. *Rapunzel's Revenge* is part of this legacy, for its Rapunzel uses her hair as a lasso, and so evokes the 'feminist' icon Wonder Woman and her (erotic) golden lasso. However, in James Blasingame's 'Interview with Shannon Hale about *Rapunzel's Revenge*' (2010), Shannon Hale stresses that "we [were] careful not to sexualise [Rapunzel], something far too common in comics. And we tried to avoid too much babe-ness by making her a pretty but not glamorous...redhead, instead of the traditional blonde princess look" (Blasingame 2010: 520). This Rapunzel is neither a damsel in distress nor a scantily clad object of male sexual desire. While her eye-catching fairytale does feature archetypal drawings of fierce Amazonian women who assert their female power by standing together and defeating or outsmarting men, beyond the fairytale-inspired drawings and stock images that tie feminism to physical strength, it suggests through thought-provoking captions that there are other ways of expressing and extending feminism, as this discussion will show.



Shannon Hale, a co-author of *Rapunzel's Revenge*, states that graphic novels—a term coined by Will Eisner in 1978 as a ‘serious’ alternative to comic—“have a cinematic quality ...but [are] so much better for the brain than just watching a movie. Your brain is putting ideas together, interpreting visual[s], assigning action to the white space between panels” (Hale, ‘Books: *Rapunzel's Revenge*’: Web). Graphic novels are challenging for fairytale readers and adapters. Although they solve the problem of telling stories pictorially, relatively little can fit or be said in the space of a comic book panel; hence one might query how pictorial fairytale adaptations can deploy (feminist) memes in anything other than a simplistic way. Hierarchies of value that privilege words over images might dismiss graphic novels, despite their complex language and reliance on the visual literacy or intensive focus of readers. However, for D. Aviva Rothschild, graphic novels “transcend ordinary art and text” given that “the eye flows naturally from element to element, creating a whole that a text-only book cannot match” (Rothschild 1995: xiv). Read left-to-right, in zigzag fashion, or from top to bottom, they create illusions of time and motion between or within panels. Pictures can contain many moments in time and form a chain reaction of events and times. The shape of

panels also determines length of time. Elongated rectangles imply long periods: shorter ones intimate a brief duration. Vivaldi, while *Rapunzel's Revenge* arranges each page (with rectangles and white spaces) in a way that seems obvious or thoughtless, the borders (gutters) are a form of visual punctuation that say where one image ends and another begins.



The two, separate, images, above (Fig. 7) demonstrate how readers fill in the gaps and see components of a sequence. The second image suggests a sunset, meaning that the contents of the first image have moved. Its longer rectangular border hints at a significant amount of time having elapsed. It moves the reader to a different time and draws on recognisable experiences that are observable in everyday life. Katie Trumpener argues in 'Picture-Book Worlds and Ways of Seeing' (2009) that all of the formal elements of graphic novels work together to generate meaning: fusing "images", "text", and the "physical layout" of the page to unite and appeal to "multiple senses", and to create a textual universe that resembles the real world (Trumpener 2009: 55). However dissimilar the images are, audiences are asked to consider them as a whole because the gutter causes the human imagination to transform separate images into a unified idea. There are no real rules for comprehending graphic novels, but, as Scott McCloud asserts in *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), even if there are only two sequential panels, each image gives the other a context and meaning, for an act of mental closure connects these moments and allows audiences to construct a coherent world (63). As meaning is found somewhere between the coalescing of images and words, graphic novels are thus far more complex than might be assumed, especially since they spur readers to engage more actively with the printed material, and because they depict human identities, relations, and interactions through their complex interplay of words and images.

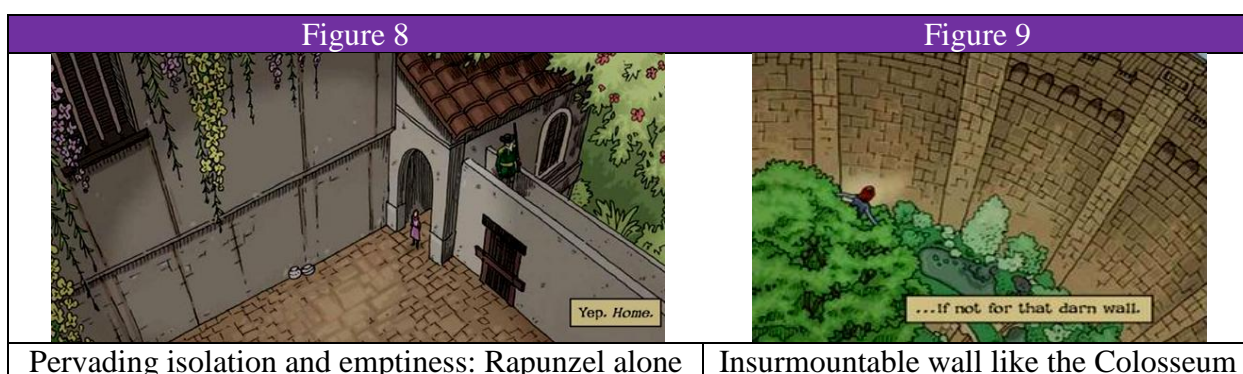
That said, the images in *Rapunzel's Revenge* resemble but also amplify their 'real-life' counterparts (humans, plants, planets) through simplification. Scott McCloud suggests that "stripping down an image to its essential meaning [allows] an artist [to] amplify that meaning

in a way that realistic art can't" (1993: 30). This means that while the drawings of characters' faces are smaller, less detailed, and flatter than an actual face, readers (unconsciously) project their identities onto inanimate cartoons because each image is so general that it can represent all faces. Perhaps readers see reflected in cartoonish faces the image they have in their mind's eye of themselves. Indeed, even when readers see two dots and a line inside a circle, there is a tendency to see it as a human face, however unrealistic. Equally true is that readers assign identities and emotions to images where they are absent, again perhaps reading themselves in the tale and imagining themselves in specific scenarios.

The visual storytelling in this feminist reworking augments the printed text and offers a thought-provoking focus on nature, home, attachments, and escape. It also melds genres and fairytales, such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and 'Goldilocks', and Wild West adventures. This generic mix creates multiple attachments, constraints, and calls to adventure, beginning in a villa and an enchanted tree, and moving to a desert, to Jack and the golden goose, and to Goldilocks and the Seven Dwarfs. Despite this proliferation of archetypes, quests, and urges, the Rapunzel meme pool is still decipherable. Crucially, Rapunzel fulfils the feminist hopes of 'The Heroine with a Thousand Faces: Universal Trends in the Characterisation of Female Folk Tale Protagonists' (2005) by usurping the role of hero, answering the 'call', escaping a confining world, undergoing initiation rites that transform her into a powerful heroine, and achieving an unfenced existence. As the artwork and Rapunzel's words illustrate, she learns the truth about her family, conquers all who deceive her, bests beasts, and gains praise and recognition (events categorised by Propp as male) on returning to her community.

Shannon, Dean, and Nathan Hale sacralise community in *Rapunzel's Revenge* but also champion Rapunzel's rugged individualism: an ideological variation on the free-floating yens for adventure and escape that underpin the Grimm 'Rapunzel'. Their image-driven tale begins "Once Upon A Tower" with a cinematic aerial shot of Rapunzel's home (Fig. 8). It is a place of safety, but Rapunzel feels trapped and empty. Her emptiness is reflected by the starkness and absence of people in the courtyard—reminiscent of a prison compound. A man with a gun guards the villa from his watchtower and patrols the perimeter, thereby suggesting that Rapunzel's movements and freedoms are restricted. Thus tensions arise between a need to be protected and a need to escape from being stifled or constricted. The barred windows and

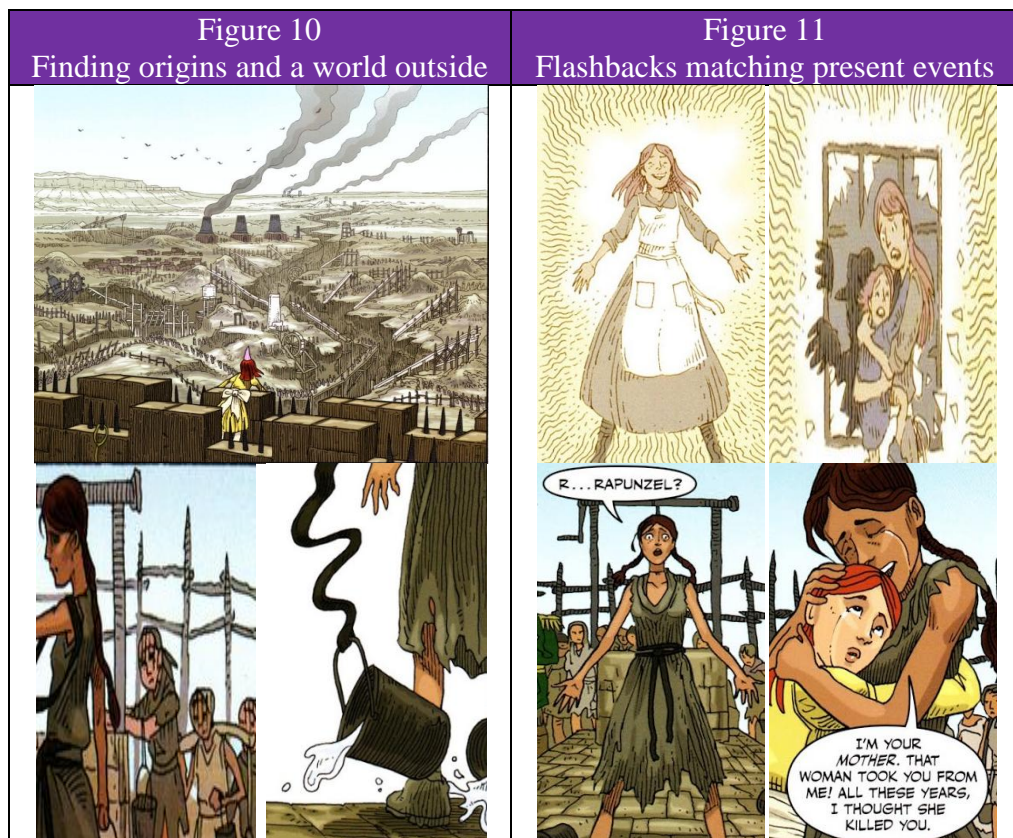
walls reinforce her emptiness, loneliness, confinement and disconnection from humanity. Rapunzel declares that “Deep in my gut, I believed if I could just look over [the wall], see what was there, my dreams...everything would make sense” (9). The wall is a defining icon of an underlying search for escape and purpose in the fairytale universe. Rapunzel quests to escape from many things, including social expectations, gender roles, and the complexities of public and private living. Two concise words in the following drawing expose her depression: “Yep. Home” (6). The caption gestures to (and lets readers dwell on) a protected state, which is also a state of boredom, and an urge to escape it. The dark colours and sense of distance suggest silence and that time stands still. This scene lingers in the reader’s mind, bleeds into the other panels that follow, and can be read as an internal monologue because the speech is italicised (thereby suggesting unspoken thoughts) and is contained by a yellow caption rather than a speech bubble. As the sharp edges of captions imply more formality, authority, and immediacy than speech bubbles, this adds a further dimension, for words are superimposed onto a shadowy image that is coloured by Rapunzel’s feelings of greyness and aloneness. While the words claim one thing (this is home) this image conveys something else.



The desire to escape from the villa feeds into maturation and self-knowledge quests.

Rapunzel wants to carve out her own path in the world, but her life and memories are blurry, as in Donoghue’s ‘The Tale of the Hair’. So too are there parallels with *Tangled*, such as fragments of dreams. White spaces replace the borders, and hatching fills a sepia-toned image of Rapunzel laughing with her biological parents (Fig. 11), implying that the reader is entering her mind and seeing her thoughts. She confesses, in the past tense, that “I didn’t know why I had that dream again”, and adds that the malevolent Mother Gothel is not her mother (7). Rapunzel ultimately becomes a mythic hero who obtains the legendary pickaxe and totem that are prerequisite to defeating Gothel. It transpires that Gothel is a tyrant sorceress who

holds the mining community ransom by controlling the water supply. The agrarian workers also rely on her “growth magic” and fear her ability to “make things...wilt” (9). Gothel is thus once again a mature woman fused with life-giving and life-threatening forces. Her dark and sinister appearance feeds into the negative female stereotypes outlined by Karen Rowe and Marcia Lieberman. It is then interesting that, in spite of her avariciousness, Gothel says that Rapunzel is to inherit everything that she owns. Rapunzel is literally the chosen one. However, on her twelfth birthday, Rapunzel (named after “lettuce” (14)) disobeys Gothel. On the cusp of womanhood, Rapunzel climbs the wall and espies an apocalyptic wasteland, including a dam and mine. Rapunzel sees masses of slaves, just as desperate to escape as her (Fig. 10). As they toil in the desert, *Ben-Hur* (1959) is brought to mind, along with various biblical dramatisations of Israelite slaves building the Egyptian pyramids. The reader seems to be offered a snapshot of all human history, or at least the history of the world Rapunzel inhabits but is denied. The near-timeless industrial desert scene implies that Rapunzel memes can ‘make sense’ of that history as an everlasting conflict between entrapment and freedom.



The above art of Rapunzel’s path into the unknown also implies entrapment and liberty.

Rapunzel frees herself from Gothel’s evil empire and is rewarded by having a serendipitous

meeting with her birth mother, by a well. Jung would call this tearful reunion synchronicity. Campbell might call welling up by a well a movement into the belly of the whale. The waters symbolise femininity, transformation, and replenishment, while the well embodies the womb and the depths of Rapunzel's unconscious being plumbed. It also bears out Marina Warner's thesis that, historically, "women dominated the domestic webs of information and power: the village, the well" (Warner 1995: 34). Rapunzel's true parentage is discovered by a well, by virtue of a flow of information between Rapunzel and her mother. This seemingly underpins the feminism in the story in that questions are finally answered and an inverted Freudian romance is actualised, for Rapunzel craves and is given a biological mother that can offer her a 'normal' life and allow her to be a part of the wider community. Although Propp would no doubt categorise her as a Princess, Rapunzel would gladly sacrifice her opulent dress to play rough-and-tumble with the peasant boys, and would relinquish her worldly goods to be free. Ideas of sacrifice are salient because Rapunzel remembers Gothel taking her away from Kate, her real mother, after her father "escaped from the mine camp and sneaked into Mother Gothel's garden" (14) to steal lettuce. She is taken as "payment" (15) and to let Kate know her place in the class system. Gothel also raises Rapunzel as her own so that she will love *her* rather than her birth mother, and so turns a 'natural' love against Kate to break her heart.

The heartfelt reunion is made all the more telling by Kate dropping her water bucket. This involuntary reaction seems realistic because to drop an object when given a shock is a likely human reaction. Kate is at once numbed by the realisation that this is her daughter and that her child is still alive, and yet is overcome with emotion. But the complexities of her emotions (and the fulfilment of her greatest wish, to recover Rapunzel) are pared-down and shorn of gushing sentimentality. Readers might feel that the text is being overly sentimental, but it avoids saccharine emotion by, (a) confining the speeches to a sentence or two, within the space of a small speech bubble, and (b) drawing Gothel's henchmen dragging Rapunzel

and her mother, Kate off in different directions, perhaps before they become over-emotional. The deliberate conciseness of these scenes communicates using relatively little material. Where no words are used, cross-hatched sepia-toned images tell readers that specific events have taken place in the past. These faded images represent Rapunzel's flashbacks and are fuzzy because they authentically depict the unreliability of memory. Concrete details and colours are lost over time, but certain memes (security, love and attachment) remain intact. These images of childhood memories, which take readers inside Rapunzel's mind, are placed next to illustrations that are sharper, more vividly colourful. Their newness implicitly returns readers to the present. That the faded and more defined images are visually similar suggests that history is being repeated. After all, Rapunzel remembers being in and then torn apart from an embrace with her mother. The reunion is therefore short-lived but powerful.

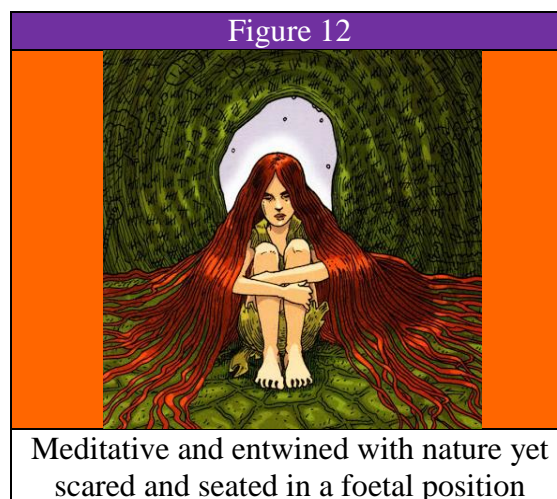
It is worth examining their exchange here because Campbell might call the reunion with the biological mother a 'Meeting with the Goddess' and the 'Bliss of Infancy Regained'. That Rapunzel utters the single (baby-like) word "Momma?" (18) and falls into her mother's arms reveals her vulnerability and signifies the early stages of a mother-child relationship. They cry as they look at each other, and Rapunzel accepts the label daughter, while Kate accepts the name Momma. Kate's powerful maternal feelings are resurrected the instant she rediscovers Rapunzel, as if they never disappeared. Indeed their parent-child relationship survives their separation because their mutual love is seemingly unconditional and timeless. This is demonstrated by Kate's teary yet energetic language and certain catches in her voice: "alive...my little girl? It's you...my flower. I know it's you! I prayed you were all right" (18). Beyond such spiritual appeals, the embrace occasions a vital flashback, as in *Tangled*: "the moment that woman touched me, all the hazy memories in my head became...real" (19). Each memory and revealed truth validates Rapunzel's identity and rekindles her enchantment

with the world because she now has complete access to her life and feels loved: “The whole world shimmered with a new idea—my momma loving me and me loving her back” (19).

Rapunzel’s new-found knowledge and loving bond show the benefits of heeding the pull to adventure. Although Rapunzel is pulled between the competing demands of wanting a home and wanting to venture forth, the latter force is stronger. The call to adventure is steered initially towards a focus on leaving the villa and exploring the world, and this particular episode of the story ends with the reunion with and rescue of Kate. However, this is not the *only* occurrence of the rescue motif, as seen in the way that Gothel speaks of Kate: “You saw how that woman lives. Think what I saved you from” (20). Does she believe this, or is she so swept up in the pursuit of power that she will (as is true of most ideologies) say anything that can justify her enslavement of people as drones? The rescue meme is adapted here in a sinister way. Gothel never apologises for tearing Rapunzel away from her mother. She simply expects her to be thankful for saving her from destitution in a cultural wasteland. Gothel implies that by ‘rescuing’ Rapunzel she is no longer destined to repeat a cycle of breeding with genetic ‘pond life’. That Gothel believes she is saving Rapunzel from herself shows how ideologies, akin to Nazism, latch onto and pollute desires for belonging or rescue. Her desire to be powerful is even distorted into a God complex and an urge to control others. Just as God takes Jesus from Joseph and Mary so that he can do great things, Gothel plucks Rapunzel out of obscurity and expects her—rather condescendingly—to take over the family business and rule the kingdom: “Out of every little girl in the world, I chose you, Rapunzel!” (32). Rescue morphs now into a call to adventure, which is also a call to lead. Yet Rapunzel challenges Gothel’s thinking and is promptly kidnapped again and sent to live in the forest.

Rapunzel is for four years “stuck in the tower like an ant in a drop of honey” (26). This tower, which is now a tree in a lake, encapsulates a spiritual oneness with nature, and give each meme—such as being trapped—new, fresh colours. Rapunzel’s affinity with nature

is heightened when she forges a bed of leaves and must eat fruit and vegetables that grow inside the tree (which echoes the tree of stone in ‘The Tale of the Hair’). That this bounty causes her hair to grow exceptionally long provides a supernatural explanation for her trademark tresses. At one stage, her auburn (sometimes scarlet) hair resembles roots or veins that tie her to nature and root her to the tree. Yet while nature courses through her like blood and sustains her, Rapunzel feels trapped, and tallies the days of her imprisonment because “Being alone became unbearable all over again” (29). The following image accentuates this isolation in that Rapunzel sits alone on a cracked and barren floor. Thick lines are etched into the stark tree, painted in dull greens. The shape of the image itself suggests claustrophobia.



Rapunzel's Revenge also mocks the patriarchal literary establishment by showing how Rapunzel is bored of three antifeminist books that have been left for her to read in her tower: *Girls Who Get Saved and the PRINCES who save them*; *Weave Your Own Twig Bonnet*; and *There's Always...Bird Watching*. Rapunzel's implied rejection of texts that promote passive behaviours provides a sarcastic meta-textual comment on female passivity and the tradition (in Rapunzel adaptations and classic fairytales) of waiting for a heroic prince, as exemplified by Propp's morphological functions and character types. The fantasy of awaiting rescue does not live up to reality. This is arguably why Rapunzel carves images of Gothel into the flesh of the tree and then punches them. She reclaims violence (traditionally associated with men) as a strategy for processing her feelings, and thereby presents herself as a rounded figure with

human feelings and reactions. Her artwork thus adds another meta-textual layer in that the reader might in turn see art as healing, as it is in the films *Barbie as Rapunzel* and *Tangled*.

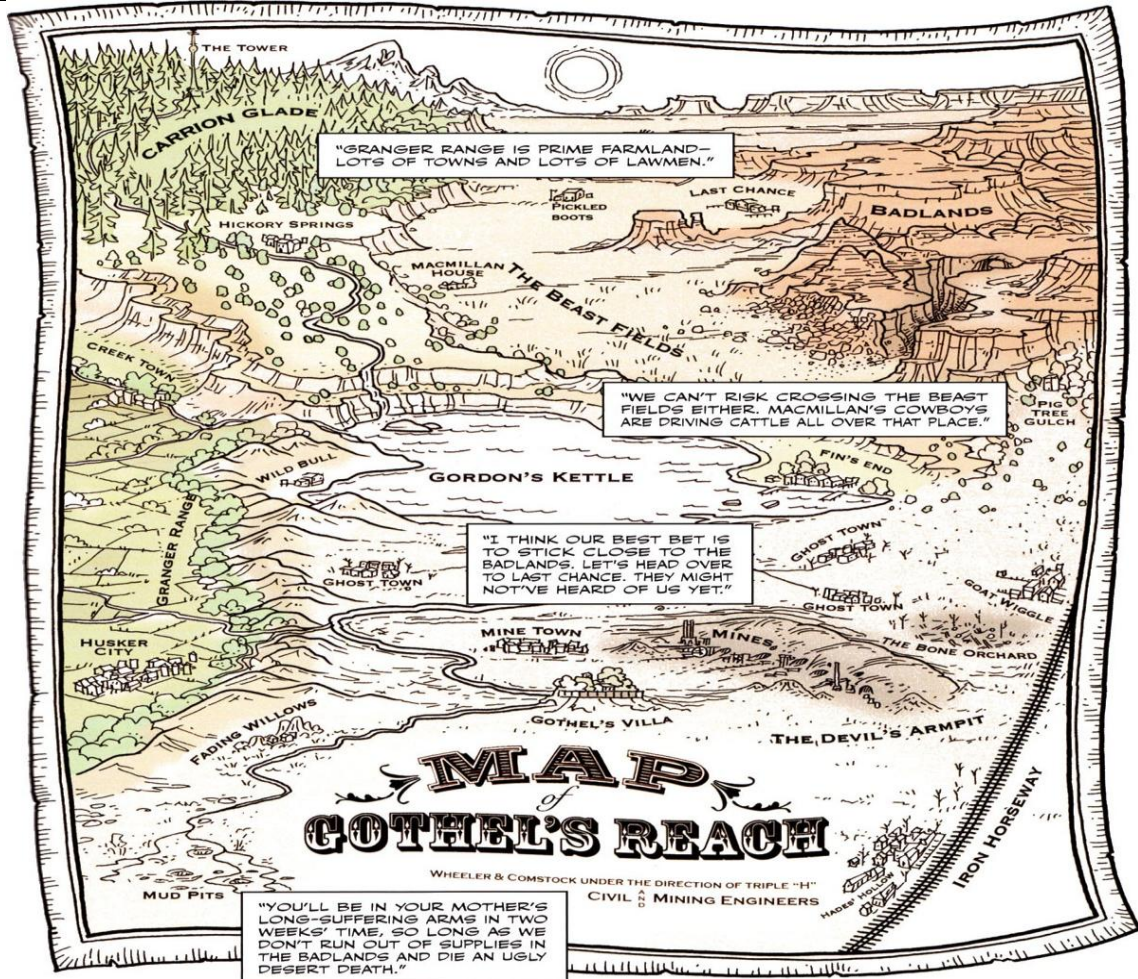
That Rapunzel resembles Tarzan at one stage (an archetypal alpha male) also allows her to challenge feminine ideals and unmask the traditional prince in ‘Rapunzel’ as a fraud. This blonde, blue-eyed cowboy (all in white) mistakes Rapunzel for a man, and confesses that while he “left behind the civilised comforts of Husker City, following tales of a beautiful maiden trapped in a high tower” (41), he will seduce but never free Rapunzel because he is afraid of Gothel. This Rapunzel thus has an advantage over all other Rapunzels discussed thus far, particularly Liz Lochhead’s Rapunzstiltskin, because she sees beyond his mask of respectability and sees that this narcissistic ‘hero’ is only bent on gratifying his own desires. By extension, by leaving the tower before the plot of ‘Rapunzel’ can reach its ‘natural’ end, Rapunzel and the reader challenge archetypes and undergo a process of feminist ‘re-viewing’. Indeed, Rapunzel has her revenge by sending this false hero to his death in the forest.²³

The Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ is given new life by the addition of the Wild West badlands. That Rapunzel intervenes when saloon workers try to steal a goose (that lays golden eggs) from a girl seeking work means that she is actively recruited as a hero. She saves the day by using her 20-foot hair as a lasso, never suspecting that the girl in a dress is actually Jack from ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’. This well-travelled cowboy replaces and is more successful as a hero than the arrogant prince because Jack focuses on others and is responsive to their needs. They share their personal histories around a fire in the desert, solidify their intersexual friendship (the first either has had), and join forces—giving Rapunzel the confidence to change her outfit and fit in with each new culture she enters. Rapunzel begins her story as a gun-toting cowgirl with a Southern drawl, who incidentally evokes Calamity Jane, just as dark-skinned Jack evokes her Native American lover, Bill Hickok; but Rapunzel ultimately evolves into someone who “out-woman[s]” (110) the female bandits, even though she refuses to “do a sultry little dance” and “distract them with [her] feminine wiles” (57).

²³Aptly, where revenge in ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’ (1985) occurs on behalf of women in general, in *Rapunzel’s Revenge* (2008) revenge is exacted against Gothel, an individual, thus moving from the general to the particular.

Figure 13

A map in *Rapunzel's Revenge* (2008) that parallels the Nintendo game *The Legend of Zelda*



A range of adventures and lifestyle options is made available to readers via a full-page map (Fig. 13) that Rapunzel and Jack consult to find their bearings. The zones or worlds call

to the reader and characters, letting them become involved in this orienteering exercise, and choose their own landscapes. Echoing the Link and Zelda video games where players select desired settings from a menu, users *au fait* with gaming language may feast on the buffet of environments, myths, and archetypes that proliferate in this graphic novel. Just as gamers are summoned to adventure—“Enter the fantasy world of Hyrule”—the universe in *Rapunzel’s Revenge* is laid bare to the reader and is ripe for the picking. The map underpins Rapunzel’s realisation that there is an outside world *and* feeds into a Western neo-colonialist ideology. The hubbub of words on the page isolates specific locations but they almost blur before the reader’s eyes, as if there are too many destinations to explore. This artefact, with realistically torn edges, evokes the past and seems to have been handled so often that it is crumbling. The text boxes superimposed onto the map hint at a meta-textual conversation whereby the reader hears the characters choose their adventure in present time. They read the map aloud and discuss it, engage with it, and allow the reader to witness their private conversation. Alternatively, they may be saying these words as they reach each location seen on the map. The rolling sun at the top of the map indicates that this is a snapshot not only of a map but of an adventure that is unfolding before the reader’s eyes, again reinforcing how an image can contain multiple moments in time. Aptly, the words ‘Map of Gothel’s Reach’ appear to have been stamped or branded on the page and resemble an intertitle for a cowboy film or Wild West adventure. Jack implores that they “stick close to the Badlands” and one notices that the Badlands are given the greatest concentration of colour, as if a decision has been made in the minds of the characters to venture there. This is confirmed for the reader by the emboldened black lines around the gorges—common aspects of cowboy films. It is interesting that the tower (despite being a hidden location) also features at the top of the page, as if the authors are reinforcing its symbolic centrality. Likewise, the iron horseway runs off the page, as if expanding into the white space and beyond forever. This part of the map speaks to the openness of the world and Jack’s impulses for absolute freedom and unending adventure. By appropriating the menus found in games, the map offers this much-desired repertoire of possibilities and exemplifies how the call to adventure is pluralised and postmodernised.

Rapunzel's Revenge is a kaleidoscope of interlacing myths and fairytales. If the Rapunzel narrative is the orchestrating principle, then that narrative is arguably enriched by virtue of fusing with a host of other fairytale narratives and motifs. Notwithstanding a danger of the text splitting into a cornucopia of virtual worlds, and thereby supporting the escapist and narcissistic ideologies that arguably underpin mainstream video-gaming, it is possible to think of *Rapunzel's Revenge* as incorporating other texts in such a way that it strengthens the psychological significance of fairytale memes. So, Rapunzel's joining forces with Jack and a host of other fairytale characters can be read psychologically as a prerequisite to harmonising her male and female principles and to achieving individuation. This seems logical, not only because Shannon Hale has authored over sixteen fantasy books for adults and young adults, including the *Princess Academy* series (which emphasises self-growth, for females especially), but because the highly popular *Rapunzel's Revenge* spawned a sequel,²⁴ *Calamity Jack* (2010). These stories are even further removed from their origin story as Rapunzel embarks on adventures beyond the walls of captivity. They also further emphasise the psychological development of Rapunzel and Jack, in addition to blending masculine and feminine attributes as part of its contestation of gender ideologies.

Conclusions and Other Rapunzels

One of the objectives of this chapter has been to marshal a selection of prose Rapunzel texts (in short and longer fiction) that focus intensely on one or a few Rapunzel memes such as lack ('The Tale of the Hair'), abandonment ('The Difference in the Dose'), and escape (*Rapunzel's Revenge*). Taken together, the Rapunzel stories, in their various genres and forms, actualise this thesis's feminist appeals to solidarity, as well as to multiplicity and difference. These tales in the main reaffirm the assertion that thought-provoking literature such as the short story arouses wonder and makes the familiar unfamiliar so that it can then be seen anew. This feminist re-visioning is central given the argument of this chapter, and more broadly the remaining chapters, that it is through estrangement and the manipulation, adaptation and

²⁴A final point is that much of Hale's work, including *Rapunzel's Revenge*, is co-authored by her husband Dean Hale and has been illustrated by Nathan Hale, who is both an artist and author (not related to Shannon or Dean) of several graphic novels—five of which form the *Nathan Hale's Hazardous Tales* series.

appropriation of Rapunzel content that retellings may disturb gender ideologies and consequently offer complex feminist variations on the Rapunzel meme pool.

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By no means does this chapter cover every feminist Rapunzel prose variant in the twentieth or twenty-first century. One could even offer extended analyses of such compelling literature as Suniti Namjoshi's *Building Babel* (1996), which uses the character Rap Rap (Rapunzel) to argue that "The feminism that we fought for has mutated into strange shapes... That's how it must be. Memes mutate" (xxvii). In addition, the question "Can we not, may we not, leave a legacy to which others may contribute?" is a call for female writers to add their voices to the fairytale collective. However, it is intriguing that in Cameron Dokey's novel *Golden* (2006), Dokey praises Parsley's *male* lover, Harry, and has them kiss and wed at the end of the novel. Rather than remove male characters altogether as a corrective to the phallocentrism and the heterosexism in 'Rapunzel' (1812-1857), Harry is a part of Parsley's individuation and decision to rename herself after the herb black-eyed Susan (178). While no-one tells their 'true tale', they ultimately live "happily ever after, building the room that is our love, our home, inside our hearts... as long as we draw breath" (179). This reworking is exemplary of Rapunzel's plurality and longstanding relevance. It is also indicative of a difference between Rapunzel stories where the call to adventure and the escape from the tower are successful, and bleaker adaptations where there is a focus on lack, continuing confinement, and various causes of pessimism. More explicitly complex—darker—reworkings include Gregory Frost's 'The Root of the Matter' (1993), which reinterprets the Grimm 'Rapunzel' as a series of confessional diary entries to which the reader has privileged access:

Diary,

I find her touch...unbearable. Last evening [we went] to the bath...Mother Gothel lathered me as she has done since I was a child. She spends a great deal of time washing between my legs, and I've always let her. It felt so rapturous. Now, though the sensation's the same, I've no desire to let her enjoy me—that is what she does,

why pretend otherwise? *She* is the one who takes her pleasure from me and walks away.
She's the one for whom I'm a possession, an object. Why else am I kept here?
(Windling 1997: 182-183)

Already it is clear that such a tale would easily fit into the structure and focus of this chapter, not least because of the evident parallels with Emma Donoghue's 'The Tale of the Hair' and its exploitative mother-lover, combined with themes of dejection and improper attachments. The diary form also demonstrates how amenable Rapunzels (and perhaps other fairytales) are to a variety of genres and forms that offer opportunities for psychological interiority. Gregory Frost's Rapunzel confesses her deepest fears in a diary, which is held in a private, safe space—a tower or sanctuary within a tower. Her life and secrets are kept within the pages of a book, just as she is locked within the tower. In this way, Frost's confessional tale bears semblance to Sara Maitland's 'Rapunzel Revisited' (1988), which has been discussed in passing as a tale devoid of emotion but full of psychological reflections, symbols, and postmodern devices such as metatextuality. Ever since she has burst onto the adaptive landscape, moving into and across various media, from fairytale to poem, from short story or novel to the screen and back again, Rapunzel has shed her long hair and her role as a passive maiden in a tower, and has become ever more aware psychologically. The next chapter will (amongst other things) examine the flattening or re-flattening out of the psychological depth achieved in some of the stories discussed in this chapter, and in 1970s film, as Rapunzel in mainstream film is assimilated to a postfeminist individualism, shorn of most of its complexity.

Chapter 5: Film Rapunzels

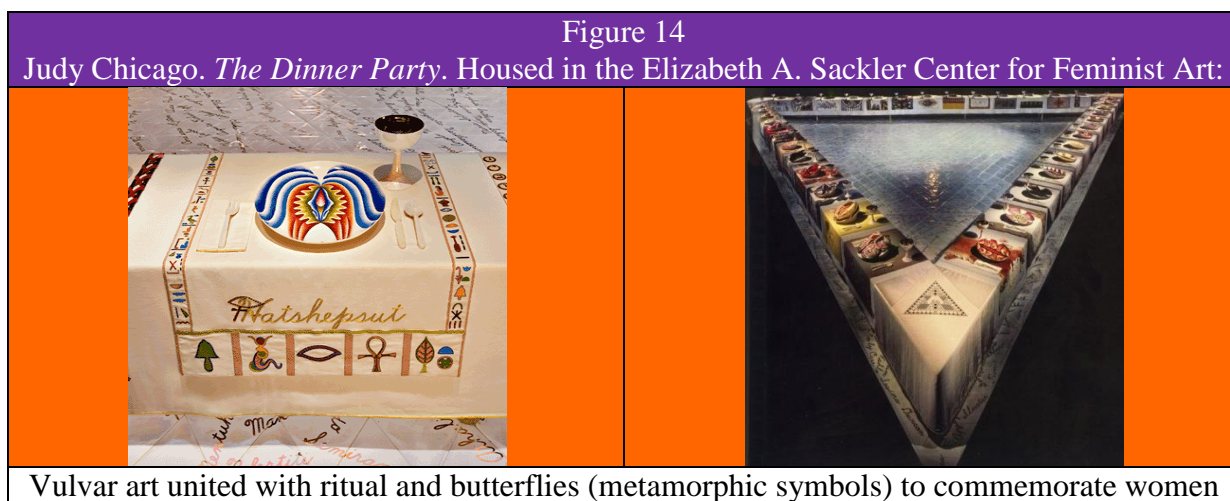
As Linda Hutcheon argues, “An adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead...It may, on the contrary, keep that work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise” (Hutcheon 2006: 176). Adapting ‘Rapunzel’ into film has extended its life, as have the multifarious offshoots analysed in the next chapter. This chapter begins in the 1970s and returns to aspects of second-wave feminism in order to examine the only full-length Rapunzel films. One happens to be in the 1970s, and the others in the 2000s, but this first film throws into relief the later ones and the feminist ideas they co-opt (and express as postfeminist ideas). A bridge between feminist theory and Rapunzel films has been supplied by the cross-fertilisation of film and feminism in the 1970s, which saw Laura Mulvey translate her essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975) into the essayistic film *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977). Representing a new form of criticism, the film’s feminist underpinning reflects the main argument here: that Rapunzel films have been variously influenced by selective feminist ideas that have become part of mainstream culture and hence the commercial film industry. As Janet McCabe says in *Feminist Film Studies: Writing the Woman Back into Cinema* (2004), “feminist film theory [...] has played a crucial—and often controversial—role in the emergence of film studies as an academic discipline; in turn, film studies shaped feminist concerns [and] granted feminist research a place to flourish” (1). *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978) is read first as a political, consciousness-raising form of feminist praxis that induces estrangement. Translating fairytales into real-life settings, it characterises a gap between how things are and how feminist filmmakers want them to be. Susan Shapiro, Esther Ronay and Francine Winham (of the London Women’s Film Group) appropriate ‘Rapunzel’ to express feminist concerns, and show that traditional film is (a) grounded in myths about women and (b) privileges male narcissism and scopophilia. Furthermore, the psychedelic elements of the film accord with psychoanalytic theory, as does *Riddles of the Sphinx*, for the symbols and mythic art express hidden, unconscious, tacit wishes and re-imagine Rapunzel’s preoccupations with escape, security, and adventure. Four full-length New Millennial films—*Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002),

Shrek the Third (2007), *Tangled* (2010), and *Into the Woods* (2014)—will subsequently be used to argue that commercial adaptations (unlike the first film) have diluted second-wave and third-wave feminisms and mark a cultural shift to a postfeminist individualism.

***Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978)**

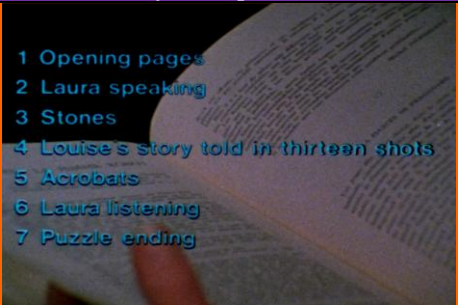
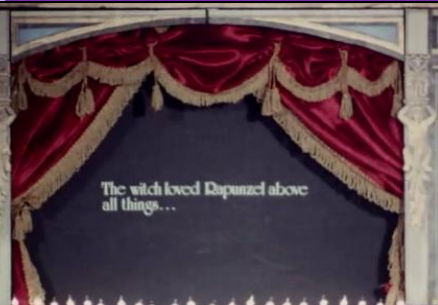
The idea of women's cinema was in the 1970s radical because of its core aim of decentring anti-feminist films produced by and for males. Film festivals in the early 1970s, notably the New York International Festival of Women's Films (1972), showcased female filmmakers as a gesture of recuperating female voices and 'her-stories' from a male-dominated industry. The majority of 1970s feminist films created for and by women are documentaries, and *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978) is no exception. Women speak to the camera directly or converse with sympathetic females about quotidian female experiences at work and home, be they in the kitchen or a doctor's surgery. The daring critique of capitalist patriarchy is matched by the inclusion of women unseen on screen previously: girl-next-door types of all shapes, sizes, and colours, who have life experience rather than screen experience or the hallmark good looks of mainstream cinema. Equally radical is their disclosure of experiences that women were chiefly expected to keep secret: abduction, incest, rape, abuse, abortion, lesbianism, and discrimination on the basis of sex or sexuality. Such contentious topics seem apt in a decade that inspired the journal *Women and Film*, the writing of Molly Haskell's *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (1974), and the passing into British law of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. Signally, films made for and by women have been used to address the treatment of actual women and the absence of realism in mainstream cinema. Key examples are Julia Reichert and James Klein's *Growing Up Female: As Six Become One* (1971) and Geri Ashur's *Janie Janie* (1971), which negotiate with feminist concerns and feminist theory and criticism by dealing with women's lives and realities. Julia Reichert states that *Growing up Female* was made "to bring...new awareness about women's oppression to a broad audience. We...wanted to reach beyond the women's movement to housewives, poor women [and] high school kids" (Rosenberg 1983: 42).

The above works are representative of the avenues opened up to women by feminist efforts, but Judy Chicago's radical artistic piece, *The Dinner Party* (1979), is one of the best-known cultural creations that encapsulates feminist attempts to express and immortalise female achievements—that patriarchies have tried to erase—throughout history. It is a vital reminder that important feminist creations can be lost to future generations easily. It is referenced here (Fig. 14) because it echoes the deliberately disorienting feminist film style of *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair*, with its movement from a reading of the Grimm 'Rapunzel' to avant-garde images and goddess artwork, and from a detective story to a documentary on witch trials and women marginalised by their husbands. Each scene answers the scene that precedes it, as in Emma Donoghue's *Kissing the Witch*. The film ends with Rapunzel and her female band: a gesture of feminist liberation also evoked, later, in James Finn Gardner's 'Rapunzel' (1994), where Rapunzel sings in coffee houses and art galleries.



The disjunctive pictures and dizzying camera techniques and 360° pans realise what Mulvey calls—in the *Riddles of the Sphinx* DVD commentary—a “counter-cinema strategy” to the precise editing, linear narratives, and “conventions of continuity” in male cinema. The *mise-en-scène* juxtaposes and brings together different media and genres, and presents a different type of storytelling. *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* thus involves a formal challenge, with adventures sometimes shown as a live-action film and at others as an abstract cartoon. This genre melding occurs to provoke new thinking. Equally, the intensity of female experiences and relations, akin to the claustrophobia of domestic spaces that provokes a call to escape, is not always communicable, and so is likewise displaced onto and expressed as a

resonant gesture, a look, a colour, an object, or a drawing. These elements all intertwine, as do the females in each sequence, who all symbolise individual and collective female voices.

Figure 15 <i>Riddles of the Sphinx</i> (1977):	Figure 16 <i>Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair</i> (1978):
	
Structuring titles and chapters for the film	Anticipating a feminist drama

Rooted in the politically radical context of a drive for female equality and diversity, *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* is full of questioning female voices. The film invokes tales of classic maidens and offers multiple feminist reworkings of ‘Rapunzel’. Sharon Barba’s poem ‘A Cycle of Women’ is read aloud to underpin the film’s feminist aims. The lines “telling their daughters / the story of a sleeping princess / but knowing it takes more than a *man*’s kiss / to wake one so bent on sleeping her life away” echo the mockery of the phallus in ‘Rapunzel’ (1977), and are seen after a close-up of a theatre stage, which connotes a sense of the pre-scripted nature of women’s lives, at the same time as it elicits curiosity and anticipation.

Act One

‘Rapunzel’ and *Riddles of the Sphinx* are invoked by the reading of a Rapunzel picture book to a blonde toddler. The mother arguably introduces her child to the Rapunzel fairytale, amid her formative years, to prevent her from becoming an acquiescent Rapunzel in the making. The child stands in for audiences of all ages and symbolises how fairytales are both enjoyable and crucial to a child’s development (a position shared by Bettelheim). Moreover, rather than simply show the girl looking at the full-page illustrations and the words, the lingering camera displays them to the screen and viewers, giving spectators time to reflect on and absorb them. Although the haircutting in the tale is cruel, the film dwells on the child’s face and provides reaction shots as a yardstick of its acceptability for children. Her eyes brim with joy and

confirm that she derives pleasure from the storytelling experience, especially as the witch exacts her revenge and sends Rapunzel to the tower and cuts her hair. That the girl points at Rapunzel's tower, taps her finger on the page, pauses, furrows her brow, smiles and murmurs something to her mother, implies she is engaging with the story herself. One might ordinarily overlook the child and focus primarily on the story being told, but the child is present on the screen and therefore must be encompassed in an analysis of the film, which very strikingly encapsulates a dilemma: the child is enraptured by the pleasures of stories and storytelling; yet the same child is being interpellated into an all-too-familiar kind of narrative.

Act Two

One radical aspect of this film is its employment of images. As an artistic gesture, the infant to whom the Rapunzel story is read is asleep in a foetal position and spins around the screen. A female doll appears on the stage that introduced the film, and—as it bows and disappears—implies that the film is moving deeper into the unconscious. The 3D art is so realistic that the characters seem ready to leap through the screen and into reality. It is therefore unsettling to see an image of a woman standing at her window, for it is as if a real person is waiting to turn and grab the viewer, making them her prisoner akin to Rapunzel. The camera also shakes violently from side to side as drawings of windows turn into cardboard cut-outs of windows (Fig. 17 and Fig. 18), thereby creating a hyper-reality that brings the story to life for audiences. Likewise, when the mother blinks, the screen turns black, for she controls the gaze. And yet the camera takes the viewer on a tour of her large herbal garden. This brings to mind Laura Mulvey's commentary in *The Riddles of the Sphinx* and her words that the camera gets bored with what is being said on screen and so wanders off and looks at other things. The often hazy screen supports this notion of a sentient camera insofar as it—as with the viewer—sometimes zones out and is unsure of what it is seeing. After all, the backgrounds and timeless statues move occasionally to create a sense of motion. Such avant-garde images (blending cartoon and live action) and cinematic techniques typify feminist film in the 1970s.

Figure 17
Gothel Staring Outside


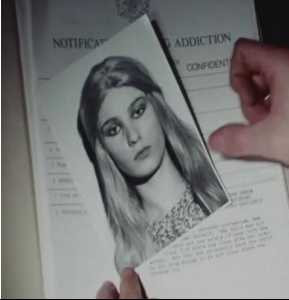




Figure 18
Transition to Live Action





Act Three

The translation of ‘Rapunzel’ into a contemporary *film noir*, where a detective seeks to rescue Rapunzel—a heroin addict sold to Martha (Gothel) for drugs, by her own parents—suggests a male-oriented adaptation. However, Jack Clewit is a parodic cliché whose mannerisms and masculine signifiers (a cigar, fedora, and love of chiaroscuro lighting) are a poor imitation of hard-boiled detective novels. Peeping through doors like Wee Willie Winkie, and leering at Rapunzel’s photographs and case file as if they were salacious diary entries, this Jack-the-lad cannot ‘clue it’ or solve the case. Driven by greed and lust, he refers to himself as a “prince”, calling Rapunzel “destined to sink...into degradation”. Just as the Rapunzel in his photograph cannot escape or turn away from his gaze, the real-life Rapunzel is a voiceless object of representation in a glass urban coffin: a mere motionless face atop a block of flats in London. Jack’s narrow-minded universalisation of women as hapless do-nothings that men alone can save reflects the sexism that exists in the real world, and leads him to hyperbolise his actions: “Taking his life in his hands he boldly entered the sweet virgin’s [(Rapunzel’s)] chamber”. Rapunzel is to Jack a beautiful archaic woman in Victorian garb, who ironically cannot make the television work and gives up and sits down. Her ineffectuality prefigures her dependence on a man, and reinforces why Rapunzels have historically invited antifeminist portrayals.

Figure 19	Figure 20	Figure 21	Figure 22
			
An inspector calls: called to adventure	An image of a beauty is leered at by a spy	Tower block maiden and a sense of height	Rapunzel captive in an urban apartment

Drawing instant parallels with ‘Bluebeard’, albeit with the sexes reversed, a critique of the male gaze is enacted when Jack peeps through the keyhole of the forbidden room inhabited by Rapunzel and her adoptive mother-lover. The camera shows only what Jack (usurping the role of director) wants to see—perhaps reflecting the presumption of a male spectator—and allows this voyeur to enjoy a predictable male fantasy: a lesbian kiss (Fig. 23). Rapunzel and Martha, seen through a pinhole camera lens, lock lips to express their love, but they are looked at and on display for male pleasure. Though aroused, he sees their lesbian encounter as abject and holds his hat in front of him, like a shield protecting his eyes and ego. Jack reasons that Rapunzel only indulges this “strange sexual intimacy” with Martha to pay for her drug habit. They cannot be *her* desires because if Rapunzel *is* a lesbian, this undermines his patriarchal centrality and means she will never love him.

Figure 23 Through the Keyhole and the Looking Glass—Painterly Parallels within the Film:	
	
Artwork of Rapunzel and Gothel as lovers	Echoes of Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1970)

Rapunzel’s subsequent admission to Martha that Jack has vowed to cure her of her drug habit replaces Rapunzel blurting out (in the Grimm tale) that her dress is too tight and that Gothel is heavier than the prince. The camera tellingly zooms in on Martha as she closes her eyes, shakes her head, and mouths an expletive. This insight into Martha’s psychological

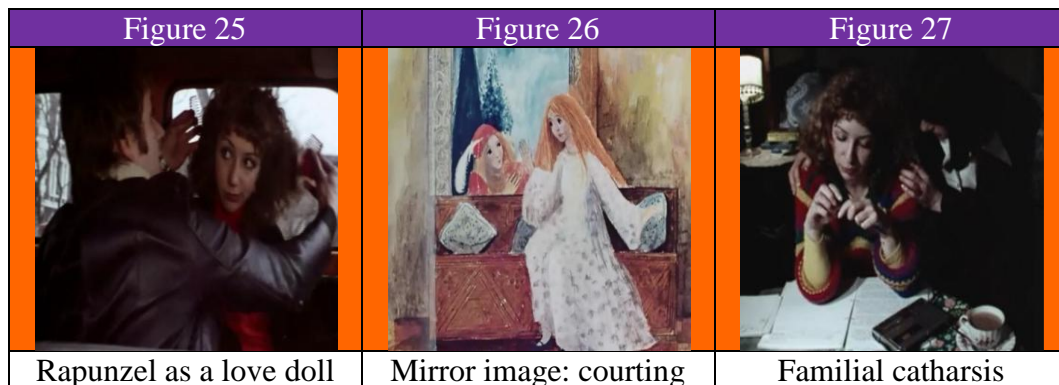
turmoil and sense of betrayal explains why she declares, “I’m going to cut your hair off!” Shot-reverse-shots and the words “No, Mummy!” play on a loop, ending with a panting, unblinking Rapunzel. Equally devastating is that Martha has Jack fired. As a reworking of Gothel blinding the prince in ‘Rapunzel’, this Private Eye never regains his job (his ‘sight’), and never saves, marries, or impregnates Rapunzel. The final close-ups of a crestfallen Jack teach that his fantasies of a Happy-Ever-After all yield to unfulfilled longing and grim realism, where adventure is co-opted by drugs (narcotics that still offer potential escape from reality).

Act Four

This penultimate Act is one half Rapunzel adaptation and one half documentary: a sort of filmic textbook about how “female sexuality” has, ever since “the Middle Ages”, been treated as “evil”. The essayistic tone of the depiction of the history of European witch trials imbues the film with academic rigour, and is a fitting riposte to Jack’s belief that all witches are evil: “He may think of her as young and dangerous, but she is usually represented as old and repulsive, her sex withered with age. These negative images can be embedded in our own unconscious, where they affect how we think about ourselves as women”. Despite adding that women “in a patriarchy [are] transformed into a symbol of male psychic terror” and that “aspects of female sexuality are usually kept silent and hidden”, this Act transforms these images into symbols of “female power”. Intriguingly, when someone whispers a chant, it recalls *Riddles of the Sphinx* and its message: “The voice was so familiar yet so fatally easy to forget. She had heard the whispery voice of the Sphinx all her life, ever since she realised she was a girl”. The enigma of the Sphinx is translated here into a call to female liberation.

‘Rapunzel’ is then transformed into a universalised story of daughters deceiving their mothers about their romantic lives. A rebellious and frizzy-haired Rapunzel naïvely leaves the security provided by her home and mother (a female doctor), and enters her lover Michael’s car, a liminal space between the domestic and outside world. His order for her to

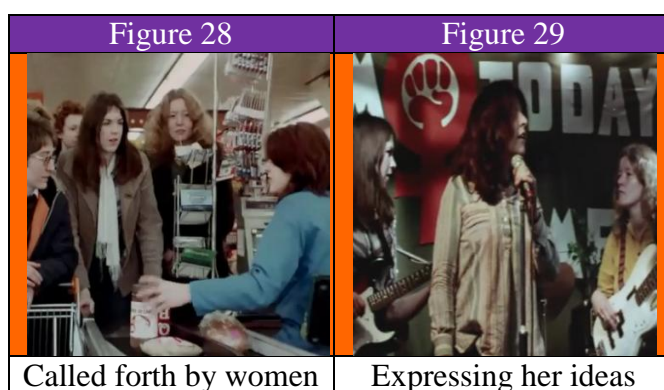
“Lose the books...we can’t have you looking like a schoolgirl” reveals his controlling role. In this confined environment, a visibly uncomfortable Rapunzel allows Michael to put his hands in her curly hair, pull fleshy pink combs out of it, and restyle her as he sees fit (Fig. 25). He is the controlling gaze made flesh. More sanguine is the reconciliation between Rapunzel and her mother. After Rapunzel says, in no uncertain terms, “I don’t like lying to my mother”, they engage in a meaningful dialogue. Her mother starts to “understand”, as Rapunzel puts it, that “I have to make my own life. You can’t make it for me”. Where Gothel sends Rapunzel to the desert, this mother grants Rapunzel the freedom she craves. This is fitting because the camera zooms out as they embrace, as if this speech is unfolding on a TV screen (Fig. 27). This Hollywood ending fades out to the theatre curtain and signifies that the final Act is next.



Act Five

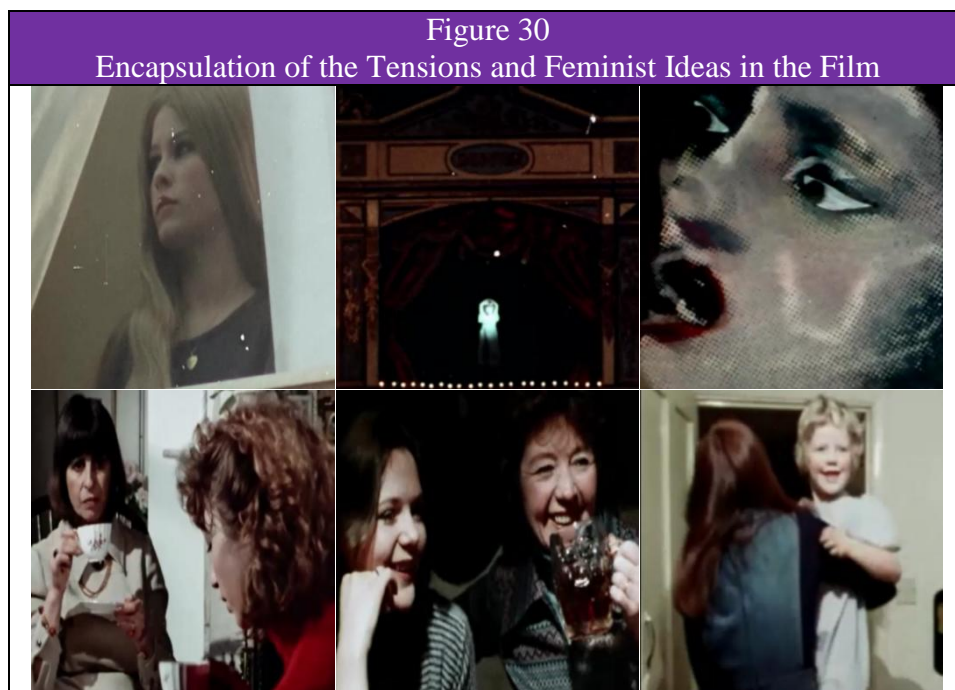
Feminist solidarity is the resounding conclusion. By having a swarm of female musicians infiltrate a scarlet Rapunzel’s workplace and convince her to sing at a local community hall, the audience is also called on to be a part of a “crashing wave” of “freedom” and “changes”. By translating the fairytale into a supermarket, and giving Rapunzel a blue (prison) uniform, the story is more engaging. One woman sees a golden saxophone (evoking Rapunzel’s hair) and puts down her iron. She abandons her domestic prison because of a call to female unity, and she watches the performance, despite the women being strangers, in order to make time for and have access to new pleasures. Rapunzel, seen beside Women’s Liberation banners, is

the voice of a feminist rally for transformation and better lives (Fig. 29). The music shows how women are strongest in groups. The musical instruments are weapons and icons of female authority that break down the “prison wall” that the women feel around them. They shatter the fetishised female myths that confine them, and ask viewers “What have we learned?” This connects with Patricia Erens’s argument that “[1970s] feminist film theory and criticism sought not only to understand the strategies of sexism, but also to encourage positive attitudes towards womanhood and an optimistic view about social change” (1990: 2). This is why Erens contends that “women [hoped to] enter film production in significant numbers and create their own images” (xv). In this film, women cultivate their own songs and are heard.



Extra-diegetic ideas of freedom that once seemed outside or beyond characters’ lives are now brought within their grasp via a song and flashbacks that revisit the previous Acts. By reintroducing and zooming in on the opening intertitle, “Rapunzel, let down your hair”, it is implied that the narrative has come full circle. The first flashback flits back and forth from extreme close-ups of the band members singing, to Act III where a blonde Rapunzel looks out of the tower-block window. The implication is that these singers can all identify with and in many ways are all Rapunzels, trapped in multi-faceted towers. The next split-second flashback is of the proscenium arch and red theatre curtain that rise to reveal a new Act based on a specific quotation from the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’. Here the film seemingly draws attention to fears of being on stage and of having to perform. Indeed the scarlet singer exclaims “You’re terrified”, while the camera displays a puppet that matches the frozen Rapunzel in the first flashback. There is an implied tension between the scripted and ideas of something

different from that which has already been scripted: a tension echoed by a flashback to artwork of a screaming Gothe! The penultimate analepsis further links each segment of the film story by having the women seen in the GP surgery drink and laugh as the music plays. Women young and old enjoy the band and forming a female community; this marks a key shift from anxiety to elation. How fitting then that the final flashback is of the child from the start of the film, who grins at the camera and is carried off by her mother. Her smile suggests she remains fully absorbed by the pleasure of the Rapunzel fairytale and fairytales generally. While her patriarchal Rapunzel picture book communicates a problematic gendered identity, this metatextual film (*Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair*) vaccinates against patriarchal mindsets, or rather, this is what one assumes the film *tries* to do—as part of its strategy of ‘re-viewing’.



Barbie as Rapunzel (2002)

Barbie as Rapunzel (2002) is a simplistic reworking targeted solely at children and teenagers. Mainstream cinematic Rapunzels intended for young adults co-opt feminist ideas about female identity into an anaesthetised, easily graspable, individualistic ethos. The vexed questions about identity expressed in say, *Zel*, are shorn of complex and measured treatments and replaced with a glib and simplified individualism. In Mattel's *Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002), another Rapunzel is locked into a rigid, patriarchally constructed identity, and a search for identity is abandoned as soon as a man arrives to rescue the tower maiden. Rather than present, as an alternative, a complex sense of being freed into a new identity, Rapunzel is preoccupied with painting and creating a new dress. This 'new' kind of Rapunzel asserts her individualism and maturation by making decisions about her costume or hairstyle. Where the haircut and tightening dress signify many things in other Rapunzel adaptations, Rapunzel uses her hair and clothing here as an easy way of making a statement about herself. Aptly, the range of Rapunzel Barbie dolls that Mattel released alongside the 2002 film hints at feminism being significantly transformed and wedded to consumerist individualism. By bringing out female toys at the same time as the film, a strategy Disney adopts in 2010, the film becomes less a serious feminist manifesto and more a marketing gimmick that re-inscribes traditional gender roles and patriarchal expectations about the female body. Consumers can also style Rapunzel's hair and change her costume (Fig. 31), as if these makeovers produce a new Rapunzel each time and can represent alterations in her mood or personality.

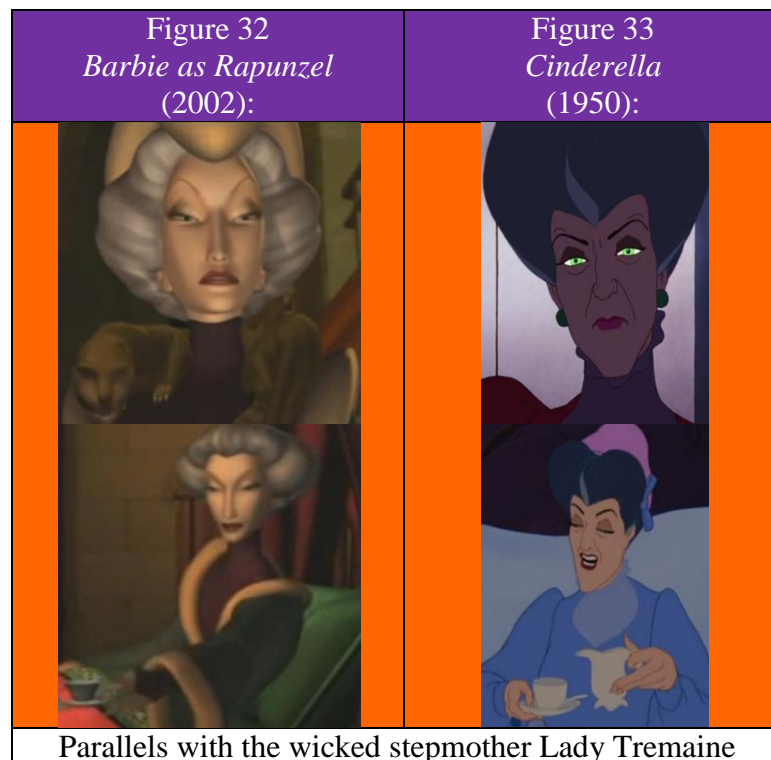


From Shelf to Screen

Mattel makes clear that this film is not just Barbie as Rapunzel, but Barbie™ as Rapunzel.²⁵ The doll best known by feminists for promoting unachievable body sizes and a clothing range has now been brought to life on screen, where she sings out saccharine clichés with abandon. This hollow woman also makes a stab at something meaningful by turning her plastic hand to acting and playing the role of Rapunzel. Again, it is not Rapunzel. It is Barbie™ as Rapunzel. This low-budget reimagining culminates in Rapunzel exclaiming “You kept me locked up my whole life because you hated my Father?!” It transpires that Mother Gothel (Anjelica Huston) loves King Wilhelm (a possible allusion to the Grimms).²⁶ As her affections are unrequited, she kidnaps his daughter Rapunzel as punishment, claiming that “She would have been my daughter if you’d have married me. I simply took what was mine”. Harsh adjectives such as “monster”, “witch”, and “hag” are bandied around and attached to “big bad Gothel”, who has an acid tongue herself: “To think some people adore children. They’re out of their minds”. Anti-feminist stereotypes propagated by this reworking include a dream sequence where a minuscule Rapunzel is picked up by a gargantuan Gothel, about to open her jaws and eat her. Symbolised here is Rapunzel’s inferiority and perception of Gothel as a murderous sorceress. This seems accurate given that this maniacal mother zaps Rapunzel and her friends with lasers whenever they, echoing Cinderella, cannot complete the impossible tasks she assigns.

²⁵This is Owen Hurley’s second film in the *Barbie as...* film series (and the first Grimm fairytale that it adapts).

²⁶This role is an excellent match for Anjelica Huston, who stars as the Grand High Witch in *The Witches* (1990).



Yet the filmmakers, mindful of their young audience, insert the dragon Penelope and a rabbit to provide comic relief and distract viewers from the woes of Rapunzel, the “prisoner”. These unnecessary sidekicks are filler material, akin to the protracted long-shots and artistic landscapes that prettify scenes rather than offer meaning or even echo the characters’ moods. An interesting portrait of Tchaikovsky does draw the eye briefly, but this intertextual allusion to *Barbie in the Nutcracker* (2001) is not immediately available to or significant for infants. Likewise, while the film attempts to elevate its cultural cachet by stating, in an intertitle, that the music is performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, the music is counter-intuitive. Antonín Dvořák’s harmonious Symphony No. 9 ‘From the New World’ (1893) plays when Rapunzel and Stefan are courting, yet resumes amid the nightmare about a querulous Gothel. Thus the film reaches towards depth and high culture, but it does no more than gesture to other texts and cultural creations. Even the statement “creativity is the true magic in art” seems forced and better suited to a marketing campaign than a filmic Rapunzel adaptation.





On the other hand, depth is implied by a hidden staircase. It leads to a silver hairbrush engraved with loving words from Rapunzel’s biological parents. As they are read aloud, a ray of light enters the tower (echoing the tale of Danae), and a shooting star transforms the brush

into a paintbrush with the ability to bring art to life. This magical artefact feeds into Rapunzel's imagination and enables her to step through the tower walls and into the village. It brings her wish-fulfilment and satisfies her call to adventure beyond home. As she emerges from a cave shaped like a head (as in *Candyman*), audiences realise that she has created a portal to a new world, and that art is literally and psychologically freeing for Rapunzel. Conversely, when a jealous Gothel discovers Rapunzel's gift, she accuses her of loving her paintings more than everything that she has bought her, thereby attaching importance to material goods rather than physical attachments. Were this an explicitly psychological tale, one might call theirs an insecure-avoidant attachment, for they both love yet reject each other. The conflictual bond causes Gothel to smash the silver paintbrush, akin to the silver horn in 'The Tale of the Hair', before destroying Rapunzel's paintings and turning the bedroom into an inescapable tower (here the film does something novel by showing audiences its creation). Gothel claims "I did it for you—to protect you", but this is a lie. She eradicates that which means most to Rapunzel, and transfigures the bedroom into a prison, because she is hurt by Rapunzel's decision to depart and marry Stefan: such is the extent of Gothel's feelings, which see her toy with Rapunzel's call to liberty and subsequently attempt to assassinate the King.²⁷

Gothel, who is not a sympathetic character, perpetuates a capitalist and phallogocentric view of women as cash cows, greedy for luxury clothes and designer goods. The above scene exhibits Gothel plying Rapunzel with gifts to buy her love and affection (albeit blowing them up to vent her anger, as does King Triton in *The Little Mermaid* (1989)). Love is everything, says the film. But love costs money. And to be loved, one must be seen. To be seen, one must be stylish. Style means acceptance. And acceptance *is* love, for women love fashion—so reasons Gothel, and men love women who are fashionable. Perhaps this is why multiple shots are devoted to Rapunzel creating expensive dresses with her paintbrush, each more ornate and

²⁷Incidentally, the two kingdoms prepare for battle as they blame each other for Rapunzel being kidnapped and, because they refuse to engage in conversation, are unaware that Gothel is responsible (yet again a secret enemy).

coruscating than the last (Fig. 35). One final outfit is “ahead of its time” and is accompanied by lavish jewels that complement Rapunzel’s loveliness. Indeed, Prince Stefan first notices Rapunzel at a masked ball because her attire is “so mysterious” and her coiffed blonde hair is “so beautiful”. Nevertheless, Gothel undermines this preoccupation with looks, noting that “You do look lovely in your party clothes...It’s just your hair—it’s not quite right”. This is a prelude to Gothel cleaving Rapunzel’s hair, not with scissors but sorcery. The delight on her face as Rapunzel weeps is a far cry from the consolatory mother in the 1978 Rapunzel film analysed previously. This Gothel adopts a mocking voice as she pretends to console Rapunzel: “Now, now. It’s only hair”. It is possible to over-interpret these words, but they seem to expose the triviality of appearances *and* mock Rapunzel for seeing hair as central to her identity. This is an unusual move for Mattel, who prize looks above all else. Yet this is forgotten when Rapunzel uses her paintbrush to restore her hair to its full length. Hair is a key Rapunzel signifier, often having multiple complex meanings, but Mattel excises its resonance and psychological complexity and makes it just another thing to be looked at, chiefly by men.

Figure 34	Figure 35	Figure 36	Figure 37
			
Creating art and a portal to pleasure	Rapunzel as her own Fairy Godmother	Creating a series of ball gowns	A masked Gothel wears Rapunzel’s hair

Don’t Just Dream It. Be It

Leaving aside the desire for freedom being subducted by a desire for a new dress or hairdo, *Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002) ends with a heart-inspiring message. It transpires that Barbie is telling the story of Rapunzel to her younger sister, Kelly, and that hearing it has ended her writer’s (or rather painter’s) block. Its therapeutic effect is evidenced after Barbie touches

Kelly's heart and instructs her that "The magic comes from here". The influence of the tale is felt when Kelly confesses that "I know Rapunzel's secret. She painted what she dreamed". Barbie's response—"When you do that, you never go wrong"—is the sort of language that children might expect to hear if they tug on the voice-activated pull-strings of a Barbie doll. This is a money-making film project with an aim of making superficial dreams come true. Paint what you want, dress how you want, do what you want. These are the empty clichés of capitalist consumer culture. The end-point of the long hard struggle for individual freedoms is a Barbie doll. Aptly, Disney's 3D animated motion picture, *Tangled* is re-read shortly because it mirrors and confuses these clichés, because Disney likewise released dolls and merchandise in conjunction with the film, and because it follows in the footsteps of Disney's lucrative 'Golden Age' of full-length animated fairytale films in the 1990s.

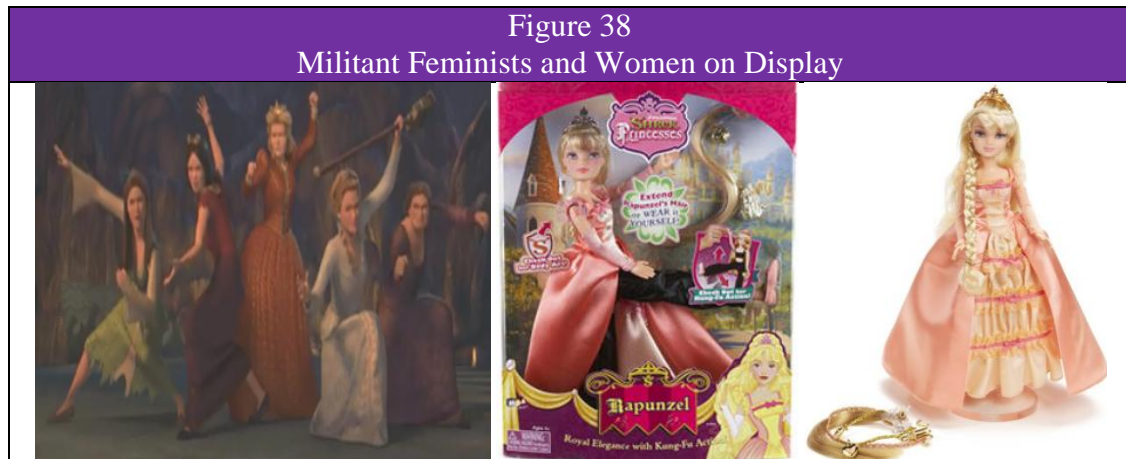
Shrek the Third (2007)

DreamWorks Studios (the so-called anti-Disney) delivers a satirical pastiche of 'Rapunzel' in *Shrek the Third* (2007), which critiques antifeminist ideologies in fairytales and Disney films. Genette calls pastiche a "playful" "imitation... whose primary function is pure entertainment" (1997: 85) given that adapters fill pastiches with "puns, anachronisms, clever allusions to the person and work of the model's author, parodic plays on the names of characters etc." (89). Though aimed at children, *Shrek the Third*, with its adult in-jokes, disrupts gender stereotypes. That it also mocks Disney's Happy-Ever-Afters by adapting many fairytales recalls Genette's thesis that "a parody always takes on one (or several) individual text(s)" (Genette 1997: 84). Leaving aside Genette's fusion of pastiche and parody as a form of "transformation" (25), the following analysis restricts itself to Rapunzel's two most prominent scenes, and argues that these consciousness-raising episodes expose how Disney targets female viewers as consumers of a conservative ideology of femininity that treats women as incapable. As Jack Zipes contends,

“*Shrek*...explode[s] standard notions of the fairytale and normative standards of beauty, proper mating behaviour, femininity and masculinity. The freakiness of *Shrek* is a delightful and hopeful anticipation of a de-Disneyfied world” (Zipes 2011: 244). The Rapunzel fairytale is transformed here from a serious narrative into a comedic one that uses humour to laugh at gender and social issues. But is DreamWorks consciously propagating a feminist message?

François Dépelteau professes that *Shrek the Third* generated \$800 million worldwide in 2007 by “recogni[sing] so-called deviant people and other ‘losers’ as legitimate and respectable members of society” (Nieguth 2011: 118). Its reappraisal of the marginal and weird as wonderful would appear to tie in with feminist ambitions of equality. The first key scene that features Rapunzel even accords with the Lurie-Lieberman debate, for it voices frustrations with the antifeminist treatment of women. Although Rapunzel looks like a jester and leads her sorority of catty, beauty-obsessed princesses into a trap, Rapunzel inspires these ordinarily passive princesses to abandon the laughable convention of “assum[ing] the position”, meaning to sit patiently for a male rescuer. Princess Fiona (an ogress and outsider) also promises the women: “From here on out, [we’ll] take care of business ourselves”. The Queen (Julie Andrews) supports this sentiment by head-butting her way through the prison walls, and asks Fiona: “You didn’t actually think you got your fighting skills from your father, did you?” Strength is thus reclaimed by and made available to women. What follows is a fight that promotes female solidarity. As Heart’s rock song ‘Barracuda’ plays non-diegetically, Snow White rips off her sleeve to reveal a Dopey tattoo (similar chains of desire are advertised in Chapter 6), Cinderella sharpens the heel of her glass slipper and brandishes it as a weapon, a narcoleptic Sleeping Beauty rips the hem of her dress, and the transgendered Doris (signifying inclusion) burns her bra—a tokenistic nod to second-wave feminist activism. However, these actions precede a riot that reduces feminism to ‘girl power’. To be free, the princesses (and audience) must be sassy Kung-Fu fighters, and so must embrace the stubborn

stereotype of the fierce, independent woman. This is vital because, as Sharon Lamb theorises, “resistance to gender stereotypes is now sold at the same [place] that perpetuates them... selling resistance means... containing it, restricting it so that it is manageable and not really resistance at all” (Lamb 2006: 33). Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix say of this scene: “It is hard to say whether this caricature of feminist militancy is laughing at or with women who stand up against gender oppression” (Greenhill and Matrix 2010: 9).



How apt that feminism and fighting are synonymised by a Rapunzel doll sold as part of the DreamWorks ‘Shrek Princesses’ toy line (Fig. 38). With “Kung-Fu kicking legs” and a “grappling hook hair extension” that consumers can wear or use as a weapon, femininity is repackaged as expansive, for the female body is repositioned here as beautiful and deadly. However, as with Mattel’s eerily similar Barbie™-as-Rapunzel doll, DreamWorks claims to challenge classic media depictions of women, at the same time as it sells women an image of being powerful—however non-standard they are—provided that they are beautiful. *Shrek the Third* does usefully oppose Disney’s line of do-nothing princesses, and so changes how one sees Disney. In this sense the film shows how adaptations affect each other. Yet feminism is attitudinised here (as is ‘Rapunzel’) as part of a shallow boys-vs.-girls fight. While being strong and having attitude helps the princesses to break out of jail—a metaphor for domestic roles and patriarchal confinement—there is nothing deep behind the appearance of resistance.

But appearances can be deceiving. The most scandalous revelation is that Rapunzel conspires with Prince Charming (her secret lover) to overthrow the kingdom. Not innocent

but calculating, Rapunzel is emblematic of a ‘me-me-me’ culture where personal ambitions supersede all. Rapunzel’s selfishness is addressed on screen by Princess Fiona’s question, “Rapunzel, how could you?” Rapunzel’s loaded (sarcastic) retort “Jealous much?” taunts the other princesses, who envy Rapunzel for fearlessly actualising her dream of social ascent. It is then surprising that a film that applauds disruption now castigates a woman for rebelling. Then again, even in the *Shrek* trilogy, women are implicitly positioned as subordinate to men; hence any potential feminism is ambivalent or confusing. For example, when Rapunzel reminds Charming that “you said you wouldn’t hurt [the princesses]”, he responds by saying “Not here, kitten whiskers, Daddy will discuss it later”. Both sexually provocative and seeking to silence Rapunzel, Charming calls himself Rapunzel’s ‘Daddy’ and so recalls tales (and realities) where women are forced to perform roles for men or perform their femininity. Perhaps this is why, when Rapunzel finally kisses Charming, she lifts her foot off the floor.

Rapunzel’s orchestrated kiss occurs before the princesses and grand archaic artwork, as if positioning theirs as a timeless love. This brazen display culminates in the film’s finale, which sees Rapunzel play herself in a big-budget ‘Rapunzel’ theatre production—entitled ‘It’s A Happily Ever After After All’ (Fig. 39). A spotlight shines on Rapunzel, who brings the audience to tears by singing: “I wait alone up here. I’m trapped another day. Locked up here, please set me free. My new life I almost see. A castle. You and me”. Longings for escape and attachment are here spoon-fed to audiences. That Charming is fed his lines by a prompter (seen reading the script) reinforces the scripted nature of ‘Rapunzel’ and the characters’ lives. This scene recalls the film’s opening, where Charming first stages ‘Rapunzel’ in a pub, only for Rapunzel’s cardboard tower to fall on him. Now her stone tower (symbolising hubris) crushes him. This occurs after Gingerbread Man pulls Rapunzel’s hair from her head. As it is shown to be a wig, the bald “new queen of Far Far Away” is publicly exposed as a fraud,²⁸ and is expelled from the film as a whole. Indeed, when the tower falls, Rapunzel is presumably still inside and thus dies as punishment for seizing her chance to improve her life.

²⁸DreamWorks’s *Snow White* has already mocked Rapunzel by daring her to “let down thy golden extensions”.

Figure 39
Theatricality and Feminine Artifice



The multiplicity of female lives in *Shrek the Third*, with women of all shapes and sizes, hints at a debunking of gender stereotypes, as does the explicit appeal to consciousness-raising. Zipes calls the Shrek franchise a “devastating critique of the Grimms and Disney”, which “point[s] to experimentation” and “furthers...tolerance and compassion” (2011: 243-244). However, while some gendered stereotypes are flatter, others are re-inflated.²⁹ As has been seen, Rapunzel’s conspiratorial efforts to overthrow the kingdom by wedding the buffoonish Prince Charming present her as an antifeminist and advocate of retrogressive gender roles. This betrayer of the sisterhood is a far cry from other well-known Rapunzels, but she seemingly typifies postfeminist culture, where self-interests are sovereign. Just as Disney ‘spectacularises’ Rapunzel, as the following analysis will demonstrate, this Rapunzel’s sole preoccupation is not her female collective or its advancement, but becoming the star of her own show—about her. But perhaps putting herself first and being honest about it *is* in some ways feminist. As Rapunzel looks far into the distance at a ‘Far Far Away’ sign, it recalls the Hollywood sign, and therefore implies that Rapunzel is in a land of (American) dreams. Certain feminisms would prohibit criticism of her dreams and choices. As Zipes concludes, “conventionality versus unconventionality, the tyranny of...homogenisation versus the freedom of...heterogeneity—these are some of the conflicts in the film [and] represent a real struggle within the film industry of cultural production” (243). Above all else, Rapunzel’s

²⁹This includes making Cinderella a blonde buffoon who cheers evermore at the most inappropriate of times. Conversely, Rapunzel is arguably the most complex character—and perhaps hardest to place, for she is wise, self-aggrandising, and ultimately loveable given her abiding concern for the welfare of her beloved princesses.

devious production of her own fairytale (a play within a play that recalls Disney's *Enchanted*) allows *Shrek the Third* to end with a flourish by highlighting the media adaptability of the Rapunzel fairytale, and problematises classic gender depictions. Although the film and Rapunzel's play trivialise the importance she attaches to her hair, it celebrates Rapunzel as a villainess who 'makes it big in the city', and it signifies cultural change and a departure from the Grimm 'Rapunzel' (1812-1857) by affording Rapunzel dialogue and what the director, Chris Miller, calls a "quiet coolness" that arguably hides her psychological complexities.

***Tangled* (2010)**

Disney's *Tangled* is exemplary of postfeminist and postmodern culture, perhaps more so than *Barbie as Rapunzel* and *Shrek the Third*. A hallmark of postfeminism is a naïve belief that the goals of female equality and presence have been achieved and that the social limitations imposed on females are inconsequential, or else have been overcome. Feminism is either forgotten or used tokenistically by Disney: a corporation that has historically preserved conservative gender ideologies.³⁰ But then feminist thought itself is often seen as superfluous in contemporary culture. Yvonne Tasker writes in *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* that "it is precisely *feminist* concerns that are silenced within postfeminist culture. Reference to 'the F word' underscores the status of feminism as unspeakable within contemporary popular culture" (Tasker 2007: 3). The irony of this is that, as Yvonne Tasker identifies, "the term [postfeminism] [was] generated and primarily deployed outside the academy, lacking the rigour we expect of scholarly work" (Tasker 2007: 19). The following analysis straddles feminist, antifeminist, and postfeminist perspectives in order to examine how Disney deploys Rapunzel memes and feminism and how it repeats and

³⁰Works on Disney and ideology include Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* (1995); Brenda Ayres, *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom* (2003); Amy M. Davis, *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation* (2006); and M. Keith Booker, *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children's Films* (2009).

potentially disturbs gender ideologies in *Tangled*, if only to reinforce or reconstruct them.

A central strand woven through this discussion is the notion of ‘feminist amnesia’, which has in part enabled a cultural obsession with a makeover paradigm, whereby female appearance is re-consecrated. Transformation—once a lofty ideal in classic tales—is made instantly available in *Tangled*. To achieve it, all one must do is wear new clothes and have a haircut. Individualism is again tied to shallow needs here, for a change in appearance ultimately heals all physical and mental discontents. The corollary of this is that female empowerment is synonymised with physical appearance and instant gratification.

Disney allegedly makes dreams come true instantly. This claim underpins its global reach, with theme parks in three continents, and with several news, music and children’s TV channels, not to mention countless copyrights to books and music that it then adapts into its own films and literature. The Disney Empire is a concretised hyper-reality (and memeplex) that reinforces the idea that humans inhabit a fairytale universe, and that Disney has a central position in global culture. Disney is not just a series of fairytale products. It is both a concept and a place “Where dreams come true”. Audiences who grow up with Disney products somehow learn to see this Disney world (and its Disney World theme park and films) fondly. For many adults, Disney recaptures the joys of a distant childhood and the fairytale’s universal appeal. Elizabeth Bell argues in *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* that “legal institutions, film theorists, cultural critics, and loyal audiences all guard the borders of Disney film as ‘off limits’ ... constructing Disney as metonym for America—clean, loyal, industrious, the happiest place on earth” (Bell 1995: 3). The prevailing, naturalised view of Disney films as innocent fantasy cartoons for children implies that audiences can enjoy these films as pure entertainment, safe in the knowledge that they are ideologically neutral. And yet from *Cinderella* (1950) to *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and

from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) to *Tangled* (2010), Disney has promulgated a relatively static ideology of femininity that, akin to postfeminism, maintains gendered representations.

The Walt Disney Corporation has long presided over princess films and has cultivated hordes of little girls who dream of being princesses—feminine, pretty, pink, and purposeless. Though Rapunzel appears far freer than the Disney heroines found before the 1970s, this underweight hero reflects attempts to disenfranchise women through media and advertising. Rosalind Gill speaks of a movement from “sexual objectification to sexual subjectification” (Gill 2007: 73), by which marketers appropriate feminist language so that women view themselves as free subjects, able to purchase products for their own pleasure rather than to please men. But beauty products target women’s insecurities about physical imperfections. Promising youthful skin, long eyelashes, and flattering dresses that can empower women, they teach women to see control over their buying habits as synonymous with self-control and self-worth. Disney convinces women that buying into the Disney princess brand is an assertion of self-confidence and a new way of doing and buying things for themselves.

Confidence is the message, but *Tangled* is a film in which feminist ideas fluctuate from diluted and selective to ambivalent and mute. *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* might be called a more explicitly feminist film, with a loud and clear articulation of what feminists are collectively supposed to want: better representation, equality, solidarity, social transformation, and freedom from patriarchal ideologies. The film thus implies a universal feminist standpoint. *Tangled* is at the other extreme. It transforms what feminism means and blurs its varying aims. While the 1978 film reaches out towards collective ambitions, *Tangled* centres on personal empowerment and (selfish) individual choices that are made without any knowledge of the social forces that drive them; hence it is difficult to extrapolate a clear message about female identity because Rapunzel is blind to how her supposedly personal choices (a) are imposed from without and (b) lead her to adhere to classic ideas of femininity. Since the film appears

to regenerate female stereotypes, it turns the female self into a shallow girlish project, a work in progress, where Rapunzel's liberty becomes the freedom to go outside, to have girls plait her hair, to obtain silk cloth, and to change her overall appearance. *Tangled*, as a postfeminist cultural production, popularises and rejects aspects of the feminism that it evokes; and it arguably undoes the gains of feminism, all while appearing to respond to and reinforce them. As one example, the film begins with criticisms of Rapunzel's many labour-intensive chores. The camera zooms in as Rapunzel cleans, cooks, paints, sews, reads three books repeatedly (as in *Rapunzel's Revenge* (2008)), makes dresses and *papier-mâché* heads, waxes the floor, finishes her laundry, and brushes her hair: all in a day. Beauty and domestic activities are thus associated with women. In her Victorian attire, Rapunzel sings about a feeling of oppression (asking "When will my life begin?"), but she is unaware that her dress is an extension of it, or that she is being lauded—by Disney—as an accomplished woman and angel-in-the-house.

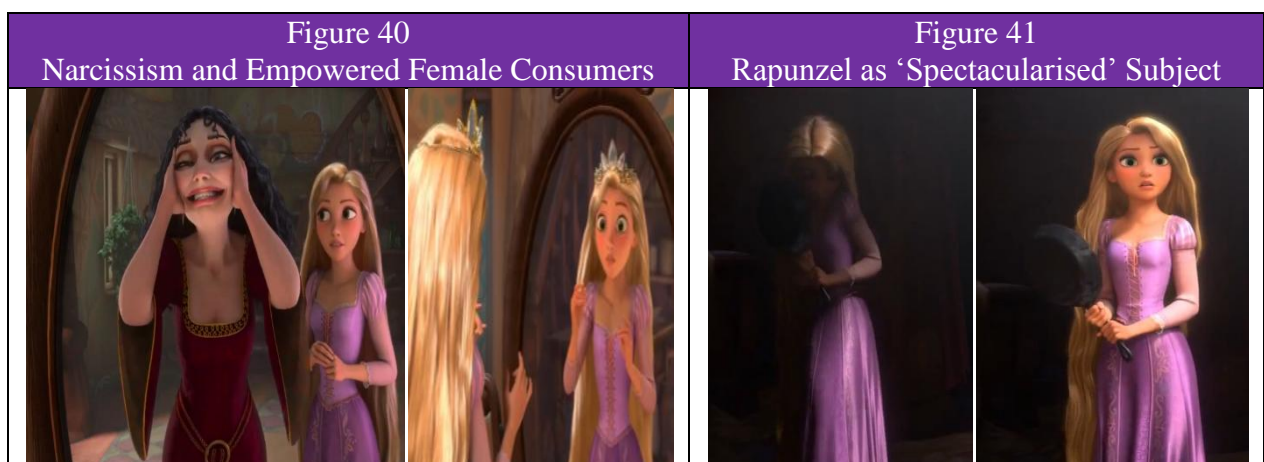
In stark contrast, the age-conscious Mother Gothel is fixated on her appearance and is aware of a pressure for older women to 'look good'. To look at Gothel, one may think that she has 'had work done' (cosmetic surgery), for she cheats the ageing process and epitomises and encourages a glamorous individuality insofar she is made to feel special by maintaining her appearance. Feeling beautiful gives Gothel a sense of self-importance, as demonstrated by her sashaying across the screen, just as Rapunzel's feminine beauty and long hair make her a celebrity and make her feel special too. To be a woman once meant being nurturing and kind; nowadays popular media presents having an attractive body as the key to female identity. Gothel's rapid bodily metamorphoses are perhaps accelerated and instantaneous to appeal to consumer culture with its emphasis on immediate gratification. Rather than achieve a youthful body through a regimented diet and exercise, Gothel is a *magically* empowered consumer who chooses, domesticates, and enslaves Rapunzel in order to realise her own wants and 'individual choices' immediately. A 'hot' body might afford women authority but

it requires constant maintenance (achieved through consumer products) to withstand criticism from both sexes and to conform to increasingly circumscribed views of what constitutes womanly beauty. Gothel is celluloid proof that women can have it all. However, while the film turns a perennial desire for transformation into a desire for physical perfection, this desire is simultaneously treated as fundamentally human and yet somehow unnatural because it is expressed by a mature woman.³¹ Gothel arguably can have it all, but she cannot and must not want to have it. Consequently, Disney uses Gothel's ageing-in-reverse to feed into a makeover culture—as seen in *Sex and the City* (1998-2004)—with its attendant anxieties about the gradual decay of the female human form; but, at the same time, it ridicules and demonises Gothel for actualising her ambition of regaining her youth. When Gothel can no longer satisfy exacting beauty standards, she dies—a symbol of the erasure of the ageing postmenopausal female on screen. This is but one conflicting message promoted by Disney. All women are expected to be beautiful, yet *older* women must be purged of such desires. They are now undesirable to men, and must resign themselves to being unfeminine, absent and invisible: secluding themselves in towers or falling to their death. The fetishisation of female power and desires is problematised by thinly veiled efforts to contain or remove them.

Gothel's central preoccupation, when she stands before a mirror (Fig. 40), is to remove the bags under her eyes and to pull at her skin to make it firmer and more youthful. Gothel's inability to see Rapunzel beside her is characteristic of a 'me-me-me' culture, as are Gothel's words: "I see a strong, confident, beautiful young lady... Oh look, you're here too, Rapunzel!" Gothel's self-indulgence adds fuel to one pervasive view which states that the male-organised beauty industry has kidnapped women's minds, and that women have no desire to be ransomed and deprogrammed. Women are not held at gunpoint or forced to wear make-up, but they are 'hypnotised' by models or consumer goods, and are recruited into the position of

³¹Gothel's rejuvenation is made more unnatural by being the result of a magic song that Rapunzel sings rapidly in order to "make the clock reverse" and to "bring back" Gothel's youth. The enchantment is temporary and Gothel is consequently wholly dependent on Rapunzel, for she cannot regulate her imperfections by herself.

‘docile glamour-pusses’. Although women are ostensibly free to choose how they look, the desire to be beautiful in the first place is often driven by a desire to please a man, or to stave off criticism from other women—who are perhaps striving to be attractive to a man as well. Fittingly, when a drunkard refers to Gothel flirtatiously as a “tall drink of water”, a flattered Gothel purrs, grins widely, and says with a coy lilt, “Oh stop it ya big lug”. Her attitude tells screen audiences that Gothel is accepting—indeed *inviting*—the male gaze and enjoys being on display, as if this is a victory for feminists, when in fact it enacts a conspiracy to deny women their hard-won freedoms. Ultra-thin and glamorous Disney women such as Gothel and Rapunzel are living signifiers of female identity being replaced by and pushed into a narrow body and a tight dress. Audiences see that Gothel and Rapunzel are thin and beautiful because they are constantly active. This arguably pressurises the ‘average’ woman into exercising, wearing make-up, and dieting. But there is also a pressure to accept being on display as definitional of women, as if to-be-looked-at-ness has become a female inheritance.

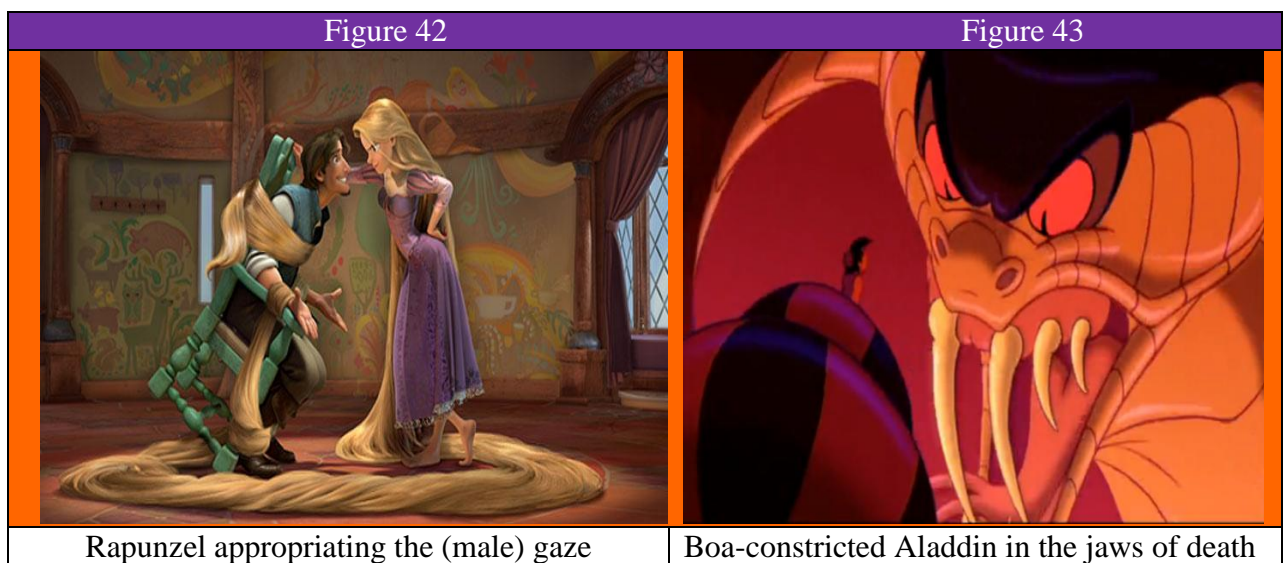


Rapunzel especially reifies beauty myths. Ethereal yet passed off as natural woman, she is the finished product. When she places a glittering tiara on her immaculate head, there is an allusion to *Cinderella* and the glass slipper, for the crown fits perfectly. Image-enhancing goods thus become a perfect match for female identity. Rapunzel sees herself in the mirror (and mirrors countless girls who play dress-up with costume jewellery) and feels beautiful. Females who see Rapunzel might look to her as a model of girliness/womanliness, but she

(with her gentle femininity) ultimately guides women back to ‘acceptable’ subject positions. Just as Flynn is tied up in the next scene, so viewers watch helplessly as Rapunzel enchants them with her sparkling exterior. That Rapunzel emerges from the shadows and glows (Fig. 41) recalls Angela McRobbie’s view that “It has now become a feature of women’s lives, indeed an entitlement, to move from out of the shadows, into a spotlight of visibility, into a luminosity which has the effect of a dramatization of the individual...[a] spectacularisation of feminine subjectivity, which becomes the norm” (McRobbie 2009: 125). Rapunzel’s actions imply she is free to choose to be objectified. As Rosalind Gill suggests in ‘From Sexual Objectification to Sexual Subjectification’, “the objectifying male gaze is internalised [and] offers women the promise of power by becoming an object of desire. It endows women with the status of active subjecthood so that they can then ‘choose’ to become sex objects because this suits their ‘liberated’ interests”. Rapunzel appears to control the scene, but she is exploited and becomes a ‘spectacular’ visual spectacle for Flynn’s enjoyment—who gasps and whose eyes bulge when he sees this luminous beauty in a literal spotlight. She is revealed gradually. Her gold hair glimmers, and her white face shines. One might assume that Rapunzel moves from a position of marginality (darkness) to centrality and visibility, centre-stage. Rapunzel even declares “I’m not afraid of you”, as if asserting her female authority. Rapunzel has the power, for she can see Flynn, whereas he cannot see her and so is vulnerable and the one being looked at. This sequence therefore brings to mind such buzz phrases as ‘girl power’ and ‘You go, girl!’ However, this ‘empowered’ girl sacrifices her position by ‘going’ forward to confront Flynn, at which point Rapunzel (the mythic beauty) surrenders herself to patriarchal inspection.

Increasingly apparent here is that Rapunzel invites inverse and contradictory readings. Though Disney treats Rapunzel as an independent, self-actualising, and self-rescuing heroine, Rapunzel is consistently a passive victim who relies on men to achieve her freedom. At first, Rapunzel is characterised as brave, especially when she pulls Flynn towards her with her hair.

This male intruder is a thief, unlike the prince in ‘Rapunzel’ (1857). On the other hand, this patriarch is tied up, immobilised, put in the hot seat, on trial and infantilised once strapped to a highchair of sorts. Rapunzel is depicted as an angry mother, who stands over Flynn to assert her moral authority and address her wayward child. With one hand on her hip and the other on the chair (tilted at a perilous angle) she demands answers (Fig. 42). This Goldi-long-locks coils her snake-like hair around Flynn and at once recalls Medusa, Jafar as a snake in *Aladdin* (Fig. 43), and Lady Macbeth—“look like th’ innocent flower / But be the serpent under’t” (I.V.65-66). Flynn aptly feels crushed by a girl whose seventy-foot hair becomes a rope or noose that occupies the entire screen, and which revives ideas of women as man-devouring serpents. Crucial here is that Rapunzel gazes into Flynn’s eyes like a basilisk and freezes him; he can but smile (with his hands outstretched) and beg for forgiveness. That Disney positions Rapunzel and other women who control the gaze as *femme fatales* is far from coincidental.

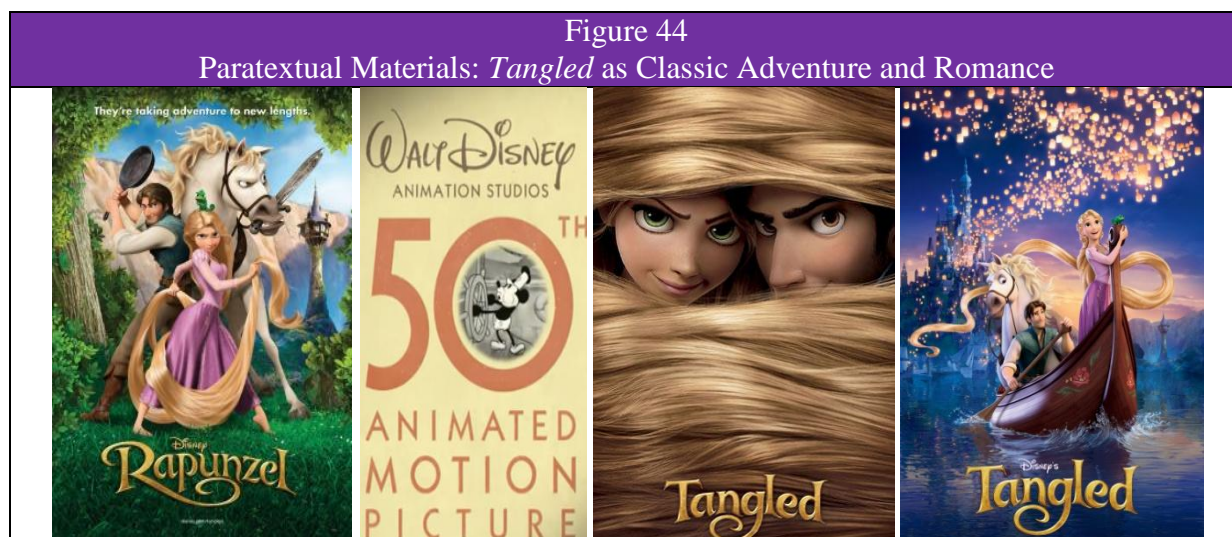


Given that *Tangled* is aimed at children and teenagers, the occasional portrayal of Rapunzel as deadly is intentionally comical, whereas Mother Gothel’s terrifying form and devilish snarls are deliberately used to universalise the evils supposedly inherent in women. Two narrow categories are available to women in *Tangled*: good (weak) or evil. Even the Queen is implicitly established as selfish. She is deathly ill during her pregnancy, and can only be saved by a sun drop that becomes a healing flower, and is then made into a potion.

The sun blossom accounts for Rapunzel's "beautiful golden hair". It also universalises the film and renders it ageless by grounding it in ritual and creation stories. But this flower has been used by Gothel for centuries to maintain her youth. When it is taken from her, Gothel's initial lack (the flower) is the equivalent of the rapunzel herb being stolen from the witch's garden in 'Rapunzel'. Gothel therefore kidnaps and raises baby Rapunzel to punish the Queen and because Rapunzel has absorbed the magic from the flower. That the Queen has no voice and cannot intervene or rescue herself recalls Ruth Bottigheimer's claims of textual silencing. She relies on male soldiers to find and transport the flower to the palace and to find Rapunzel. Nevertheless, one suspects that Rapunzel's biological mother would be a 'good' mother, unlike Mother Gothel, who is the equivalent of the wicked stepmother. Gothel and Rapunzel have an unusual relationship that recalls the master/slave binary in Anne Sexton's 'Rapunzel' (1970), albeit one that lacks its complexity. Audiences see Gothel brush a young Rapunzel's hair and sit her on her knee. However, Gothel only plays 'mother-me-do' in an attempt to inculcate Rapunzel into a submissive role and to make this toddler agree to never leave the tower—for her own safety. To ensure that Rapunzel sees Gothel as all that she could ever need in the world, and to stall Rapunzel's urge to "leave the nest", Gothel describes her as "immature", "ditzzy", "vague", and a "fragile...little sapling" that cannot survive on its own.³² But is Gothel then an antifeminist mother, or does she fall under the category of postfeminist? Is there such a thing as a terrible mother? Or is it just the case that women—in the service of (consumerist) freedom—should be permitted to treat children as they see fit? Gothel steals Rapunzel and only teaches her to talk and sing so that she can obtain what she wants most: eternal youth. Yet postfeminists would surely argue that this is Gothel's right. Where once she would be branded selfish and arrested for child abduction, now there is a case to be made that Gothel would be termed liberated from the idealisation of women as mother-protectors.

³²The soundtrack CD for the film includes more of Gothel's psychological blackmail: "I'm just your mother—what do I know? I only bathed and changed and nursed you...Leave me [for dead], I deserve it".

This is precisely why the Grimms would barely recognise ‘Rapunzel’ in *Tangled*. Even so, twenty-first-century consumers may only know the Disney film and may eventually see Disney as the creator of ‘Rapunzel’. As Donald Haase observes, “the defining version of a tale...in the minds of...media-aware children, is the cinematic one” (Haase 2007: 344). Despite being the world’s first official Rapunzel movie and a Box Office success, it is worth noting that the film title changed from *Rapunzel Unbraided* to *Rapunzel* and finally *Tangled* (Fig. 44), allegedly to appeal to both sexes and hint at an intriguing problem to be solved. And yet Jack Zipes excoriates the film because it “emptie[s] the meaning of...‘Rapunzel’” by removing “any hints that ‘Rapunzel’ might reflect a deeper initiation ritual in which wise old women keep young girls in isolation to protect them” (Coffield 2011: Web).



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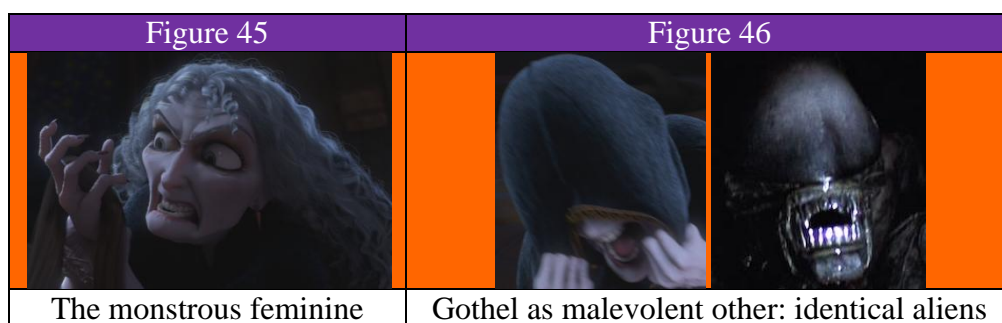
Readers steeped in the theory and culture of fairytales will arguably take for granted the possibility of psychological complexity in *Tangled*. The film’s animators themselves hint at such complexity in their statement that “The immersive fog...around Gothel and Rapunzel at the campsite...symbolise[s] the emotional effect of Gothel clouding Rapunzel’s mind” (Disney, ‘*Tangled: About the Film*’: Web). This pathetic fallacy is a flimsy attempt at psychological depth and implies that Rapunzel’s mind is an open book. Psychology is thus Disneyfied (sanitised and made easily graspable) in a way that suggests that the female mind

is easily decoded. Flynn also plays the role of couch psychiatrist, and lays bare Rapunzel's deepest feelings when she cries in a foetal position in a dark cave: "You're...at war with yourself here". He pigeonholes and pins down her anxieties, namely her "overprotective mother" and a desire for a "forbidden road trip", and then tries to "ease" her "conscience" by calling her burgeoning desires "serious stuff...part of growing up". His claim that "a little rebellion, a little adventure" is "healthy" is an example of how Disney popularises and asset-strips selective psychological ideas so that they can be easily digested. If the film does deploy a kind of watered-down psychological language that reflects the pervasiveness of pop psychology in everyday life, this can potentially lend itself to deeper psychological interpretation, especially for viewers and readers who know their Rapunzels. But critics might still be reading complexity into it, especially since complex emotions such as joy and guilt are reduced to shots of Rapunzel smiling in the light or crying in darkness.

Although there is an arguably lightweight usage of psychological motifs and language in *Tangled*, the cutting of Rapunzel's hair does insinuate deeper psychological significances. Mirroring a perennial adolescent self-hatred, Rapunzel feels ashamed when her hair is cut, for Gothel—alluding to *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)—shouts "What have you done!?" and so leads Rapunzel to blame herself for losing her long feminine hair: a hallmark of Disney princesses. Her long tresses darken when cut (as it would in puberty) and mark her entry into adulthood. When Disney's Mulan cuts her hair, it connotes an agonising sacrifice of her femininity: one that is necessary for Mulan to pass herself off as a man and be accepted by the warriors. However, the potential meanings of the haircut are less clear-cut in *Tangled*, for Flynn conducts this 'sacrifice', not Rapunzel. Just before Rapunzel can heal Flynn with her locks, he holds her face, silences her, and surreptitiously severs her hair with a shard of glass from a broken mirror. Though glad to be free from the burden of (being hunted for) her long hair, the haircut is a false gesture of feminist progress, for it is cut by a man—without Rapunzel's

consent—to contain and control her appearance. Flynn makes the hair short like his, knowing it will never grow back. That her golden tresses turn brown indicates that she has lost her strength and ability to heal, akin to the biblical Samson; hence Rapunzel is divested of her distinguishing feature as a fairytale heroine and, in keeping with postfeminist narratives, is normalised: no longer supernatural or a super-female but average and reliant on a man.

A psychological dimension to the film that hints at complexity is the fear that losing one's youth coincides with a loss of social and sexual power. The magic hair sustains Gothel's youth, femininity, and sexual desirability. The haircut is therefore traumatic for Gothel and Rapunzel—unblinking and panting heavily afterwards, as in *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978). A desperate Gothel touches the hair—knowing that it will age her unless it is attached to Rapunzel. This decaying woman screams because the hair turns brown and makes her skin wither; she then sees her reflection in the broken mirror. This is why Gothel pulls her cloak over her face, ashamed of what she sees. The unbearable (abject) sight evokes Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), for Gothel knows that the mirror shows her as a horror (Fig. 46). As with the evil Queen in 'Snow White', Gothel sees she is not the fairest in the land, trips over the hair, and falls to her death. Time catches up with this vampire, who crumbles to dust in the light—her cloak empty as it hits the forest floor. Just as the Fates cut the thread of life in Disney's *Hercules* (1997), cutting Rapunzel's hair kills Gothel.





Rapunzel lives on as a new Disney woman with an androgynous spiky haircut that seems to be a declaration about appearing new, bold, relevant, cutting-edge. Rapunzel's short brown hair can be read as a statement of progress for women, as if she has chosen to look like this.

Her makeover includes a radical change into the trappings of royalty, which reflect her new identity as a princess and her instant social ascent. She does not have to work for this climb. It just happens. All the same, Rapunzel symbolises a new generation of self-aware Disney women, for she knows what she wants and she is unafraid to pursue it. However, what she wants is treated flippantly, for Gothel's death marks a triumphant return to the patriarchal status quo. The ending of the film feeds into postfeminist narratives whereby women retreat from public spheres and are called home. The transformative power of the fairytale is used to celebrate social conformity and an extravagant romanticisation of the home, for the film begins with and ends in the castle, where Rapunzel is reinstated. A postfeminist assumption is that economic emancipation allows women to *choose* to leave work and return to the home. Though there is a troubling lack of career options for female characters in *Tangled*, one suspects that Rapunzel is simply so rich that she need never work again, as if money were the only incentive for being employed. The harmonious ending also implies that, once married, she can dispense with adventures. Now is the time to enjoy her (passive) happy-ever-after within the confines of a capitalist patriarchal kingdom. And now that she has fulfilled her one ambition of discovering why there are always floating lanterns in the sky on her birthday, this spirited teen can temper her fiery attitude. The film thus abandons its commitment to giving Rapunzel lifestyle choices. Indeed destiny becomes an organising principle that steers this ambitious teen away from personal pursuits and into the arms of a man. Rapunzel does not ache for a prince to rescue her, but this does not prevent her from leaving with a man when one finds her. Moreover, it seems that the postfeminist agenda turns the desire for *any* man into the *right* man for Rapunzel, and so means that one stereotype is replaced by another, as a misleading gesture of progress. Rapunzel herself states that it is "fate, destiny" that brings Flynn to her. By the same token, the fortuitous discovery of Rapunzel's royal ancestry automatically confers on this enchanted yet otherwise 'average' teenager power and prestige. Flynn gives Rapunzel the tiara that signifies her inescapable identity as a Disney princess,

and so sets Rapunzel on the path to her ‘proper place’. This speaks to what Diane Negra calls the “postfeminist promise of coming back to oneself in a process of coming home” (2009: 7).

Rapunzel’s quest blurs the borders of feminism, antifeminism, and postfeminism. This is because Disney’s filmic fairytale adaptation is driven not only by an impulse for freedom but a shallow desire to see floating lanterns. This feisty heroine-cum-spunky action girl is now a common stereotype in the cinematic landscape. Indeed it is rare not to find, nowadays, such female stereotypes on screen. And yet Rapunzel’s attitude has no purpose other than to provoke humour (when she mocks Flynn) or to drive home a point, such as when she states that she is the Lost Princess. Despite occasional gestures toward complexity, what remains lost in *Tangled* is a sense of meaning behind Rapunzel’s hair. The end of the film sees Flynn validate Rapunzel, for he loves brunettes; there is a romantic lesson of acceptance and being loved, warts and all. But again the multi-layered motif of the hair is asset-stripped in this Disney adaptation, as it is elsewhere in other rewrites from this period. Aptly, in Fiona Ashe’s mini film *Rapunzel: The Blonde Years* (2008), Rapunzel ties her blonde hair around a hook and scales down the tower walls herself. She then cuts her hair with the prince’s sword, takes off her long Victorian outfit (patriarchal shackles), and exposes a sleek red dress—as if revealing a new, sexier identity (Fig. 47). This shallow, diluted treatment of feminist ideas echoes the self-styled fashion guru Victoria Beckham, who says that the Spice Girls “brought out [her] daring [and] say-what-you-think-side” (Beckham [2001] 2013: 136). Ashe’s Rapunzel seems to have internalised Beckham’s perspective and her life lesson that “If you want something, go and get it. If you want to wear something, so what if no one else is wearing it, just wear what you want to wear. Do your make-up and...hair how you want, and sod everything” (136-137). The central feminist message thus becomes “Be yourself”, but being yourself is predicated entirely on appearance. By implication, Disney offers style over substance. This is also true of several adaptations in the next chapter.

Figure 47 <i>Rapunzel: The Blonde Years</i> (2008)	Figure 48 <i>Tangled</i> (2010)
	
Shedding patriarchal layers and attitudinising individualism	The new Rapunzel: light-headed, vacant, and still dressed in Elizabethan or Victorian attire

A two-way process has been demonstrated by this film analysis. Feminism has

affected *Tangled* in the sense that the film challenges *some* stereotypes, albeit resulting in clichéd perceptions of Rapunzel as a “spirited, kind and playful girl in her late teens”, as if having energy and being benign are synonymous with a feminist identity. Yet equally true is that Disney both appropriates and influences feminism in a way that simplifies and reduces it. The entire film propagates the message that characters are being liberated so that they can be who or what they want to be. But it is also possible to argue that this might equally be read in terms of the still-prevailing (if not beleaguered) stereotype of the American Dream that lives on in Victoria Beckham and Fiona Ashe: “Don’t just dream it. Be it!” *This* is how feminism is Disneyfied: by being changed into a ready-made cliché that is popularised for the audience. If *Tangled* presents a diluted feminism, *Into the Woods*, analysed next, does not even do this.

***Into the Woods* (2014)**

With its emphasis on visual splendour, intertitles, lavish costumes and period architecture, and its intertextual references and all-star cast (including Emily Blunt and Meryl Streep), Disney’s opulent live-action adaptation of Stephen Sondheim’s 1987 musical *Into the Woods* explicitly announces itself as a classic fairytale adaptation. For Disney to create a big-budget fairytale musical is a risky enterprise, yet Jeff Gomez, CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment, asserts that “Superstar power, the fairytale angle, and Disney’s huge marketing machine give

Into the Woods the edge at the global Box Office”.³³ However, Sondheim admits that his long struggle to bring his musical to the screen required him to submit to Disney’s vision in terms of Rapunzel: “Disney said, we don’t want Rapunzel to die, so we re-plotted it... You will find in the movie that Rapunzel does *not* get killed” (MacFarquhar, ‘Master Class’ 2014: Web). James Lapine adds that Rapunzel survives in this adaptation as Disney was “worried about the body count” (Marks 2014). Sondheim ultimately agreed to this anaesthetisation—which he calls “part of our puritanical ethics”—because while “there has to be a point at which you don’t compromise anymore... that may mean that you won’t get anyone to sell your painting or perform your musical” (MacFarquhar, ‘Master Class’ 2014: Web). Charles Gant observes, “It needed trimming, Disneyfication, and changes in Hollywood fashion to get Sondheim’s sophisticated take on fairytales to the screen” (2015: 14). Editing (‘trimming’), Disneyfication, and cultural tastes drive the following analysis of Rapunzel’s fairytale, read here as a female-centred narrative that superficially disturbs but ultimately fortifies gender ideologies.

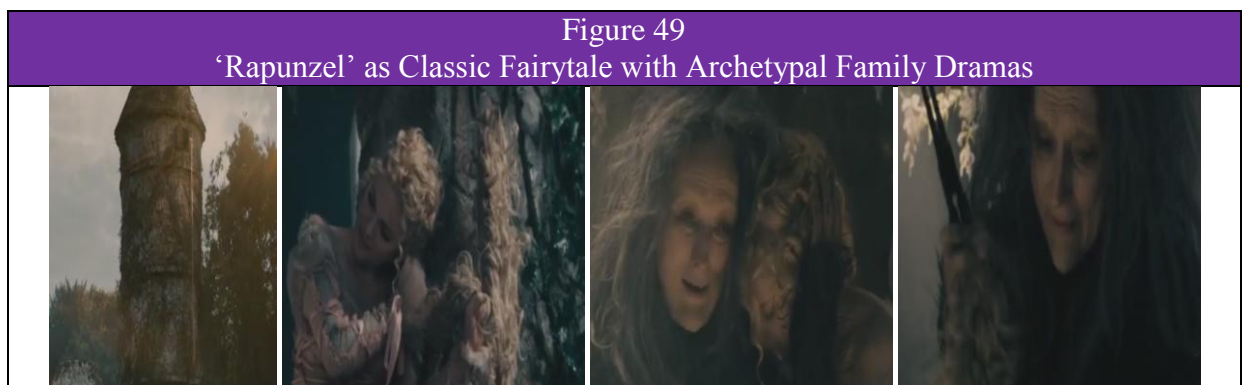
Disney’s *Into the Woods* is frequently prefaced with the word ‘post-’. Its director, Rob Marshall, confesses that he became re-enchanted by the project after listening to the tenth anniversary presidential speech on the September 11th attacks, and, at a post-screening in New York, called the film “a fairytale for the post-9/11 generation” (Berkshire: Web). But Michael Koresky would agree with the above naming of *Into the Woods* as postmodern. To be precise, he says “Mainstream cinema is now sufficiently postmodern (and post-*Shrek*) to make Sondheim’s once radical conceit—the intermingling of a handful of iconic Grimm stories, driven by characters wise enough to control their own fates and thus subvert the narrative contraptions in which they find themselves—seem like just another self-reflexive night at the movies” (Koresky 2015: 66). Merging ‘Rapunzel’, ‘Cinderella’, ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’, and ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, this is conceivably the apogee of Rapunzel

³³Anousha Sakoui, ‘Disney is Practicing its Scales this Season’. *Bloomberg Businessweek*. 24 November 2014.

adaptations and Disney's decades-long efforts to produce a screen Rapunzel. The previous discussion of *Tangled* suggested that Disney has been building up to an adaptation of 'Rapunzel', given its insistence on always presenting long-haired women in its films (even in the *Silly Symphonies*), and its dramatisations of the Rapunzel fairytale in *The Princess Bride 2: Royal Engagement* (2004) and *Enchanted* (2007). However, although Disney's *Tangled* represents a logical transition from the 2D animated motion pictures of the twentieth century to 3D animation in the New Millennium, Disney never made that final leap into live-action fairytales until Rob Marshall released his film musical *Chicago* (2002). This Oscar-winning hit symbolises a resurgence of cultural and studio interest in musicals. Indeed, it was only in 2003 that Marshall and Sondheim planned to bring *Into the Woods* from stage to screen, bringing fairytales to life by using humans to play fairytale characters. It is worth speculating here about how *Into the Woods* represents for Disney a post-cartoon age, with a live-action Disney *Cinderella* (2015) already released and a remake of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) reportedly in preparation. Will a *Rapunzel* soon follow?

Rather than follow Rapunzel's entire journey in *Into the Woods* (2014), this critical reading concerns her bond with the Witch (Meryl Streep) and her lover (Billy Magnussen), who is named in the closing credits as "Rapunzel's Prince". Played by Mackenzie Mauzy, the maiden with "hair as yellow as corn" makes her first significant appearance in a timeless and flower-filled tower that highlights Rapunzel's innocence, beauty, and connection to nature. However, Rapunzel's on-screen dalliances with the prince explain why she pleads to be free from a tower that is closed off to the world: "I'm no longer a child. I wish to *see* the world". Once more Disney renders communicable through song complex and competing desires for security, growth, freedom, and adventure. Yet the witch, as with Gothel in *Tangled*, seeks to deter Rapunzel from individuating and leaving the nest. Her song about having to "shield" Rapunzel from "what's out there" culminates in the words "Stay with me...I *am* home",

meaning that the witch positions herself as the embodiment of Rapunzel’s (ostensible) need for security and home.³⁴ Her words are a promise of everlasting fulfilment, for home is, as the saying goes, where the heart is. But Gothel’s lyrical efforts to maintain the status quo visibly distress Rapunzel, who cries throughout. For that matter, there is disjunction between the witch’s words and actions. Though Rapunzel buries her head in Gothel’s shoulders like an infant seeking maternal solace (Fig. 49), and at one stage enjoys a loving embrace, rage floods Gothel: “Why could you not obey? Children should listen...I gave you protection and yet you disobeyed me!” Although obeisance to parental authority is the lesson here, as in Sexton’s ‘Rapunzel’ (1970), Gothel has mixed feelings for Rapunzel, who calls her “Mother” when she caresses her cheeks and holds her close. She desires human contact, but she pulls away. Gothel likewise breaks away from their embrace and asks: “What would you have me be—handsome like a prince?” Her query evokes the troubling and questionable relationship in Donoghue’s ‘The Tale of the Hair’, for Gothel implicitly wonders ‘Am I enough for you?’ and ‘Do we have to have a romantic relationship for you to stay?’ Rapunzel potentially answers these unspoken questions (when Gothel tells her to stay at home) by presciently holding her neck, as if betraying her feeling of being choked. Gothel is not enough for her. These feelings resurface in the same scene when Gothel forcibly cuts Rapunzel’s hair.



Given that this is a Disney adaptation, Rapunzel is obscured by plants at the exact moment of cutting. This sanitisation seems a deliberate move. Indeed, when Rapunzel yells

³⁴Meryl Streep sounds uncannily similar here to Donna Murphy (Gothel in *Tangled*), who was originally pitched as the Witch in *Into the Woods* (2014)—perhaps to instil a sense of continuity and recognition for audiences.

“No!”, she is made to lay face down on her bed. To hide her emotions from the screen is to make the act more palatable for viewers. However, as this scene unfolds at breakneck speed, audiences are denied the time to reflect on a woman being forced into submission. Not bold but weak, Rapunzel feeds into antifeminist portrayals of women as passive sacrificial victims. Her voice is ignored and, as in several of the adaptations in this thesis, Rapunzel is dominated in an aggressive (sexual) manner by a powerful woman who purports to be her moral curator. This is significant because viewers have already seen Gothel upstage and blind the dashing prince after she sees him in “the forbidden tower”. By making him fall off his horse and into a wall of briars that she creates by magic, she symbolically castrates the prince and all men that threaten her pair-bond with Rapunzel. Gothel’s speech at the start of the film even suggests that her man-hatred stems from Rapunzel’s biological father “robbing me, raping me... ripping up the rampion,” as well as plundering her magic “beans” and thereby destroying her “youth” and “beauty”. The word “raping” makes for uncomfortable listening, but ties in with the non-consensual haircutting, for Gothel conceivably repeats a vicious cycle of abuse by taking out her frustrations on the child of her abuser. Meanwhile, her actions against Rapunzel’s prince seem justified, because anything that she does to hurt this man can be explained away as a scorned woman’s cautionary retaliation against all men, or a mother’s feminist ambition to protect her child from amative men and patriarchal authority. Even so, the lingering extreme close-up of Gothel’s face suggests that she instantly regrets hurting Rapunzel (her child) and the prince. Nonetheless, as in *Rapunzel’s Revenge*, she still leaves Rapunzel at a swamp in the forest. Aptly, while Rapunzel’s twins appear in a desert in the Grimms’ ‘Rapunzel’ and Sondheim’s 1987 musical, Disney (as moral censor) cuts them out.

Figure 50
Rapunzel the Healer, Bride, and Commodity



Sondheim's Disneyfied Rapunzel narrative also adheres to the Grimm hypotext by severing the Rapunzel-Gothel bond in favour of a heterosexual romance. Although the climax is the magical rejuvenation of the "old...ugly...barren" witch, the liberation of this matriarch is an empty gesture of feminist progress, for it neither repairs her relationship with Rapunzel nor does anything except reinforce beauty ideals. The witch now appears to transcend gender stereotypes (and resembles a deity), but her identity and self-worth hinge on her appearance. Equally, after Rapunzel heals the prince, he flaunts her before the kingdom as his prize, and echoes *Tangled* by approving of her hairdo: "Your [short] hair...I like it!" This lack of substance is mirrored by his castle crumbling before the narrator finishes saying that they were "destined to live Happily-Ever—". In this final Act, Rapunzel weeps alone in the ruins of her tower. This speaks to the loss of Rapunzel's tower as a place one can go and call home. It also encodes the shattering of the mother-daughter union, as well as an ambivalent attempt to move on and salvage something from the rubble. Specifically, a tug of war between the prince and Gothel prompts Rapunzel's decision to "not go" with Gothel as she cannot forgive her for sending her "to an island in a swamp". As Rapunzel rides off into the sunset with the prince and concludes that "I never want to see you again", this marks the death of their bond and contradicts the moral "no-one is alone". Though Rapunzel no longer dies, her end is numbing as hers is the only enduring positive female relationship in the film, and it falls apart.

Tom Hooper's Oscar-winning screen adaptation *Les Misérables* (2012) offers another 'palimpsestuous' reworking of the Rapunzel fairytale. Its lingering close-ups of Fantine

(Anne Hathaway) when she is forced to cut her hair and so sacrifices what Louisa May Alcott describes in *Little Women* (1868) as Jo's "one beauty" registers how psychologically devastating it can be for a woman to lose her hair. However, *Into the Woods* has been chosen as the final film text in this chapter, not only because it radically alters Grimms' 'Rapunzel', but because it is a live-action Disney film that offers 'more of the same', meaning the perpetuation of gender ideologies, despite being released nearly thirty years after Sondheim's 1987 musical. The 2014 adaptation *is* predictably gendered and something of a fashion show. Nevertheless, it still holds the title of "the highest grossing opening weekend ever for a movie based on a Broadway musical, trumping the record set by *Mamma Mia!* in 2008...[and] seen by four times as many people as saw the original 1987 and 2002 Broadway productions in their entirety combined" (Skiles and Pender 2015: 4). Outside of the film, it is interesting that Meryl Streep was seen applauding rapturously at the Oscar ceremony (nominated for her role in *Into the Woods*) as Patricia Arquette appealed to America for parity in terms of female earnings and opportunities. Though the Disney film is mired in antifeminist sentiments that hinder female advancement, Streep finally embraced what she has called the female-demonising role of witch because she relates to Mother Gothel (Smart 2014: 19), and because she sought to counter the absence of fairytale females on screen. It is then ironic that while *Into the Woods* is read here as antifeminist, Streep argues that such fairytales are educative and (in contrast with Lieberman's thesis) are *positive* training manuals for females: "All the great sagas are about kings and conquerors and heroes—male journeys—and fairytales are often cautionary: what you want for *your* girls" (Truitt 2014).

Conclusions

The five Rapunzel films discussed in this chapter share the Grimms' ambitions of keeping stories alive in the cultural consciousness. Full-length film Rapunzels since the 1970s are few but varied, and all suggest that the liberatory potential that feminists find in the Rapunzel tale

is based on a call to adventure and related feminist concerns that are treated in intriguing ways. *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978) produces a sense of estrangement that takes viewers out of themselves, unsettles gender ideologies, and helps them see the world anew—or at least tries to. Here the Rapunzel story permeates many aspects and contexts of human life (from teenage rebellion to a first love or a doctor's clinic) and thus adds weight to the notion that 'Rapunzel' and fairytales generally have universal appeal and translate to many contexts. This rare and hard-to-find film is an explicitly experimental feminist adaptation that has a consistent agenda and focus. It is clear, having analysed this film and its theoretical influences, that complex adaptations disturb gender ideologies more explicitly than simplistic deployments of memes and motifs that also perpetuate longstanding ideological appropriations of them. The second film discussed in this chapter, *Barbie as Rapunzel* (2002), is primarily concerned with aesthetics and assimilating Rapunzel to the Barbie brand, with its emphases on looks and female passivity. The shift in target audience, from adults to young children, has been accounted for by this discussion and explains why Mattel simplifies and nigh-on *Disneyfies* the Rapunzel fairytale. The call to adventure becomes a call to a hairdresser. This commercial Rapunzel revision mirrors and anticipates Disney's *Tangled* (2010) and *Into the Woods* (2014). Disney fittingly communicates to audiences a recalibration of gender stereotypes and an array of (quasi-)feminist and (quasi-)psychoanalytic ideas. Concentration is given to sexuality, maturation, and several feminist themes, yet the teen age range necessitates an anaesthetisation of complex ideas so that they are accessible and acceptable for impressionable minds. The irony is that Disney impresses on viewers conservative roles and a tabloid (shallow) individualism where the message is to define oneself through image. While the influence of feminism in the 1970s supports ideas of fairytales possessing liberatory potential, and while the call to adventure is reinterpreted as a feminist call to adventure in 1978, by 2010 the call is co-opted by a consumerist individualism.

Chapter 6: Commercial Hairy-Tales

Even when a product is packaged anew, the messages are the same. In fact, that's a principle of marketing: to keep creating the same old thing packaged differently and with a slightly new twist.

(Lamb 2006: 11).

The pervasiveness and cultural sway of fairytales in the West have been demonstrated in each chapter by a range of 'Rapunzel' re-visions. This final chapter interrogates eight Rapunzel adaptations that are testimony to the power of American mass marketing, especially Disney, and to the "double address" (Tasker and Negra 2005: 108) of postfeminism, whereby images of ostensibly empowered women are used to re-inscribe traditional gender roles. While one may read this chapter and the Appendix and be able to think of more adaptations and cultural scenarios involving Rapunzel than I have provided, the following examples of postfeminist Rapunzels in the wider media are ones that I have been unable to discuss in earlier chapters, and exemplify how fairytales are still being co-opted to acculturate women to traditional roles. Advertisers continue to exploit the power of fairytale language and images so that consumers buy whatever a particular group or individual is selling. The twenty-first-century adaptations herein are representative of a recent trend towards Rapunzels that 'sell' postfeminist values (as argued in Chapter 5), and have been organised chronologically and by genre. Given a need to be selective and to draw the line somewhere, these examples are not exhaustive and do not encompass *every* Rapunzel adaptation ever created. Rather, they have been chosen to illustrate and analyse the relationship between popular culture and conservative ideologies.

In Chapter 1, I cited Lieberman's theory that gender stereotypes in fairytales have a direct impact on female identity, and that females have tended to base "their psycho-sexual self-concepts, and their ideas of what they could or could not accomplish...[on] fairytales" (Lieberman 1972: 385). However, as argued above, the persistence of Rapunzel advertisements is more a testimony to the power of American mass marketing, and of Disney in particular, rather than to a set of Jungian archetypes (shadow, trickster, hero, anima, animus, mother) or to Freud's prescriptions for sexual development. Notwithstanding the gender ideologies that

are often contained by advertisements, audiences turn to adverts not as psychological aids but as a means of gratifying their desires for consumer goods. Consumerism does of course have a psychological dimension, its promise being to create and then fill a lack. Chapter 1 identified lack as a Rapunzel meme on the basis that it may be a universal human condition. However, if the idea of lack is at the heart of consumerist ideology, then its putative human significance is always secondary to consumerism's instant answer to lack. Marketers turn to fairytales again and again not because of their deep or complex therapeutic value, but because Disney has for almost a century made fairytales popular, marketable, and profitable. As such, appeals to deep-down human urges are replaced with appeals to shallow desires and women's presumed buying habits and impulses.

Advertisers often edit out searching aspects of 'Rapunzel' because they want their fairytale adaptations to communicate immediately discernible ideological messages in an uncluttered way. Given the hectic nature of everyday Western life, complex ideas such as individuation are out, and appeals to shallow wants are in. After all, the goals of advertisers are different to those of an author. Marketers, driven by profit rather than a desire to bring about psychic totality, target women's pockets, and address females as faceless consumers. Authors tend to target female minds and see women as thinking subjects, as do the writers in the previous chapters. Even so, it would be naïve to discount the economic motivations of fairytale authors, who themselves often employ advertisers to attract females to their books. Important here is that image creators know from market research that girls often grow up wanting to *be* fairytale princesses and to wear their extravagant dresses. American advertisers have therefore tied fairytales to consumerism, and have used fairytale-inspired advertisements to re-route female desires towards products that ostensibly make all their dreams come true. Crucially, throughout this thesis I have called fairytales longstanding because they appeal to persistent urges and longings. But whereas fairytales promise eternal bliss, marketers replace everlasting happiness with instant and ephemeral wish-fulfilment, and intimate to their

audiences that one cannot live without whatever ‘magical’ product is being advertised.

Marketers are not necessarily attempting to communicate universal human truths. They are simply using the themes and images of fairytales (stories enjoyed globally) to create a sense of fun and ‘hook’ audiences. This in part explains the ongoing popularity of the genre.

Rapunzel in Advertisements and on Television

Sharon Lamb argues persuasively in *Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers’ Schemes* (2006) that “marketers can channel [female] desires along familiar routes of beauty, romance, homemaking, nurturing, and shopping, all the while telling her how fun, imaginative, powerful, creative, and free she’ll be when she buys these products” (Lamb 2006: 4). How appropriate then that *ghd*’s 2009 Twisted Fairytales campaign forges links with and tries to be seen in relation to ‘Rapunzel’, to target women as modern heroes and ‘empowered’ consumers. Even the lettering in the intertitle creates a visual comparison with fairytales, as if viewers are being read a fairytale or shown a courtly romance. Just as Disney opens its fairytale films with flashing letters, or with the image of a book opening, so too does *ghd* try to usurp literature and imply that ‘this is the book on screen’. Perhaps *ghd* borrows from Disney, and emulates its commercial strategies, to elevate its cultural kudos and to capitalise on the success of the Disney fairytale brand. Similarly, while *ghd* departs from the classic Rapunzel tale, paratextual allusions are employed to associate *ghd*’s hair-care accessories with fairytales, romance, and dreams coming true. Given that contemporary audiences chiefly access fairytales through Disney (for some this is their only point of contact), it is likely that *ghd* would consciously draw on Disney’s (acculturating) romantic fantasies.

Chapter 3 spoke of hyper-hyper-texts and the problems of stating when an adaptation stops being an adaptation. This is important because although *ghd* employs familiar images from several literary fairytales (and Disney), rather than use quotations from the written texts, *ghd* creates its own verses for its fairytale ‘twist’. These are ostensibly new narratives for a

new age and for new women. Although critics such as Naomi Wolf (1991) and Sharon Lamb (2006) oppose commercials that insist on female self-regulation and beauty, *ghd* suggests that being beautiful is paramount and that one *can* achieve perfection by using its ‘unique’ products. This is accentuated by the opening intertitle: “Her locks would appeal to many a suitor... why not find someone taller and cuter?”. Sarah Lambley, the global marketing director for *ghd*, states in an interview that this advert “gives women the confidence to play by their own rules”. And yet, as Sharon Lamb suggests, “marketers and manufacturers don’t have to confront the negative impact on girls: the confusion about sexuality and romantic relationships, the anxiety about weight and appearance” (Lamb 2006: 6). This darkly seductive take on ‘Rapunzel’ is thus somewhat confusing, as is its overriding message, for *ghd* is implicitly appealing to the illusion of “choice feminism”, which proposes that women can do or say whatever they want and call it feminist (Mackay 2015: 156). In this case, feminism means asserting one’s identity through image alone. While this stylish advertisement superficially venerates female agency and resourcefulness, it is a false consciousness, promoting style over substance. Though it points towards female freedom and self-sovereignty, this fairytale advert recalls and rescinds feminist gains, for the personal is no longer political. The personal is preening, and it is characterised by passiveness, femininity, and sexual allure. The scarlet Rapunzel who avoids and yet appears to control the gaze here is further streamlined, desiring nothing but to wear a billowing dress, straighten her hair, and flaunt herself (Fig. 51). As such, *ghd* manipulates women into endorsing self-regulation by constructing hair-care as a guilty pleasure.

Moreover, *ghd* attitudinises feminism by having a slender, ethereal, Rapunzel control her appearance, as if this means controlling her destiny. Indeed, the advert ends with the words “You can do anything with your hair”. The words “with your hair” weaken the sentiment that “You can do anything”. What is meant is that “anything is possible” in terms of viewers’ hair. Manipulation of one’s outward appearance is consequently all that is meant by ‘possibilities’,

and *ghd*'s online video tutorials and ready-made looks further circumscribe these possibilities. Second, the portrayal of Rapunzel as an empowered female suggests that *ghd* hair products alone can change one's life, and in this case Rapunzel's. And yet, however one looks at it, this advert is not about soul-searching or growth, but about hair, shorn of the complex metaphorical associations it carries in some of the literary adaptations discussed previously. By stripping Rapunzel down to her hair *and* connecting this once multivalent hair with *ghd* straighteners, all symbolic meanings are lost, and the supposedly empowering feminist message is undermined.

As Imelda Whelehan suggests in her study *Overloaded: Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism*, "feminism by itself is seen to be inadequate" (Whelehan 2000: 77), hence the rise of the terms 'post', 'new', and 'choice' feminism, which attempt to explain and redefine 'what a girl wants' (the title of Diane Negra's 2008 study on women in the media).

Relevant to this content analysis of *ghd*'s Rapunzel-inspired advert are Diane Negra's words:

Postfeminism offers the pleasure and comfort of (re)claiming an identity uncomplicated by gender politics, postmodernism, or institutional critique ... Crucially, postfeminism often functions as a means of registering and superficially resolving the persistence of 'choice' dilemmas...From the late 1990s renaissance in female-centred television to the prolific pipeline of Hollywood 'chick-flicks', to the heightened emphasis on celebrity consumerism, and the emergence of a new wave of female advice gurus/lifestyle icons, the popular culture landscape has seldom been as dominated as it is today by fantasies and fears about women's 'life-choices'.

(Negra 2009: 2)

Rapunzel's 'life-choices' and anxieties only extend to how she 'chooses' to style herself and to her styling her hair in a multitude of ways on screen. Interestingly, her hairdos draw on a rich legacy of literary and visual depictions of women, including such Disney princesses as Belle and Aurora. As is true of Disney's fairytale films, the female protagonist is presented as 'lifestyle icon' and celebrity—a role model for young girls and women. Rapunzel's confident body movements and expansive dress allow her to occupy more space and intimate power, echoing Cyndi Lauper's gusto-filled performance and dress in 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' (1985). Here, Rapunzel is the embodiment of 'Girl Power'. In Angela McRobbie's words:

supplanting feminism [...] and appearing to adopt the interests of [...] young women, commercial culture finds a licence to speak on their behalf. Companies draw on the language of ‘Girl Power’ [...] to bestow on their products a sense of dynamism, modernity and innovation. Such post-feminist strategies allow for the expansion of the ‘teen girl’ global market on the basis of re-invention of the category of youthful womanhood for whom freedom has now been won. (McRobbie 2008: 533)

Yet as Rapunzel’s primary aim is to ‘reinvent’ herself to attract a prince, the advert signifies to its female target market a courtship ritual. Dan Laughey argues that “Ads represent a contrived version of social rituals, norms and conventions—like women being subordinate to men” (Laughey 2007: 84). That Rapunzel is coquettish and lowers her eyes exposes the advert’s sexual undertones and its ulterior preoccupation with romance quests. The extreme close-ups of her exposed skin and of her slowly fondling the cylindrical *ghd* straighteners are erotic and attract the attention of a knight-in-shining-armor, who is seen shortly after the first intertitle. Patriarchal authority and the male gaze are signified when the prince espies Rapunzel through an extended telescope. The vision is restricted to what he sees—a woman sitting at a window. Against the backdrop of flowers and sensual fabrics, Rapunzel’s crimson lips and knowing grin liken her to the biblical Eve. Although she is not seen abseiling down the tower walls, this nods to ideas of pre- and post-fallen woman, for Rapunzel leaves the tower (innocence) and enters the wider world (experience). This is her ‘choice’, yet her desires clash with those of the prince. Rapunzel is treated as a sexual object here, not a subject, and the hero wants ‘it’. He even kills a demon to prove his manliness and win the maiden’s heart. This prince claims Rapunzel as his reward by kissing and climbing her hair—such is the effect of her hair on him. However, there is a quasi-feminist twist, for the hair is attached to an iron hook, not Rapunzel. All that is perceivable in the stark stone tower are straighteners and hair atop a pair of scissors, for Rapunzel has cut her hair and is missing. The implication is that men are obsolete and that women can rescue themselves. Nevertheless, while this may invite positive feminist readings, this is an example of how Rapunzel can be depicted in a commodified fashion as a means of selling consumer goods. Freedom and personal choice in this instance mean the ‘freedom’ to embrace purchasing power and to adhere to a prescriptive feminine look. For that matter,

there is a sense that Rapunzel is now superfluous, for the camera lingers on the hair and allows Rapunzel to disappear, as if the hair can now signify Rapunzel without being attached to her.

Above all else, the final image of Rapunzel donning a black leather jacket over a gold dress is connotative of a darker and edgier personality. It transpires that Rapunzel is stealing the prince's motorbike (replacing the horse in the Grimm 'Rapunzel'). Non-diegetic rock music begins as this 'Bad Girl' biker straddles the motorbike, as might the 'prize woman' in a TV quiz show. This classic scenario of the 'good girl gone bad' underpins Sharon Lamb's thesis that "TV, commercials, and movies feed your daughter a steady diet of stereotypes" (57) and pigeonhole women into certain predictable types. Although Rapunzel seemingly challenges idealisations of women by committing theft and abandoning the prince, when she kicks the pedals and speeds off, she is *re*-pedestalised and connotes "to-be-looked-at-ness". The resounding and confusing message is therefore: be like Rapunzel and buy into an ideology that venerates style over substance. This is the epitome of postfeminist individualism.



Australia's company Parmalat *celebrates* shallowness in fairytale-inspired adverts that promote chains of desire. Rapunzel, Little Red Riding Hood and Cinderella star as "bad girls" in TV ads for 99% Fat-Free Ultimate Chocolate Rush Milkshakes. Red Riding Hood's tattoo, Rapunzel's impending transgressive haircut, and Cinderella's hooker boots (Fig. 52), suggest ways of being secretly subversive, and are designed to rewire consumers' brains so their wants and desires are guided towards low-fat drinks. The implication is that this refreshing drink

releases the real woman beneath the prim-and-proper masks worn by each fairytale heroine. The motto “Just a Little Naughty” therefore becomes an incentive for buyers to indulge their naughty sides because this is permissible. But each advert forms a new chain of desire that consumers are compelled to ascend. While chains of desire draw consumers to whatever makes them feel good, and distract them from or compensate for whatever makes them feel bad or anxious, each chain is naughtier and more daring than the last, and offers a transient, meaningless substitution for whatever they lack. In addition, these adverts gloss over the gendered construction of ‘Woman’ as *femme fatale*. Once more each fairytale heroine has a wry grin. The hooker boots and wolf tattoo also hint at sexual knowingness. Is Cinderella a prostitute and has Little Red Riding Hood conquered the wolf or taken him as a sexual lover? And why, for that matter, is it ‘naughty’ for Rapunzel to cut her own hair? Presumably any deviation from the narrative with which audiences are familiar is the real transgression here. This means, as the epigraph to this chapter implies, while old tales are given new ‘twists’ or ‘skins’ (as Emma Donoghue puts it), the same moral of conformity to gender roles persists, with appearance once again simultaneously venerated and treated as a guilty female pleasure.



Tending to one’s appearance seems subversive here because it flies in the face of feminist efforts to champion intellect over unachievable beauty standards. Women can diet, exercise, overhaul their bodies, and still never live up to the doctored images that saturate all

forms of media. Parmalat intimates that all women *can* look as good as its models because its juices are 99% fat free, but it thereby reiterates a ‘need’ or cultural desire for women to preen themselves and to ‘watch their weight’. One then wonders if, akin to the above women who are objectified and packaged for male pleasure, ‘real’ women must also be 99 percent fat free. More to the point, the kinds of transformation seen in the above adverts are purely external. *What*—if anything—is the real message here, and why is it naughty? Is it that Parmalat juices afford women the confidence to make drastic changes to their appearance, and thereby beget a change in personality? If so, one wonders what the ingredients are. Might not women feel free or ‘empowered’ to alter how they look and feel *without* the aid of a consumer product? Perhaps the real moral is that Parmalat defies feminism and furthers a postfeminist agenda. This itself is ‘naughty’ because Parmalat’s target audience is unaware of being manipulated by a company that promises to be their friend. It tells women that they can drink these juices and look good, and it promises to keep this indulgence a secret, as if saying “Have a drink. We won’t tell...”. As in *Tangled* and *Shrek the Third*, tattoos and high-heel shoes are also used as a declaration of rebellion and otherness. The overt message is that women can be who they want and dress as they want. But the covert message is that male-dominated corporations are telling women who they are, how to dress, and what to drink; thus once more personal choices come from without. The socially approved ‘brand’ of individualism being promoted here is a false consciousness that repackages conformity as non-conformity, and redefines womanhood as image-obsessed. This commoditisation of womanhood is encapsulated by Hilary Radner’s assertion that postfeminism “encourages and reinforces consumer culture practices as one of the primary means through which a woman can confirm her identity and express herself. It constitutes a very attractive version of feminine culture in terms of the needs and designs of the media conglomerates that dominate the contemporary scene” (Radner 2011: 3).

The Walt Disney Company is *the* dominant economic force in terms of children’s programming and entertainment, and has redesigned the term fairytale so that audiences automatically think of its princesses. Chapter 5 has identified Disney’s various outlets, which

range from film to theme parks that are known globally, and from television channels to entire news corporations. Small wonder then that Disney has been accused of influencing American mindsets and of disseminating ideologies that aim to keep its audiences under its spell for life (an argument set out in Jack Zipes's 'Breaking the Disney Spell' (1994)).

Of the thousands of possible examples that could have been chosen for an ideology critique of Disney, this analysis concerns Disney's television series *So Random!* which is principally aimed at children and teenagers and is testament to the buying power of the Disney Empire, for a special episode entitled 'The Real Princesses of New Jersey: Rapunzel' (2011) showcases Miss Piggy, who stars as Princess Rapunzel. This is important as Miss Piggy's 'star power' is used to captivate audiences and signify that this will be a humorous product. What is more, the very presence of Miss Piggy is testament to Disney's purchasing power and enviable economic position. Having completed a multi-million-dollar acquisition of the Jim Henson library, Disney now owns the rights to America's successful Muppets brand. Aptly, this episode translates 'Rapunzel' into America, and offers a (Disneyfied) commentary on female identity in twenty-first-century American culture. It is also a parody of America's confessional reality TV series *The Real Housewives of New Jersey*, which 'spectacularises' female subjects and gives audiences privileged access to the lives of affluent and catty women.

As in Marina Warner's 'The Difference in the Dose', this post-fairytale fairytale lacks any supernatural elements, and reflects a genuine fascination with how the rich and famous live. This might explain why this episode attracted 3.2 million viewers (Seidman 2011: Web). Every aspect of three princesses' lives is divulged to the camera. Yet Disney's portrayal of female identity is ambivalent, given its dual embrace and mockery of capitalist individualism. Echoing the preceding adaptations in this chapter, ambition supersedes all, but this ambition extends only to financial riches and a glamorous appearance. The 'flat' female characters here lack the self-questioning and self-awareness found in *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (1978). As in Parmalat's adverts, this episode supports the view that, in postfeminist American culture

at least, “appearance is one’s character and capacity for achievement in all aspects of life” (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer 2006: 268). This matters because Disney’s adaptation is predicated on the pursuit of happiness, which is achievable not through consciousness-raising or asserting individual and/or collective liberties, but through personal image and makeovers.

The fairytale itself is given a makeover in the opening scene of *The Real Princesses of New Jersey*. An expensive fairytale book entitled *Real Princesses of New Jersey* features the iconic Disney castle logo: a gesture of claiming or branding ‘Rapunzel’ as a Disney creation. This book opens to reveal a live-action sequence that begins at the foot of Rapunzel’s tower. However, the male narrator’s first words completely alter the way one views the visual scene and the lavish fairytale landscape, because he states that “Here’s another *lousy* tale of the Real Princesses of New Jersey”. Characteristic of the sarcasm and disenchantment of the twenty-first century, Cindy (Cinderella) and Princess Beauty (Sleeping Beauty) are introduced as ‘trashy’ Brooklyn broads, and are thus judged by a man. Enveloped by gaudy dresses and talking while chewing gum, they are constructed as vapid. This is confirmed when Cindy and Beauty each look up at Rapunzel’s penthouse and say—with deliberately grating voices—“Wow! Fancy new digs!” With their hands on their hips, they encode attitude and girl power. Full of envy, they conclude that “Punzie thinks she’s better than us” and that a man must be paying for her “new lifestyle”. Their scathing criticism implies that women cannot be financially autonomous or successful without a rich man. This declaration bears out Angela McRobbie’s discussion of “feminism undone” by a “hyper-culture of commercial sexuality” (McRobbie 2009: 18), by which is meant sexism being revived through the back door and used to relegate females to a position of silence, flirtation, and acquiescence to male scrutiny. As McRobbie proposes in ‘Post-Feminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime’ (2009), females are now “called upon to be silent, to withhold critique in order to count as a modern, sophisticated girl” (417). Rapunzel enjoys wealth and male interest because she preserves her beauty and allows herself to be valued by men. As such, a return to ‘pre-feminist’ values is passed off as the fantasy of a happy-ever-after. After all, Rapunzel and the other princesses have to agree to be the prince’s lover (and implied sexual conquests)

in order to fit in and be a 'real' princess in New Jersey. The word 'real' is troubling here, as it is in the *Real Housewives* series, where many of the women are neither housewives nor authentic, because these 'real-life' Disney princesses signify a false agency and a belief that women can do anything, provided that it involves consumerism, and has patriarchal approval.

Meanwhile, as Bonnie Dow reasons in *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970*, Western culture has forestalled further large-scale feminist activism by disseminating a "comforting message that patriarchy is over and women have achieved equality" (Dow 1996: 205). This message is reflected by television series such as *Sex and the City* (1998-2004) and *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002), where independent, forthright, self-actualising women are used as marketing tools for promoting postfeminism's 'double address' and a retreat to the domestic sphere. Each series ironically ends with a desire to abandon work and an independent life, and return home to a man. Susan J. Douglas criticises television for communicating such conservative ideologies (passed off as feminism) as follows: "progress because of feminism—indeed, full equality has allegedly been achieved—so now it's okay, even amusing, to resurrect sexist stereotypes of girls and women" (Douglas 2010: 9). Not only are sexist stereotypes being revived: audiences are being called on to approve them. With respect to *The Real Housewives* series, and by extension Disney's capitalist 'Rapunzel', Douglas contends that such shows reflect "what is often being said [in wider society] about girls and women...what we can and should do, what we can and can't be", and thus encode "the dark, sneaky serpent of sexism...slithering just below the shiny mirage of power" (6).

Miss Piggy occupies an unusual position of power as a 'real' princess. She is, as her name reveals, non-human. Kathleen Rowe posits that Miss Piggy "destabilises the line between animal and human. With Miss Piggy, the animal is almost human, and the human—especially the female—is already close to animal" (Rowe 2011: 41). Might she then be a cruel symbol of how men and women see other women? There is something grotesque but also quite endearing about her because, Rowe continues, "Miss Piggy's body is both animal and human:

the snout in close proximity to the ultra-feminine lashes, the little pig ears in the mane of hair, and the hoof-feet in dainty high heels. Her personality also mixes the animal and human. Her masculinised aggressiveness undermines a femininity that would render her more ‘human’, and instead she becomes a hybrid which in another context might be deemed monstrous” (41). Miss Piggy performs her femininity in an exaggerated way that is made all the more comical by the fact that she is voiced by a man. As she sashays across her lavish penthouse, mosaics, expensive art, and masses of flowers can be seen below an enormous self-portrait of Rapunzel. The paraphernalia directly underneath this painting thus appears to pay homage to Rapunzel. Dressed in pink and with glimmering blonde hair, Rapunzel (Miss Piggy) is painted as a celebrity or deity (Fig. 53). Above all else, it betrays her vanity and arrogance. When Cindy and Beauty mock this artwork, they term Rapunzel “narcissistic”, even though Rapunzel is, by her own admission, merely following a culturally prescribed need to celebrate herself as a woman: “I’m learning to love myself”. Rapunzel uses this mantra to qualify her current single status: “Who has time for love?” Under this postfeminist agenda, men are mocked as a distraction, but are ultimately the centre of Rapunzel’s focus. The illusion is that females are liberated from patriarchal regimes and are free to follow their own desires. However, Rapunzel’s confident assertions that she is “beautiful” and has “so many hobbies” mask her true feelings. In reality, only if *others* think her ‘sexy’, and only if others envy her for being able to maintain her lifestyle can she truly love herself. The locus of her identity is exterior to her.

How unfortunate for Rapunzel that Cindy and Beauty are archetypal “frenemies”, adulating her in person for her success, but privately hoping to “take her down a peg or two”. As Thomas Hardy suggests in *The Return of the Native*, “The devout hope is he is doing well. The secret faith is that he is making a mess of it” (Hardy 1999 [1878]: 168). As the camera moves to a diary room, each princess sits on a throne and complains about Rapunzel. It is only within this private, confessional, space that the ‘backbiting’ princesses divulge their true feelings: “Every time with the Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your blah blah blah... I don’t get it. We all work at J.C. Princess. How can *she* afford this?”. The reference to J.C. Princess

is a pun on the American department store J.C. Penney and is used to make this adaptation seem relevant to everyday American life—particularly since the majority of viewers will be familiar with this company. And yet Rapunzel either works at home or is in fact unemployed. Indeed, Rapunzel is *never* seen outside of the penthouse: symbolically trapped by domesticity.

In *What a Girl Wants?: Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (2009), Diane Negra charges that reality TV champions “the female homemaker... Postfeminist culture places a premium on showplace domesticity, with the achievement of a comfortable domestic life a marker of personal virtue. In this realm also, status correlates with the achievement of/entitlement to comfort, composure, and serenity” (Negra 2009: 128). Read in this light, Rapunzel’s portrait is a celebration of Rapunzel and the American Dream. Rapunzel now has it all—the looks, the luxury, and the life she always wanted. Her accessories are an extension of this identity. As Negra observes, “the 1990s and 2000s saw a strong consumerist emphasis on the expressive, designative power of small (though frequently costly) aesthetic touches in the home such as throw pillows, throw rugs, candles, and fresh flowers in various rooms” (128). *This* is what American culture expects Rapunzel to do with her money. Yet Cindy and Beauty are baffled because they have a lower quality of life, despite earning the same wage. Life has therefore become a competition in this episode, and everything needs an explanation.

The magic mirror from ‘Snow White’ is consulted when answers are sought, and it emphasises consumer technology, for it is now a voice-activated mobile telephone application. Cindy asks, “Mirror app, mirror app, on my cell, how can Rapunzel live this well?” The oracle (a macho Brooklyn man) informs Cindy and Beauty that “you two blow your pay-checks getting your hair done every other day and Punzie hasn’t spent one dime on her hair since she was born”, but they still refuse to believe that Rapunzel is fiscally responsible enough to have ‘made it big in the city’ alone. Just as Karen E. Rowe and Marcia Lieberman conclude that patriarchal fairytales teach women to hate other women, in this update, Cindy hates Rapunzel. The irony of this is that Cindy herself is reliant on and boasts about her “charming prince”: “He gives me glass slippers. We go to fancy balls... You seein’ anyone with a large wallet?”.

Intriguingly, a subsequent close-up of the window reveals Charming Prince Carmine pulling Rapunzel's hair and then entering the room. Before he speaks, the camera whooshes out to the diary room, where Carmine announces: "Look, here's the thing. It's a very large kingdom and a lot of princesses". Carmine is unmasked as an unfaithful lover who has been "three-timing" the princesses. By consequence, despite their protestations, all three women reveal themselves to be in want of a man. Gender stereotypes are also reinforced, with men expected to be promiscuous cads. Even so, Carmine gets his comeuppance when Cindy asks: "What are you doing climbing up another woman's tower?". His dishonesty provokes an instant change in Rapunzel, who states: "Ladies, I've got a confession—these are extensions". Rapunzel pulls out her hair extensions as a gesture of loyalty, and causes Carmine to fall from the tower to the ground. Such outrageous behaviour typifies the *Real Housewives* series, where women often threaten to kill one another, and 'stab each other in the back'. Such salacious activities are what draw audiences to their stories. There is vicarious pleasure to be had in seeing the housewives humiliate themselves, at a safe remove. Indeed, television executives are well known for selecting the most dramatic people imaginable to improve their ratings. At the same time, the housewives (as with Rapunzel and Cindy) offer a self-reflexive commentary on the show in which they star. They implicitly ask viewers not to take anything too seriously, for this is playful humour. However, humour is but one means by which gender stereotypes and ideologies—including postfeminism—can permeate culture, unchallenged.

Rather than dwell on the death of Carmine and a return to a state of lack for Rapunzel, Cindy utters her final lines: "You took out your extensions for me? That's mad loyal". Hair is the ultimate sacrifice for these women. Although Rapunzel can have her extensions refitted, by removing them, she implies that friendship supersedes appearance. By the same token, with her hair now short, a diamond necklace shaped like a butterfly is displayed to the camera. This butterfly conjures images of transformation. Rapunzel certainly thinks she has changed insofar as she frees herself from her extensions and thus abandons an inauthentic identity. But perhaps this is reading too much into it. The sketch *does* end with Rapunzel pledging to put her "Sisters before Misters" and thus with a promise to privilege female solidarity over a

male companion. However, her final words, “Watch the bling”, undermine the heart-warming evocation of a sorority. Rapunzel has already broken the sacred bonds of sisterhood by engaging in a romantic relationship with Cindy’s boyfriend. The reference to her “bling” likewise characterises Rapunzel as more concerned with accessories than human contact. This closing focus on capitalism exposes Rapunzel and the friends with whom she forms attachments as shallow. Rapunzel does not abandon an inauthentic identity altogether by freeing herself from her false tresses. This is an illusion. All that she changes is her hairstyle.

The Real Housewives franchise has been restyled and rolled out across America, and has even found success internationally in the spin-off series *The Real Housewives of Athens*, *The Real Housewives of Israel*, and *Les Vraies Housewives*. The suggestion is that all women share a fascination with and are therefore compelled to tune in see to how ‘the other half’ live. Each on-screen woman is a celebrity famous for being famous rather than for a specific talent. Maintained by their husbands, and devoting the majority of their time to the upkeep of or upgrading of their image, they are nevertheless seen as the pinnacle of aspiration and success. As with Barbie™-as-Rapunzel, Miss Piggy as Rapunzel seems to be living proof that American mass marketing and postfeminism (despite or even because of its contradictory values) work.



Other Rapunzels

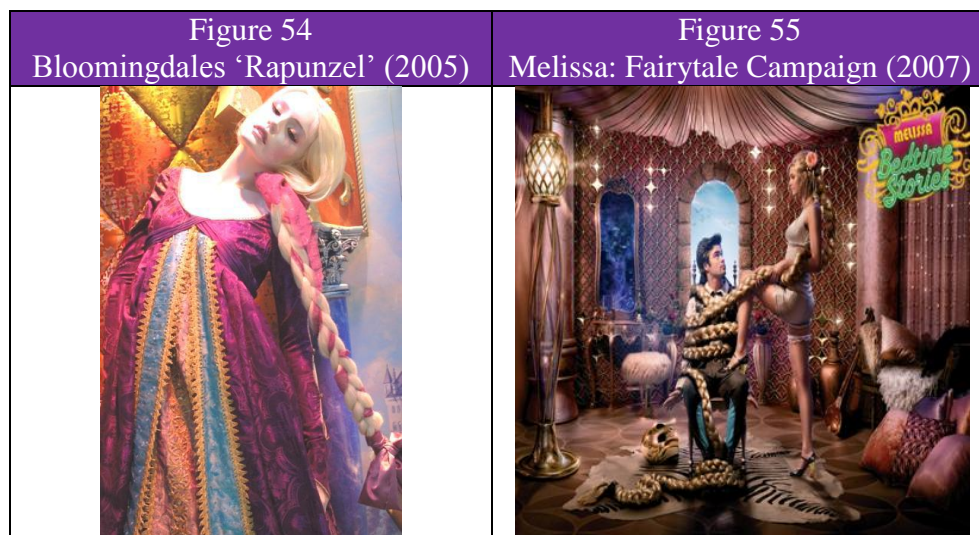
One of the greatest challenges presented by this research has been deciding upon certain Rapunzel adaptations and excluding others. The temptation to include *every* Rapunzel reworking that cropped up along this doctoral journey has been considerable, given that all of

the examples provided in the Appendix are worthy of close textual analysis. This is of course a value judgement, but, as the Introduction argues, one of the intentions of this thesis is to provide a pool of resources on adaptations and appropriations of the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’, as a means of affording Rapunzel a stronger voice and greater presence within fairytale discourse. What is more, all of the chapters have highlighted areas for future research, including case studies on Rapunzel in other media and genres, such as theatre, video games, magazines, book covers, music videos, song lyrics, paintings, and online fairytale forums and blogs. The possibilities do appear endless. And this is both exciting and problematic, for this runs the risk of transforming the thesis into an exercise in spotting the intertextual Rapunzel link. Although I have argued in the opening to this thesis that Rapunzel can be found everywhere, to support my argument that Rapunzel adaptations from 1970 onwards are exemplary of how fairytales repeat or disturb gender stereotypes, and, in order to highlight Rapunzel’s complex position in cultural production, I have restricted the discussion to a range of carefully selected adaptations (organised in terms of genre), that best illustrate how the various manifestations of Rapunzel have been inflected by a transition from second- to third-wave and postfeminism.

The following annotated list of Rapunzel adaptations encapsulates how instantly recognisable Rapunzel has become to adapters and audiences, and how fairytales from the 1970s onwards have been used as a vehicle for perpetuating conservative gender ideologies. In keeping with Kay Stone’s thesis that Rapunzel’s immurement is “a reaction of men to the threat of female sexuality” (Stone 1975: 47) and so represents the preservation of innocence and the freezing of her desires, Bloomingdale’s Rapunzel mannequin (as one example), has radiant porcelain ‘skin’ that connotes life and lifelessness. Drained of colour, with her head tilted to one side, her eyes are closed (Fig. 54). Whether demure, dead, or both, her lowered eyes reinforce her passiveness as audiences gaze upon her. Her blonde braids root her to the spot and are tied to her dress, ironically suggesting that her hair, dress, and environment all combine to asphyxiate her. Unable to escape her tower or her flowing medieval attire, she intimates that women are always on display. At the same time, while she suggests innocence,

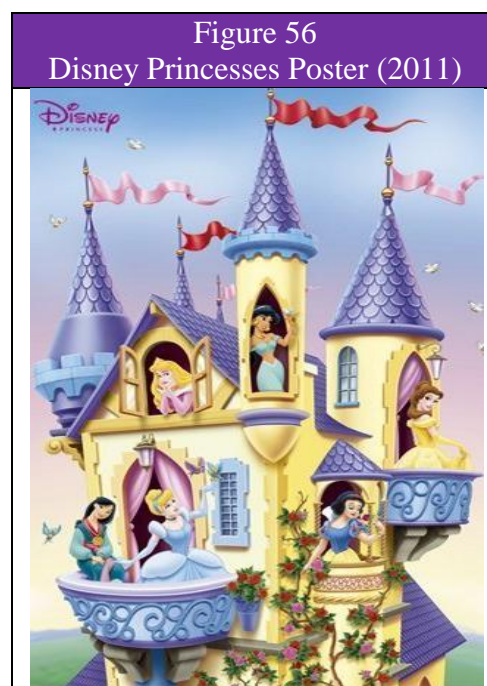
her protruding stomach hints at pregnancy. Shorn of complexity and reduced to an object of the male gaze, this image of a woman in need of rescue and a man has been standardised in the collective cultural imagination. Here, Rapunzel is interchangeable with Sleeping Beauty: comatose, sexually available, and unable—or perhaps no longer desiring—to leave her tower.

Traditionally, men climb Rapunzel’s hair to conquer and claim her. It is a metonymic reduction and *objectification* of women, specifically their hair, as if hair constitutes the entirety of womanhood. The lesson is that women can only express themselves through femininity and must aim to attract a man. Melissa, a Brazilian women’s shoe company, has Rapunzel (Fig. 55) use her hair to tie a suited-and-booted man to a chair and hold her sharp high-heel perilously close to his crotch. Both pure maiden and *femme fatale*, she dominates the scene and invites the male gaze. But the male seems complicit in this sexual scenario. ‘Rapunzel’ is reconfigured here to call audiences to sexual adventure and to buy new shoes.



A second example that best illustrates a cynical view that all women are the same, and sexually available, is Disney’s Princesses poster: a promotional tie-in with its fairytale films. The roses, ‘pure’ feminine characters, and gentle colour palette are all designed to appeal to a female audience. This is how Disney views females and interprets female viewing interests. The princesses occupy a castle that recalls the trademark Disney castle, an emblem of wealth and magic. Yet they do not look at one another, and are bracketed off from each other lest audiences confuse them. These immured women are all, in various ways, Rapunzels waiting to be rescued by a prince, and thus are prizes to be won. Each princess reinforces the Disney

brand, its power, and its patriarchal slant. Consumers pick the woman they like most, just as one might a prostitute. Straight-laced yet sexually knowing, they tempt spectators to enter their harem through open windows that frame them like art for viewers' pleasure. Implied is that girls exposed to this poster (Fig. 56) will assume that they must model themselves on these princesses, allow themselves to be scrutinised by men, and base their self-worth on an impossibly immaculate appearance (reinforcing self-regulation). Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* centres on freeing Aurora from her tower, yet she ironically returns to it here. Rarely does one see Disney princesses outside of a tower, as if the proper place for all women is inside a building—a home perhaps? The opposite view is that these princesses are beacons of feminism: rich, happy, righteous sisters 'doing it for themselves' and leading their own lives; rather than attracting a man, they are glorying in being without one. Such an interpretation is feasible but it has to pit itself against the countervailing perception that these 'women' are primed-and-preened slaves. The implication is that girls are buying into the Disney brand *and* a ready-made and narrow lifestyle option for themselves, for Disney princesses are explicit endorsements of and are recruiting agents for an ultra-conservative femininity.



Another loose Rapunzel adaptation of note is one explicitly targeted at young adults. NBC's *Grimm* episode 'Let Your Hair Down' (2011) transforms Rapunzel into a werewolf, Holly Clark, who uses her hair as a whip. While this heroine's name distances the episode from Rapunzel, her long hair creates deliberate associations with Rapunzel. However, it is

disappointing that while Holly becomes a monster as a result of child abuse, she is cured instantly when two men hold a pink flowery hair clip in front of her face, as if an accessory connoting femininity is the one true cure that (a) makes Holly finally remember who she is and (b) allows her to return home. The restoration of the nuclear family suggests an embrace of conservative ideologies of femininity, with the moral that a woman's one true place is in the home. This postfeminist retreatist fantasy is manifested as a saccharine sequence befitting Hollywood film. Holly leaves the woods, races into the arms of her tearful mother, and enters a castle-like house with a white picket fence. This entire scene (and moving orchestral music) signifies Holly's reintegration into the American social order. As Diane Negra suggests, the social climate of American television has shifted post-9/11 and has seen a "return to hearth and home" (Negra 2008: 55). The call for freedom and a new identity is thus reinterpreted as a call for home and the security of being a wealthy all-American girl. With straightened hair, a pink hair clip, and a 'preppy' outfit, Holly has been unmistakably tamed, feminised, muted (she is silent for the rest of the episode), and transformed into a carbon copy of her mother.

ABC's highly publicised *Once Upon A Time* Rapunzel episode, 'The Tower' (2014), has been chosen here as a final example of Rapunzel adaptations in the popular consciousness because while it seems to offer a positive feminist message, it never quite delivers. It examines familial anxieties, is inward-looking, and concerns a black Rapunzel and so appears progressive (realising third-wave feminist ambitions of racial inclusiveness); yet the issue of race is never mentioned and so seems tokenistic. For that matter, Princess Rapunzel is surprisingly absent from her own episode. And given the sparsity of dialogue, audiences may feel inclined to supply depth where it is lacking or finish off the story because they know the hypotext so well. The premise is that a fear of inheriting the throne compels Rapunzel to leave the security of the palace and go "digging for the [herb] night-root", which instils confidence. Eating the night-root leads to her being imprisoned physically and psychologically, for a faceless witch chases her into a tower and blocks Rapunzel whenever she tries to escape. Years later, Prince David Nolan hears her cry and battles the grim-reaper-like witch. Nolan lifts its hood to see his own face and so literally faces his shadow aspect. The faceless witch takes on the form of

all who eat the night-root in order to help them to “overcome [their] fears by facing them”. The message is therefore that Rapunzel has become a prisoner of her own mind. She has chased herself into a mental tower—a place of retreat—but also a physical one where she keeps herself prisoner. As Nolan tells Rapunzel, “She’s your fear. Only you can defeat her!”. It is at this point that the witch (now climbing the black hair) is also revealed to be Rapunzel (Fig. 57). Rapunzel is told to “Cut it away. Let it go”. The haircut literally kills the witch and cuts away the psychological pressures Rapunzel has carried for years. She is reassured that “You can finally have what you want. You can leave this tower”, but Rapunzel is visibly distressed and insists “I don’t want to leave”. When Nolan tells Rapunzel that she must let go of her fear of the unknown and her feelings of unworthiness, or else she will “die here alone”, she finally cuts the hair and destroys the witch, thereby achieving consciousness-raising. Nevertheless, that her psychological growth and freedom are only enabled by a male hero reinserts Rapunzel into the role of passive love object. Rapunzel never frees herself and only enjoys a heartfelt, albeit fleeting, reunion with her royal parents because of male intervention. The moral is that catharsis has been achieved, and that Rapunzel’s crippling lack is liquidated. However, this is yet another modern cultural production that positions ‘retreatism’ as the only path to contentment for women, and where any residual suggestions of psychological depth are forgotten, especially given that the episode ends with the indication that this silent maiden in the tower will wed Prince Nolan, having been restored to her ‘rightful’ place in the home.



Conclusions

This chapter has been one of the most demanding, for I have faced competing desires to offer a feminist critique of Rapunzel adaptations and to defend the popular versions of the fairytale. I have examined the afterlife of ‘Rapunzel’, but I neither include Rapunzel adaptations purely because they are Rapunzel tales, nor seek to preserve tales that re-inscribe gender ideologies. And yet I use a sample of such tales to show how they “make visible the fairytale’s complicity with ‘exhausted’ narrative and gender ideologies” (Bacchilega 1997: 50). Chapter 2 stated that the Grimms themselves used ‘Rapunzel’ and its perennial ideas to promote gender ideologies. Two centuries have passed since the publication of ‘Rapunzel’ in 1812, and adapters continue to use ‘Rapunzel’ to further their own ideological agendas. In Chapter 6, adapters were seen to tie perennial ideas such as lack to a postfeminist agenda that prizes consumerism and personal wants over collective rights and growth. This chapter has scrutinised the features of postfeminist Rapunzel adaptations, and extends the exploration of how ideologies recruit perennial ideas, because the postfeminist Rapunzels in this and the previous chapter ultimately undermine the sense of progression in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, from second- to third-wave feminism. At the same time, visual media does do exciting things and often displaces or rejuvenates familiar symbols and stories in interesting ways. While this chapter has focused on twenty-first-century postfeminist Rapunzel films and adverts that strip away the symbolic meanings found in their literary hypotext(s), the analysis of such texts required a rethink and a more nuanced approach, because such reworkings can reinforce gender ideologies and *still* be clever and sophisticated. Equally, while this chapter has identified a trend towards Rapunzel tales that celebrate a postfeminist retreatist fantasy, this does not detract from those feminist Rapunzel texts in the same or other media that provoke new thinking. The impulse to re-tell and re-view continues to make itself felt across a variety of media. For instance, Chapter 5 noted that Meryl Streep applauded rapturously at the Oscars Awards as Patricia Arquette asked America for parity in terms of female opportunities. In her first role since this ceremony, and since playing Mother Gothel in *Into the Woods*, Streep has starred as Emmeline Pankhurst in *Suffragette* (2015). Akin to *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair* (from the London Women’s Film Group), this female-authored and female-directed film refuses to break with the past and its scars and, by revisiting the history of first-wave feminism, counters the postfeminist belief that the need for feminism is over. This film looks back to move forward, as with several of the Rapunzels in this thesis. However, as the Conclusion will argue, I am not so naïve as to claim that we have entered an era in which all adaptations and Rapunzel re-visions will be divested of gender stereotypes, just as I cannot conclude that the durability of Rapunzel adaptations is wholly the consequence of perennial or pre-ideological ideas, rather than American advertising and cultural ideologies.

Conclusion: ideologies and universals

This thesis has realised its aim of following a single fairytale and a select number of its adaptations from 1970 onwards in order to investigate dominant psychoanalytic, feminist, meme, fairytale, and adaptation theories. It assembled key voices from fairytale, gender, and ‘Rapunzel’ scholarship, in order to highlight how pervasive ‘Rapunzel’ has become in contemporary Western culture, and how gender ideologies continue to appropriate ‘Rapunzel’ to infiltrate the cultural imagination. Chapter 1 established a pool of Rapunzel motifs on which adapters continue to draw. As stated in the Introduction, this pool is the result of extensive research, and has been included because the thesis has sought to examine the difficult question of why Rapunzel motifs appear to be longstanding and whether this is due to the power of cultural ideologies or to certain universal human urges to which ‘Rapunzel’ and its multifarious re-visions ostensibly appeal. In recent years, a great deal of scepticism has been directed at the supposed existence of human universals, with critics preferring to examine instead the social construction of ‘human nature’ alongside the gendering of fairytales and the patriarchal ideologies they support and/or challenge. Criticism of this kind is exemplary of the ideological criticism that has become a routine part of literary studies since the 1970s. One mainstay of the critique of ideology has been to suspect all appeals to human universals on the basis that they attempt to pass off time-bound, culturally specific values and assumptions as natural and as eternal. Given the prevalence of universalised gender ideologies in fairytales, this thesis has itself performed ideology critique from a feminist perspective in its examination of ‘Rapunzel’ and its multifarious adaptations into and across various media in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, including novels, short stories, poems, films, television, illustrations, and advertising. However, one of the distinctive critical interventions that this thesis has made is to attempt to save universals from complete demolition. Chapter 1 thus set up a framework that offers a double vision of ideologies and the perennial ideas that they co-opt. I have termed these ideas or memes perennial (if not universal) and *pre-ideological*.

To give a final example in support of my position: if, as Andy Mousley argues, human beings are predisposed to form attachments, then that pre-ideological urge can be channelled in different directions by different ideologies or discourses, from romantic attachments, to an

attachment to places, to a fetishistic attachment to things (Mousley 2013: 118-119). Ideologies would not be so successful in “recruiting” human beings as “subjects”, to use a term from Althusser, if they did not appeal to human needs and urges. While theories of ideology (post-1970) tend to repudiate ideas of human nature and the ‘natural’ entirely, by emphasising how ideology treats what is cultural as natural, critics such as Steven Pinker aver that although culture influences human identity, there *is* still a human nature that is inborn in all humans (Pinker 2000: viii). As Brian Boyd suggests, “to deny a universal human nature and insist only on local cultural differences [makes] a claim about human nature: that the minds and behaviour of humans depend solely on culture. This [is] false: our minds and behaviour are *always* shaped by the interaction of nature and nurture, or genes and [the cultural] environment” (Boyd 2009: 19). This supple thinking of universals and cultural ideologies not in terms of an either/or paradigm but a both/and approach has informed each chapter in this thesis. In each of the chapters, the perennial and arguably pre-ideological ideas of ‘Rapunzel’ and Rapunzel adaptations in Western culture have been identified alongside the critique of the ideological (and especially patriarchal) uses to which they have been put. I considered this methodology to be apposite because it has allowed for recognition of the enduring appeal of fairytales that thereby lend themselves to differing ideological adaptations and appropriations.

Jack Zipes argues that “we live and breathe” fairytales and “are impelled and compelled to use them to make meaning out of our lives” because they are “the basis of culture” and teach us about who we are and how we fit into our various cultures (Zipes 2013: xii). Although Zipes critiques patriarchal adaptations that guide readers towards specific meanings and ideological messages, which readers are asked to internalise and apply to their own lives, he is nevertheless drawn to ideas of universals, which potentially exist beyond culture—though these are (as has been seen) mediated by cultural ideologies. Pivotaly, Zipes also gestures towards a double vision of fairytales as cultural and as works that have universal significance:

Fairytales are informed by a human predisposition to action—to transform the world and make it more adaptable to human needs, while we also try to change and make ourselves fit for the world...[T]he focus of fairytales, whether oral, written, or cinematic, has always been on finding magical instruments...or powerful people... that enable protagonists to transform themselves [and] their environment, making it

more suitable for living in peace and contentment. Fairytales begin with conflict because we all begin our lives with conflict. We are all misfit for the world, and somehow we must fit in...with other people, and...must invent or find the means through communication to satisfy as well as resolve conflicting desires and instincts.

(Zipes 2013: 2).

The fairytale's notional capacity to transform readers and the world is, I have argued, why feminist adapters repeatedly return to fairytales to promote change and the destabilisation of gender stereotypes. As Olga Broumas has demonstrated in Chapter 3, literature uses language in new ways, uses metaphors that reach into the unconscious in order to effect transformation, and displaces or rejuvenates familiar symbols (in this instance Rapunzel's hair and tower). Anne Sexton contends that "Poetry...milks the unconscious. The unconscious is there to feed it little images, little symbols, the answers, the insights I know not of" (Maio 2005: 79). Implied here is that poetry is in dialogue with the psyche. Although patriarchal adapters also use the power of literary fairytales to access the unconscious and to promote their own agenda, I support Zipes's view that fairytales are inflected by "human predisposition[s]". Chapter 1 listed several perennial needs and desires, and argued that fairytales, with their utopian visions, help readers to work through perennial psychological anxieties and desires. That fairytales can be thought of as stepping stones towards maturation is part of their appeal. In addition, Terri Windling (2007), as with Zipes, uses inclusive language to argue that 'Rapunzel' is "universal and timeless" in that "we've all hungered for things...felt imprisoned by another's demands [or been] carried away by love". Her conclusion that "We can't stay in childhood forever...the adult world with all its terrors and wonders waits for us" is shared by Zipes and Bruno Bettelheim, and is another example of the view that fairytales have personal and universal significances. However, as this thesis has identified, it is difficult to produce watertight distinctions between perennial human urges and their ideological mediation, not least because not all critics will identify or look for the same perennial ideas in fairytales such as 'Rapunzel'. And, of course, different critics may have different interpretations of what (if anything) can be called perennial or pre-ideological. Brian Boyd's nuanced concept of interactions between the cultural and the natural is thus useful here, as it enables one to avoid

making broad-brush conclusions, such as: ‘Rapunzel’ persists today solely as a result of cultural ideologies *OR* solely as a result of human universals.

James Jasinski observes that “universal or generic motives” are often tied to fantasies in order to obfuscate “specific motives” and “make the contingent appear natural or inevitable” (Jasinski 2001: 380). For example, since adapting *Snow White* in 1937, Disney has made itself synonymous with fairytales, and adapts fairytales in a way that hides its ‘specific motives’. Walt Disney’s jest, “We just make the pictures, and let the professors tell us what they mean” (Bell 1995: 1), would have audiences believe that Disney films are produced in an interpretive vacuum and that its stories are universal. To imply that its films lack social and historical contexts positions Disney as ideologically neutral, as a maker of innocent fantasy films, and as a curator of the ‘truth’. Consequently, one might accept its barely hidden worldview as true because its romantic visions seem harmless and desirable. More recently, Disney’s *Pocahontas*, *Rapunzel*, and *Merida* have been used to glamorise a retreatist fantasy and a postfeminist female identity, for they all enjoy finding not just any man but the *right* man. In Chapter 5, I argued that Disney has interwoven free-floating ideas such as escape and lack with a heterosexual fantasy and conservative ideology of femininity. Yet Walt Disney’s above remark appears to mock the academy for intellectualising his fairytale films, as if critics are reading something that isn’t there or which was not intended. How could anyone possibly accuse Uncle Walt and his beneficiaries of doing anything other than entertain the masses? This is part of Disney’s spell, which renders audiences hesitant to criticise, let alone *verbalise* any objections to, the Disney Empire and the vision it asks audiences to share. If, as Marcia Lieberman has argued in Chapter 1, fairytales *are* training manuals, then Disney films visually indoctrinate or recruit children as lifelong subjects, and so—consciously or otherwise—manipulate the magic and appeal of fairytales to advance a Disneyfied postfeminist agenda. Žižek calls ideology the “eternalisation of some historically limited condition” (Žižek 1994: 4), and here Disney positions itself and postfeminist thought as natural and eternal, even though both originate in and are maintained by popular culture.

In 2012, Disney's 'I'm a Princess' marketing campaign responded to a cultural backlash against Disney's characterisation of female characters as beautiful, passive, and purposeless. Rebranding princesses as "brave", "feisty", "spunky", "compassionate", and "loyal", Disney subtly moved away from, and implicitly denied, its traditional depictions of women, from the 1930s through to the late 1990s. The shift in focus towards self-actualising female characters undermines Walt Disney's implied ideological obliviousness, and is indicative of how popular culture informs the commercial film industry, and especially Disney. At the same time, despite its claims to the contrary, Disney has "appropriated the fairytale" to reshape Western culture and to, as Zipes puts it, tighten its "cultural stranglehold" (Zipes 1999: 339). The girls seen smiling in the 2012 campaign videos typify postfeminist culture, for they speak of their love of bikes, dirt, and running, all while holding dolls and wearing Disney princess costumes. This, it seems, is the new 'muddy hem' version of Disney, befitting a new age and girlhood. However, to recall Sharon Lamb in Chapter 5, "resistance to gender stereotypes is now sold at the same [place] that perpetuates them... selling resistance means... containing it, restricting it so that it is manageable and not really resistance at all" (Lamb 2006: 33). To say 'I am a *new* Disney princess' is not to be free from but further stifled by ideals of femininity. Young girls may believe that they are identifying themselves as unique, strong, and individual, but they are in actuality pledging allegiance to Disney and a "beauty contest motif" that steers women away from developing their minds, their "true magic" (Rollin 1987: 91), and towards patriarchal expectations. And just as girls often admire and aspire to be Disney princesses, Chapter 6 demonstrated how Disney allies its beautiful princesses with the career aspirations of real women. Dressed in a hallmark princess outfit, Miss Piggy as Rapunzel makes it big in the city, but is attacked by her female companions, and found to be funded by her male lover. Miss Piggy is a princess here, but a princess who exemplifies the patriarchal presumption that women cannot govern their lives and finances, hate all women, and must be rescued by a man. There is little difference between Disney now and in its so-called Golden Age (1998-1999), where, as one example, Disney's Ursula tells Ariel, in *The Little Mermaid* (1989), that she

can ‘make all your dreams come true’. As one might expect, Ursula the witch plots to thwart Ariel, whose expansive dream of being a part of the human world is reduced to a desire to marry Prince Eric. This ideological promotion of a romance quest and of heterosexual coupling aims to neutralise the unruly woman. This same narrative pattern, visible in *Tangled* (2010) and *Into the Woods* (2014), bears out the thesis of Marcia Lieberman (1972) and Karen E. Rowe (1979), namely that Disney evokes nineteenth-century ideals of an essentialised notion of true womanhood and uses fairytales in order to romanticise patriarchy.

But more than this, Disney arguably seeks to *universalise* patriarchy and its own films, as well as to usurp ownership of all classic fairytales. Chapter 3 in particular addressed the issue of authorship and the difficulty of locating ur-texts for fairytales such as ‘Rapunzel’. Although filmmakers typically adapt literature to screen, twenty-first-century consumers may only know of Disney’s *Tangled* and may eventually see Disney as the creator of ‘Rapunzel’. As Donald Haase observes, “the defining version of a tale...in the minds of...media-aware children, is the cinematic one” (Haase 2007: 344). By responding to and feeding a supposedly postfeminist zeitgeist, Disney is paradoxically eternalising Rapunzel as a glamorous symbol of ‘girl power’ and female sexuality, one who lacks economic, intellectual, and sexual freedom. This is characteristic of postfeminism’s double address, which denies the need for feminism at the same time as women’s rights are withheld and options for female identity are circumscribed. As Shauna Pomerantz suggests in ‘Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Un/Defining the ‘Girl’’:

[R]ather than generating more ways for girls to ‘be’ in our society...discourse has limited possibilities for girls, trapping them within polar states that regulate what they can say and do. These polarities condemn or condone, pathologize or normalize, ignore or glamorize, girls. (Pomerantz 2009: 149).

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 identified cohering restrictions in terms of Rapunzel’s speech, dress, and lifestyle options. However, such representations are not identical in all Rapunzel films and adverts. One of the most frustrating and encouraging findings of this thesis is that not all media work towards the same goal. The literary Rapunzels I have chosen give greater emphasis to Rapunzel’s psychology and her *meaningful* ambitions, yet this is not true of all other media,

or indeed all other literary adaptations themselves. As stated in Chapter 1, this thesis provides examples of how Western culture deploys media, fairytales, and Rapunzel, in various ways. But again, while I organise the texts according to media and in a loosely chronological fashion, there is no readily discernible, *overarching*, message or sense of progression. To paraphrase Chapter 4, there is a messy co-existence of wants and needs, and a tendency to resist easy answers and resolutions. After all, the poetry in Chapter 3 suggested a movement from second-wave feminist ideas of consciousness-raising in the 1970s to third-wave feminist ideas of multiplicity and difference. But the desires for adequate female representation and inclusion are longstanding and do not necessarily belong to a certain decade. While there are dominant tendencies in the adaptations from 1970 onwards, it is possible that there have always been similar concerns about female identity, which are local and/or universal.

Moreover, the language of ‘progress’ is problematic when used chronologically, because to literary and academic feminists, postfeminism is regressive. The selected postfeminist adaptations use fairytales to make consumers want only to be a part of the narrative of self-regulation, female beauty rituals, and illusions of freedom brought about by purchasing power. As we have seen, feminists seek to reassess such texts that reinforce gender acculturation. As we have also seen, in versions that stretch from the supposedly pre-ideological to Disney, patriarchy is transmitted through the tales via their entertainment value. As David Rudd suggests: “pleasures in texts...can persist despite (or even because of) their ideological shortcomings” (Rudd 2013: 59). Accordingly, I have called the short story ‘Rapunzel’s Revenge’, which features in a feminist anthology, a mediocre feminist fairytale. Despite its content, it remains an important example of a Rapunzel adaptation that explicitly calls itself a feminist reworking of patriarchal dominance, and which *tries* to resist and negotiate with, rather than wholly repudiate, feminine tropes. It therefore follows in the footsteps of post-1970s writers who, energised by Adrienne Rich’s call to “re-view...the writing of the past” and to “break its hold over us” (Rich 1971: 369), have countered and questioned the female silencing in the Grimm ‘Rapunzel’ (1857). Attempts to re-view are perhaps clearer in *Rapunzel Let Down Your Hair*

(1978), which more accurately reflects positive social changes and advances in women's rights. Adaptations of this kind have led me to agree with Jack Zipes that fairytale re-visions enable "questioning of all norms" (Zipes 1979: 177). This study is part of this questioning, but is not the final word on an area surprisingly lacking in sustained scholarship. Rapunzel herself lacks a prominent voice in fairytale discourse.

To reiterate, this research began with the 1970s because this decade saw the rise of second-wave feminism and fairytale theory, and feminist rewritings of 'Rapunzel'. At the same time, this work on adaptations has led me to think more probingly about the potentially timeless and universal human ideas that are embedded in the selected Rapunzel fairytales. The literary adaptations have tended to be more challenging and counter cultural, whereas the popular media tend to channel ideologies that are often conservative. Nevertheless, beyond their differences, all of the adaptations have drawn on, minimised or expanded one or other permutation of the recurring motifs: hair; lack; a call to adventure; the need for security and attachment; and a desire to escape the home as part of a process of sexual and/or psychological maturation. This is because these 'pre-ideological' human ideas make fairytales appealing *and* make each Rapunzel version recognisable as a Rapunzel adaptation. This investigation of a single tale therefore offers an approach that might be applied to other tales and other works. Possibilities for further examinations of Rapunzel in contemporary culture include theatre, opera, and online tales, and several such cultural productions are listed in the Appendix. The project illustrates that the proliferation of postfeminist individualisms and postfeminist adaptations in popular culture merely reinforces how postfeminism originates in and is perpetuated by popular culture, and is regressive in terms of gender ideologies. At the same time, the selected feminist and counter-cultural adaptations compensate for the various de-humanisations to which women have all too often been collectively subjected. Ultimately, therefore, this thesis illustrates the longstanding and continuing pattern of how universals and cultural ideologies appear to be inextricable and jostle for supremacy.

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DavenportFilm, *From the Brothers Grimm: Rapunzel, Rapunzel* (1979). Dir. Tom Davenport.

HBO, *Happily Ever After: Fairytales for Every Child: Rapunzel* (1995). Dir. Bruce W. Smith and starring Whoopi Goldberg.

Paramount Pictures. *Airplane* (1980). Dirs. Jim Abrahams, Jerry Zucker, and David Zucker. The sole reference to Rapunzel is the line “The tower! The tower! Rapunzel! Rapunzel!”

Pegasus and Brightspark Entertainment, *Britannica’s Fairytales from around the World: Rapunzel* (1991)—re-released in 2008 under the title *Tangled Up*.

Sony Pictures, *MirrorMask* (2005). Dir. Dave McKean.

Universal Pictures, *The Breakfast Club* (1985). Dir. John Hughes. The “frigid” “princess” Claire Standish (Molly Ringwald) is explicitly called “F***** Rapunzel!”

Walt Disney Pictures. *Frozen* (2013). Dirs. Jennifer Lee and Chris Buck. Rapunzel has a split-second cameo in Anna’s kingdom, alongside Flynn. Her hair remains cut.

Into the Woods (2014). Dir. Rob Marshall.

---, *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement* (2004). Dir. Garry Marshall. Chris Pine is referred to as Prince Charming (the role he later plays in *Into the Woods*) and calls up to Mia (Anne Hathaway) at her window: “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, with hair so fine, come out the window, climb down the vine”. She responds, “The feat you ask dear sir isn’t easy, and I won’t respond to that line, it’s far too cheesy”.

Music, Opera, and Ballet

BalletLORENT: Rapunzel (2014). Narration written by Carol Ann Duffy.

Conner, Jennifer A. and Tom Trenney, ‘Rapunzel: What the prince saw at the top of the hair’. *Organa America*. Pro Organo, 2005.

FOX, *Glee*. S5E14. ‘New New York’ (2014). Dir. Sanaa Hamri. Written by Ryan Murphy. Rachel Berry (Lea Michele), starring on Broadway as Fanny Brice, sits alone in her limo—“glassed off from the masses”—and realises that “I *am* isolated. Rapunzeled away and barely out of my teens”. She therefore asks herself “How am I gonna be one of the great Broadway actors, which was my lifelong dream, if I don’t have any real-life experiences to pull from?”

Harrison, Lou, *Rapunzel: An Opera in Six Acts* (1952).

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Rapunzel Toys and ‘Hairy’ Dolls

Although any long-haired doll in existence might be categorised as a paratext of ‘Rapunzel’—including Barbie™, Sindy, Bratz, Tressy Dolls, and Chad Valley Styling Heads—the following have been included to highlight the diversity of Rapunzel-esque dolls and products.

Dam Things, Troll Doll (1959).

Disney, Princess Colour Change Brush Rapunzel.

---, Princess Sparkle Rapunzel Doll.

---, Rapunzel Deluxe Styling Head.

---, Rapunzel Jelly Shoes.

---, Rapunzel Plush Soft Doll Toy (21”).

---, Rapunzel Puzzle (500 pieces).

---, Rapunzel Tower Playset.

---, Seven-Piece Playset Including Rapunzel, Toddler Rapunzel, Flynn Rider, Pascal, Maximus, Mother Gothel and Hook Hand Thug.

Fisher-Price, Little People Disney Princess Rapunzel and Flynn Toy, 2-Pack.

George, Disney Licensed Musical Princess Rapunzel *Tangled* Fancy Dress with Headband.

Ideal Toys, Beautiful Crissy Hair Growing Doll (1969).

Mattel, Totally Ultra Hair Barbie.

Mego Corp., Growing Hair Cher: the Doll with Long Hair (1976).

Once Upon a Zombie, Rapunzel Doll.

Parker, Extendable Hair Deluxe Doll Set.

Play-Doh, Rapunzel Hair Designs.

Sodial, Rapunzel Custom Styled Blonde Cosplay Wig (Child).

Tanuki-Koji, Okiku Doll (1918). According to Japanese urban legend, the Okiku doll has hair that grows down to its knees of its own accord, despite being cut regularly, for it is possessed.

Target, Our Generation Hair Grow Doll (Blonde Phoebe).

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