



Rapunzel's Body Language

An Analysis of the Treatment of Female Bodies in the *Rapunzel* Fairy Tale Genealogy

HANNAH MCCURRY

PROFESSOR JULIA ASSAIANTE, ADVISOR

SPRING, 2020



The Roots

Petrosinella by Giambattista Basile

1634; Italian

Persinette by Mlle. de La Force

1698; French

Rapunzel by Friedrich Schulz

1790; German



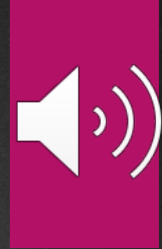
Petrosinella (Basile)

- ❑ Petrosinella's body is acted upon in ways she agrees to
- ❑ She uses her wits to escape the Ogress
 - ❑ The chase scene at the end allows for agency



Persinette (de La Force)

- ❑ *Persinette* is “beautiful as the sun,” obedient, and quite naïve
- ❑ Sudden marriage before subsequent pregnancy
 - ❑ Both of which *Persinette* is shown to be ignorant
- ❑ Her hair is used throughout, and cut off by the Fairy at the end as punishment
- ❑ She saves the Prince with her tears and the Fairy is redeemed at the end



Rapunzel (Schulz)

- ❑ Direct translation of the French *Persinette* into German with two subtle additions to the tale:
 - ❑ A hook is added for Rapunzels benefit, to help her pull the Fairy and the Prince up the tower
 - ❑ Rapunzel comments that “all her dresses were becoming too tight”
- ❑ Ignorance of her body
- ❑ Physical and mental weakness associated with Rapunzel



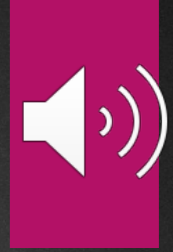
The Grimms' Seeds for the Future

First Version of the *Rapunzel* tale by the
Grimms

1812

Second Version 1857 of the *Rapunzel* tale by
the Grimms

1857



First Version in 1812

- ❑ No sudden marriage in this tale, but Rapunzel still becomes pregnant
- ❑ The Fairy cuts off Rapunzels hair as punishment
- ❑ No redemption of the Fairy at the end of the tale



Second Version in 1857

- ❑ Reinstates the sudden marriage before Rapunzel becomes pregnant
- ❑ The Sorceress cuts off Rapunzel's hair as punishment
- ❑ This is the most influential version of the tale
 - ❑ What's kept? What's edited out?



The Modern Branches

Rapunzel by Anne Sexton

1972

Disney's *Tangled* directed by Nathan Greno
and Byron Howard

2010

Rapunzel, Rapunzel by Nikita Gill

2018



Rapunzel (Sexton)

- ❑ Rapunzel's body is objectified and sexualized, not by the Prince, but by Frau Gothel
- ❑ Possession of Rapunzel's body is central to this poem



Tangled (Disney)

- ❑ *Tangled* is loosely based on the Grimms' version, with many differences
- ❑ What stays:
 - ❑ Rapunzel's naivety
 - ❑ Rapunzel's hair is cut off by hands that are not her own
 - ❑ Rapunzel's tears heal the Prince-figure
- ❑ Reinststate the chase scene
 - ❑ Does this give Rapunzel agency again?

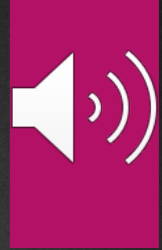


Rapunzel, Rapunzel (Gill)

“Rapunzel, Rapunzel, ask yourself why you let down your hair. Ask yourself, would anyone who truly loves you ever allow it to be subject to such wear and tear?”

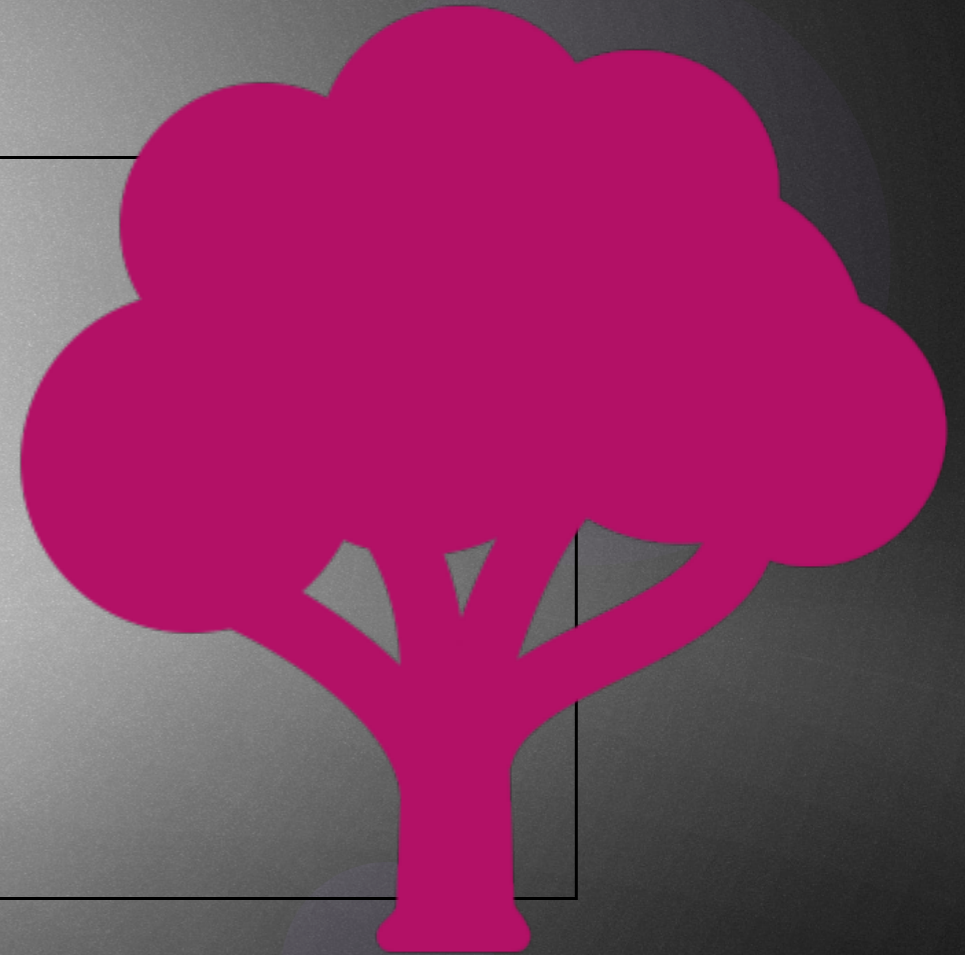
(Gill, 84)

- Rapunzel realizes that her body should not be used by anyone
- She cuts off her own hair and uses it to escape and free herself
- All she needed was „hiding in the marrow inside [her] own powerful spine, [her] own bones“ (Gill, 84)



Conclusion

Petrosinella (Basile)
Persinette (de La Force)
Rapunzel (Schulz)
Rapunzel (Grimms)
Rapunzel (Sexton)
Tangled (Disney)
Rapunzel, Rapunzel (Gill)



Works Cited

- Basile, Giambattista. *Petrosinella*. Edited by Helen Zimmern. Translated by John Edward Taylor. Fisher Unwin. 1912.
- de La Force, Charlotte-Rose de Caumont. *Persinette*. Translated by Laura Christensen. 2014.
- Gill, Nikita. *Fierce Fairytales: Poems & Stories to Stir Your Soul*. Hachette Books. 2018.
- Greno, Nathan and Howard, Byron, directors. *Tangled*. Walt Disney Animation Studios, 2010.
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*. 1st ed. Berlin. v. 1, no. 12. 1812.
- Grimm, Jacob und Wilhelm. *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*. 7th ed. Nikol. 2014.
- Schulz, Friedrich. *Rapunzel*. Translated by Oliver Loo. 2015.
- Sexton, Anne and Susa, Conrad. *Transformations: an Entertainment in Type from the Book of Anne Sexton*. Open Road Media. 2016.