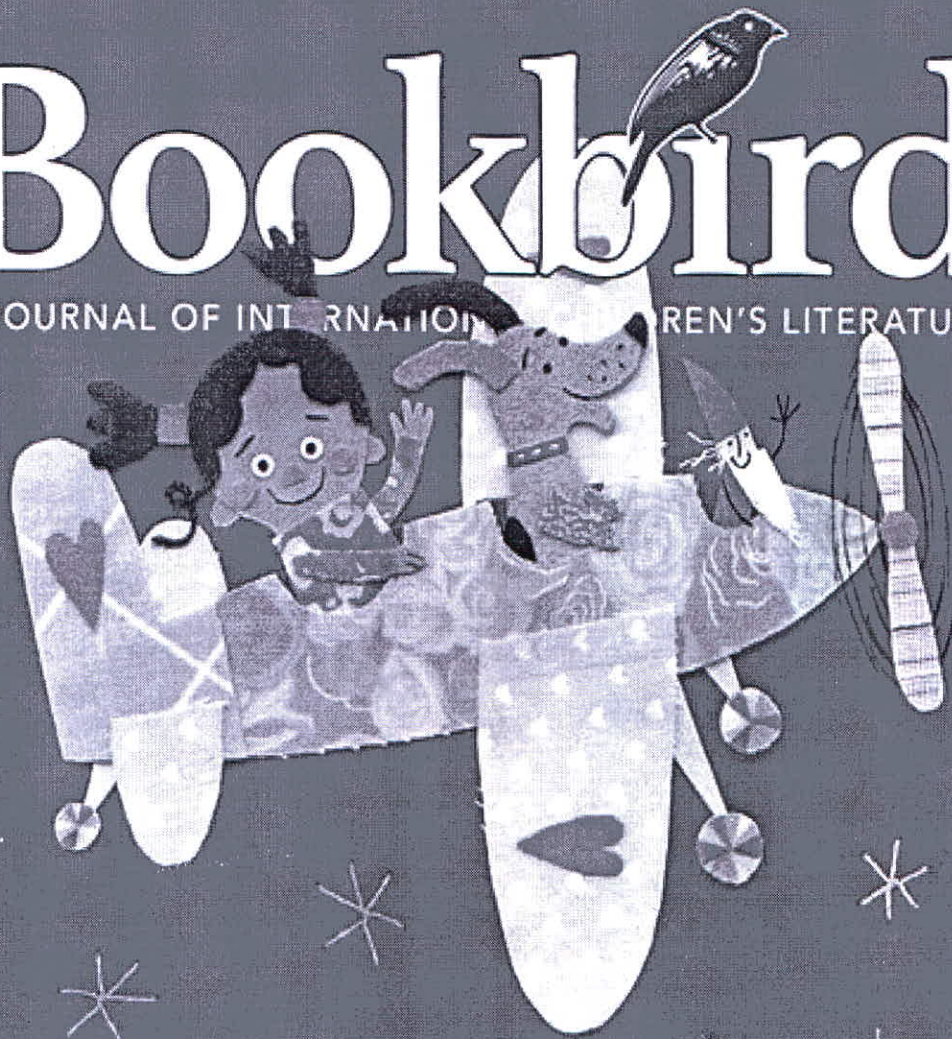


Bookbird

A JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



2022, Vol. 60, No. 1

INTERNATIONAL
BOARD ON
BOOKS FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

A SPOTLIGHT ON POLAND WITHIN THE GLOBAL TAPESTRY OF ISSUE 60.1

Featured Articles: Little Women • Breaking Down Taboos • New-Old Trends in Recent Polish Book Illustration for Children and Young Adults • Japanese Picturebooks for Children in the Fight against COVID-19 • Menacing Men and Well-Meaning Women • Constructing a New Girl in Meiji Japan • Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Has Finally Let Down Her Hair!



Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature

Search Within Journal

In this Issue

+ MUSE Alert



Volume 60, Number 1, 2022

Issue

Viewed Save

Additional Information

Published by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), Bookbird communicates new ideas to the whole community of readers interested in children's books, publishing work on any topic in the field of international children's literature.



PUBLISHED BY
Johns Hopkins
University Press

VIEWING ISSUE
Volume 60, Number
1, 2022

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature

Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Has Finally Let Down Her Hair! The Feminist Evolution of "Rapunzel" from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century

Komal Tujare

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 60, Number 1, 2022

pp. 77-85

10.1353/bkb.2022.0007

Article

collapse

You are not currently authenticated.

If you would like to authenticate using a different subscribed institution or have your own login



Rapunzel's fairy tale as a mirror to the ideological structures of society. The portrayal of Rapunzel has evolved considerably over the years. She emerges first as a submissive, silenced, passive character with no choice or agency throughout the story. She is the protagonist, and it is her name that makes the title of the story, and yet she has hardly any action to her credit in the story. However, as her tale travels through time, ideologies about

© 2022 BY BOOKBIRD, INC. 001 - 2022 | 77

Additional Information

ISSN	1918-6983
Print ISSN	0006-7377
Pages	pp. 77-85
Launched on MUSE	2022-03-15
Open Access	No



Abstract

Abstract:

Although children's literature and cinema are seldom studied critically for their thematic relevance in social structures, their influence on young, impressionable minds cannot be denied, and they are often the first teachers of gender politics to new generations. The study of gender conditioning in light of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale "Rapunzel" and its evolution from the classic tale to the blockbuster Disney animation *Tangled* in 2010, then traveling to India as a short story by Sowmya Rajendran in 2015, is the focus of this article. Feminist theories support the discussion here.

Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Has Finally Let Down Her Hair!

The Feminist Evolution of "Rapunzel" from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century

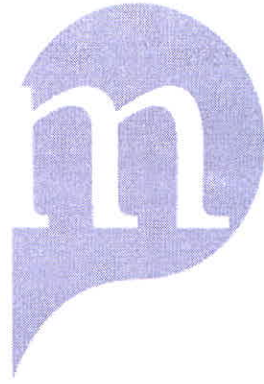
by KOMAL TUJARE

Although children's literature and cinema are seldom studied critically for their thematic relevance in social structures, their influence on young, impressionable minds cannot be denied, and they are often the first teachers of gender politics to new generations. The study of gender conditioning in light of the Grimm Brothers' fairy tale "Rapunzel" and its evolution from the classic tale to the blockbuster Disney animation *Tangled* in 2010, then traveling to India as a short story by Sowmya Rajendran in 2015, is the focus of this article. Feminist theories support the discussion here.

▲ Although this critical study of Rapunzel begins with the German

expand





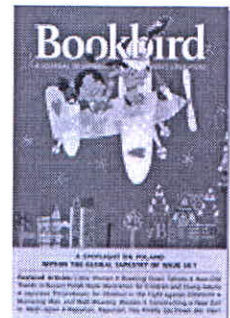
PROJECT MUSE®

Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Has Finally Let Down Her Hair! The
Feminist Evolution of “Rapunzel” from the Nineteenth
Century to the Twenty-First Century

Komal Tujare

Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature, Volume 60, Number
1, 2022, pp. 77-85 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/bkb.2022.0007>



➔ *For additional information about this article*
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/849495>



Rapunzel, Rapunzel, Has Finally Let Down Her Hair!

The Feminist Evolution of “Rapunzel” from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century

by KOMAL TUJARE

Although children’s literature and cinema are seldom studied critically for their thematic relevance in social structures, their influence on young, impressionable minds cannot be denied, and they are often the first teachers of gender politics to new generations. The study of gender conditioning in light of the Grimm Brothers’ fairy tale “Rapunzel” and its evolution from the classic tale to the blockbuster Disney animation Tangled in 2010, then traveling to India as a short story by Sowmya Rajendran in 2015, is the focus of this article. Feminist theories support the discussion here.

Although this critical study of Rapunzel begins with the German tale first published in 1812 by the Brothers Grimm, it must be noted that this version is neither the first nor the original. The 1812 version is considered an adaptation of a French story titled “Persinette,” by Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de La Force, which in turn was heavily influenced by an Italian tale titled “Petrosinella,” by Giambattista Basile. It is also significant to note that like most children’s literature that often gets passed orally and alters with each telling, the story of Rapunzel has also undergone several alterations. In fact, the original tale by the Brothers Grimm itself was altered considerably in its final edition of 1857. The story has since had multiple adaptations and translations owing to its global popularity. However, the scope of this article will not extend beyond the two versions of the story by the Brothers Grimm, the Disney film *Tangled* (2010), and the short story “Rapunzel” from the collection *Girls to the Rescue* by Sowmya Rajendran, published in 2015. The following article examines Rapunzel’s fairy tale as a mirror to the ideological structures of society.

The portrayal of Rapunzel has evolved considerably over the years. She emerges first as a submissive, silenced, passive character with no choice or agency throughout the story. She is the protagonist, and it is her name that makes the title of the story, and yet she has hardly any action to her credit in the story. However, as her tale travels through time, ideologies about



women in society change. Women gain more rights and gender stereotypes get challenged. When the story reaches the twenty-first century, ideas of femininity have evolved and patriarchal structures are getting challenged across all fields. This is observed in the film *Tangled* (2010), which presents Rapunzel as a driven, passionate, lively girl who seeks freedom and voice to a great extent. Finally, the Rapunzel that reaches Indian short fiction for children in 2015 is a complete contrast to the original Rapunzel of the Brothers Grimm. She is assertive, determined, fierce, and ambitious. The story rejects stereotypes surrounding women, but also challenges the conventional gender binary, gender roles, and heteronormativity. These alterations in the representation of gender and sexuality are important to note as they give a glimpse into the ideologies about women that permeate

all social structures. In new historicist terms, the attempt is to understand the “textuality of history (of women) and the historicity of texts (about women)” (Montrose, 588).

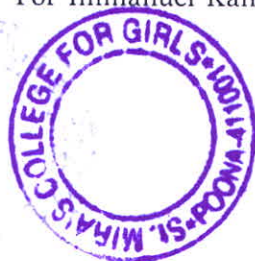


Rapunzel Entrapped—The Brothers Grimm

The portrayal of Rapunzel in both the versions of the tale by the Brothers Grimm is similar. The word *rapunzel* is first used in the story to refer to rampions that grow in the witch’s garden. The rampions in the witch’s field become an object of intense desire to a woman who is eventually to give birth to the protagonist. This intense desire the woman experiences is one so strong that she says she would die if she does not have some of the rampions. When her husband trespasses on the witch’s garden and brings her a handful of rampions, the consumption of these only makes her desires grow threefold. The rampions mentioned here, evidently, have a symbolic function. They become external symbols of the woman’s unfulfilled desires, which her husband strives to satisfy by trespassing on the “forbidden garden” (a euphemism for the female genital organ). By extension, the rampions that, once consumed, make the woman crave them even more acutely can be seen as a symbol of excess

female sexual desire, which, if not curbed, will bring extreme repercussions (as it does in the story when the witch takes the child away). While the 1812 version states that the craving for the rampions is on account of pregnancy, the 1857 version seems to hint at pregnancy as a consequence of the quenching of the intense desire. It is also noteworthy that the child born to the woman is then named “Rapunzel,” meaning “rampion.” At birth itself, Rapunzel is already described as a personification of an object of intense sexual desire. It is not surprising, then, that she does not step out of this objectification throughout the story.

For Immanuel Kant, humans differ from animals in that they have



“dignity” or what can also be described as “inner worth.” “Humanity,” therefore, according to Kant, stands for the potential for rational choices and pursuing one’s own ends (42). Neither of these applies to the Rapunzel of the Brothers Grimm. In addition, Kant explains, when an individual with humanity is reduced to the status of an object through “degradation,” “subordination,” and “dishonouring” of humanity, it is called objectification (163–64). This applies perfectly to Rapunzel. At birth, she is passed off to the witch as an object of barter. Thereafter, we know nothing of her except that she is “the most beautiful child under the sun,” with “splendid long hair, as fine as spun gold.” Sexual objectification is understood as when a woman’s body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire (Bartky, 27). This is true of Rapunzel. She is tucked away as an object of possession in a tower in a forest at the age of twelve, and her life and choices subsequently are governed by the witch. In fact, when she finally gets “married” to the prince, it is not a choice she exercises but rather a lack of choice she expresses: “He would rather have me than would old Frau Gothel.” Her objectification has been internalized by this point. Women often self-objectify (Fredrickson and Roberts 177-178). As such, Rapunzel’s choice of marrying the prince (submitting herself physically to him), the first man she laid eyes on, serves as an indication of her objectification of herself. When her secret affair is discovered, there is still no agency afforded to her as Gothel cuts off her long tresses (maiming the beauty that is her only identity) and throws her in the wilderness. She is rescued from her life of misery when the prince finds her. She then restores his eyesight with her magical tears and lives a life of stereotypical marital bliss. Interestingly, she remains the damsel in distress who is rescued by the prince even though she is the one with the power of healing, which remains understated. In the words of Simone de Beauvoir, “He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other” (26). Even though the title of the story is “Rapunzel,” she is not the hero of the story—she remains secondary as the “other” in her own tale.

Rapunzel Enabled—*Tangled*

The Disney film *Tangled* emerges 153 years, or more than one and a half centuries, later. At first, the objectification of Rapunzel seems to continue with the description “a healthy baby girl is born, a princess, with beautiful golden hair.” Rapunzel is soon raised by Gothel and is warned to stay indoors, locked in a tower. She is told repeatedly that the outside world is too dangerous for her. This idea of limiting women to domesticities is not new or uncommon. In her essay “A Room of One’s Own,” Virginia Woolf writes, “Women have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force.” But this is what marks the departure of *Tangled* from the tale of the Brothers Grimm. Disney’s Rapunzel has not submitted to her fate. She is unhappy about her oppressed condition and gives voice to that unhappiness instead of making her peace with it. In the song “When Will My Life Begin,” Rapunzel enumerates all her daily chores. Although initially it appears

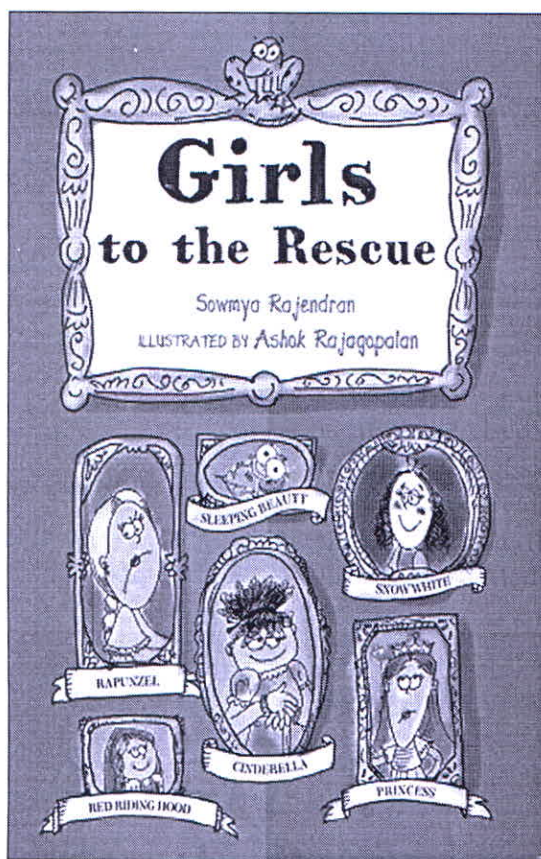


like Rapunzel fits the stereotype of “the angel of the house” as she sweeps, polishes, waxes, does the laundry, mops, and shines up, and then sweeps again, you soon realize that Disney is not building but rather breaking stereotypes. Rapunzel can clean, sweep, cook, and knit, but she can also read, play the guitar, and paint in her very own gallery. Her creativity is also exercised in papier-mâché, ballet, chess, pottery, ventriloquy, candle-making, sketching, and so on. Her creativity is her escape from the torture of reality. *L'écriture féminine* as female writing (and creativity) that stems from the female body is important. Hélène Cixous, in “The Laugh of the Medusa,” calls for sisterhood in terms of celebration of the female creative body. The body is to be used profitably to produce works by women, about women, and for women. Rapunzel’s depiction of productive creativity forces us to see the female body as a source of creativity. She rejects her objectification by assuming the role of a subject, a doer, a maker. And this leads her to her desire for more from life than her state of captivity.

Rapunzel’s rejection of objectification continues further when Flynn Rider enters the tower. She does not, like the 1857 Rapunzel, hand herself over to him as an object. Instead, she attacks, deliberates, and rationally comes to the decision of using Flynn as a means of escape from the tower. Her priority is her dream—going to see the lanterns. But the lanterns are merely symbolic. They represent her desire to shine bright and float freely across the sky. She is in no hurry to find a husband who can take her away from Gothel. Instead, as in Simone de Beauvoir’s description of a young girl, she “throws herself into things with ardor, because she is not yet deprived of her transcendence; and the fact that she accomplishes nothing, that she is nothing, will make her impulses only the more passionate. Empty and

unlimited, she seeks from within her nothingness to attain All” (374).

There is also subversion of conventional tropes in the film. Rapunzel is often the headstrong and determined one who rescues Flynn Rider from harm. She also encourages others to step out of their stereotypical roles and discover their true selves—the thugs and ruffians have dreams of becoming florists, doing interior design, baking cupcakes, knitting, sewing, doing puppet shows, and collecting ceramic unicorns. Men are not conventionally involved in such activities as they aren’t considered “masculine” tasks. But Disney consciously breaks the stereotype of “macho” or “real” men and portrays a softer side of the thugs and ruffians, which is as much a part of their masculinity as their physical strength. In fact, the title of the film itself was changed from *Rapunzel* to *Tangled* before the film’s release to present it gender-neutrally.

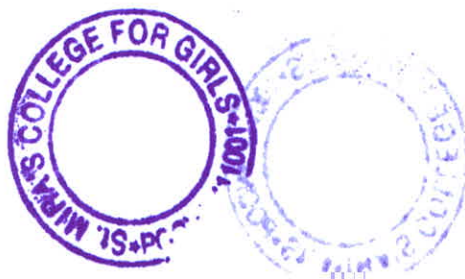


The popular love theme in the film, “I See the Light,” is a celebration of the freedom that Rapunzel has found at last. She has spent eighteen years of her life looking out from a window. Now she has finally found her place in the outside world, where she is free from her stepmother’s tyranny and can choose to live her life on her terms. Her greatest dream has been realized and she has found a companion in Flynn to share her joys with. Rapunzel’s song becomes a loud celebration of her choices and subsequent freedom. She is no longer the “other” to a prince. She claims the “self” of her identity by assuming responsibility for herself and her choices. The song also leads to the moment of epiphany for Rapunzel. The symbol of the sun, which is a recurrent motif in all her paintings, now brings the promise of freedom to her. Her artistic creation stemming from her body leads her to her historical past. It is only when Rapunzel steps out of her oppressed state that she can witness the richness of her past—inspiring all women to do the same. Her story, therefore, ceases to be a romantic tale. It is a tale of attaining empowerment and finding liberation.

Conventionally, Disney movies portray women being rescued by men. A “true love’s kiss” from a man is capable of rescuing women from spells and curses. But *Tangled* subverts all conventional archetypes. In the film, it is Rapunzel who continually rescues Flynn, even from death at the end, where she uses her magical powers to bring him back to life. Her magic is symbolic of female power. It is the ability to reach out and make a difference rather than sit passively and wait. Rapunzel’s journey is a journey of self-discovery—a journey much like a traditional bildungsroman that will lead her to her identity as a mature adult who seeks passion and creativity, freedom and agency, companionship and equality. It is also a journey that enables her to take charge and attain transcendence instead of submitting to perpetual immanence. She is no longer waiting—to be saved, protected, married. This subversion is crucial in changing ideologies about women in society. It is only when children are exposed to these empowering ideas through literary and cinematic texts that true equality can be attained.

Rapunzel Emancipated—Sowmya Rajendran

Building on this trajectory of breaking out of conventions appears a short story titled “Rapunzel,” written by Sowmya Rajendran, a contemporary Indian writer and winner of Sahitya Akademi’s 2015 Bal Sahitya Puraskar. The story appears in an illustrated short story collection titled *Girls to the Rescue*. The subversion is already evident in the title. Rajendran notes that these princesses in Western fairy tales are, essentially, “mega bores,” who spend their whole lives waiting—to be saved, to be protected, to be married. An article in *Bound India* penned by editor Avani Udgaonkar reads, “This portrayal of the docile, biddable woman in fairy tales is representative of a far larger problem. Children are constantly being hardwired for life, and what they absorb at such young ages affect their outlook, their beliefs and their abilities for the rest of their life.” It was this thought that led to the creation of *Girls to the Rescue*, which offers a retelling of “Rapunzel,” among other fairy tales, like those of Cinderella, Snow White, and Red Riding Hood.



Rajendran's Rapunzel is unlike the Rapunzel of the Brothers Grimm and the Rapunzel of *Tangled*. She is not a princess. She is an ordinary girl with extraordinarily long hair that she has grown to despise. Ironically, her father is a barber who believed that as per their family tradition, women must keep their hair long. He therefore refused to give Rapunzel a haircut. Her mother, an astronaut who was away on a mission to the moon, had shaved off all her hair, much to the father's vexation. Rapunzel rebels against her father's control. She is not submissive like the earlier Rapunzels. She is fierce, assertive, and rebellious. She is also not one to sit and wait. She decides to stealthily cut off her hair by stealing the scissors from her father's kit. She is caught before she can cut off her plait, however, and then locked in a tower by her father.

Rapunzel does not submissively sit in silence like a docile lady. She screams and shouts, asking to be let out. When Prince Charming arrives, he is the antithesis of all stereotypical princes. His cloak has resplendent rainbow colors, and noticing Rapunzel locked in the tower, he is nervous about what he is expected to do. He also confesses to his inability to climb ropes and admits that he prefers studying beetles and slow dancing. Rapunzel doesn't expect his help, though. Using her intellect, she devises a plan. She asks him to throw his sword up to her and uses it to chop her braid. She then uses her long braid to clamber down the window and eat cheese sandwiches with Prince Charming, as she is ravenous. The story ends with Prince Charming confessing that he'd rather not marry her and Rapunzel declaring herself a "woman of the world." The two agree to enjoy the moment.

The story, although very brief and seemingly simple, addresses many pertinent issues. Rapunzel is not tortured and victimized by Frau Gothel in this tale. It is her father that attempts to oppress her. This is a significant alteration as the father becomes symbolic of a traditional Indian patriarch who asserts his control over the women in his family and through this derives a sense of superiority and self-worth. As Simone de Beauvoir puts it, "No one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility." What marks this Rapunzel's departure from the previous two is perhaps the fact that she has an empowered mother with an ambitious career as an astronaut. Empowered women inspire empowerment. Rapunzel is unafraid when her father threatens her, and she refuses to submit to his unjust domination. She is also not one to wait and mope about her miserable condition in the tower. Instead, she decides to find a way out of the situation by working actively toward solutions. She doesn't need male support to bring her freedom to fruition.

Rapunzel's desire to cut her hair so that she can dribble a ball at games and her rejection of her father's suggestion to "learn some embroidery" are all indications of how she moves out of stereotypical molds of femininity. She also openly admits to being ravenous—a confession most women avoid as they believe it makes them appear less feminine. Simone de Beauvoir states, "To be feminine is to show oneself as weak, futile, passive, and docile. The girl is supposed not only to primp and dress herself up but



also to repress her spontaneity and substitute for it the grace and charm she has been taught." This is the internalization of the "eternal feminine," or what can be described as femininity in the stereotypical sense. Rajendran's Rapunzel shuns it entirely.

It is Prince Charming in the story, however, who goes one step further in breaking stereotypes. Prince Charming looks dapper in his resplendent rainbow cloak—a clear indication of his status outside the heteronormative structure. Judith Butler explains in her book *Gender Trouble* that we must not assume that gender is always to remain as two—a binary of male/female. To think of it as a binary is to also believe that sex and gender bear a mimetic relation whereby gender mirrors sex. This is flawed and must be avoided. As such, Rajendran's Prince Charming rejects stereotypes of machoism and brute physical strength and instead embraces his softer side, which experiences fears and finds joy in slow dancing. This does not make him less of a "man." The archetype of "desperate-princess-meets-eligible-prince-and-they-live-happily-ever-after" is also negated. Rapunzel does not seek a husband to attain self-worth. She declares herself a "woman of the world." Prince Charming also rejects the idea of marrying Rapunzel in an implicit attempt to tell readers that he doesn't fit into the cisgender, heterosexual group. The idea that a relationship between a man and woman must be one of intimate romance is refuted.

Conclusion

As Simone de Beauvoir puts it, "What would Prince Charming have for occupation if he had not to awaken the Sleeping Beauty?" (237). The answer is clear. Prince Charming and Rapunzel can enjoy their moment of companionship happily, without promises of matrimony. Their individual ambitions and nonstereotypical traits inspire a generation of readers who will find ideals of empowerment through the story. The only way for women to rise out of their self-objectification is through a change in their conditioning from a young age. Instead of romanticizing toxic relationships that oppress and victimize, literature and cinema for young minds must put companionship and solidarity in focus. It is not only important to have a plural and inclusive representation of what it means to be a woman; it is also important to have heterogeneous representations of the gender spectrum instead of a binary. Having a children's tale offer these representations is even more significant as it changes the conditioning offered to young minds. Manjari Singh, a department member at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, states in her work *Gender Issues in Children's Literature* that the manner in which genders are represented in children's literature impacts children's attitudes and perceptions of gender-appropriate behavior in society. She also adds that "[s]exism in literature can be so insidious that it quietly conditions boys and girls to accept the way they see and read the world, thus reinforcing gender images."

Judith Butler writes that "woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification" (33). Women are made, not born. Portrayals of essential womanhood and



femininity or manhood and masculinity in literature and media become norms that condition children further into gender roles. These also limit the scope of gender identity to a binary and the scope of sexuality to a singular. If this is to change, children's conditioning must change. Literature and cinema, two of the most influential sources of conditioning, must change. And these changes, although already in progress to some extent, must make the construction of gender and sexuality fluid and liberating rather than rigid and limiting. This resignification is possible and attempted by contemporary children's authors. As Kate Millet puts it in her book *Sexual Politics*, "Whatever the 'real' differences between the sexes may be, we are not likely to know them until the sexes are treated differently, that is alike" (29).

The journey of Rapunzel gives hope for further resignification of gender norms to make them more inclusive and fluid. Tales travel and evolve across time, and the evolution of Rapunzel's tale is proof of a dynamic society that has grown through the different phases of women's fight for empowerment. Representations of women are getting challenged in contemporary writings, and this has influenced children's literature as well. The shift in representation of gender is crucial as it paves the path not only for empowerment of women but also for the perception of gender on a spectrum instead of a binary. Children's literature will have endless evolutionary scope once its transition out of conventional tropes is complete.

Works Cited

Children's Books

- Grimm, Jacob, et al. *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm All New third Edition*. Bantam, 2003.
- Rajendran, Sowmya. *Girls to the Rescue*. Tulika Publishers, 2015.

Secondary Sources

- Bartky, S. L. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. Routledge, 1990.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, Vintage Ebooks, 2011.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Edited by Linda J. Nicholson, Routledge, 1990.
- Cixous, Helene. "The Laugh of the Medusa." Translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1976, pp. 875-93.
- Fredrickson, Barbara, and Tomi-Ann Roberts. "Objectification Theory: Toward Understanding Women's Lived Experiences and Mental Health Risks." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 1997.
- Grimm, Jacob, et al. *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm All New Third Edition*. Bantam, 2003.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Lectures on Ethics*. Edited and translated by Peter Heath, Cambridge UP, 2013.
- Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. U of Illinois P, 2000.
- Singh, Majari. *Gender Issues in Children's Literature*. ERIC Publications, 1998.



Udgaonkar, Avani. "Girls to the Rescue: Sowmya Rajendran's Rewriting of the Toxic Culture of the Submissive Little Girl." *Bound*, 23 Nov. 2018, boundindia.com/girls-to-the-rescue-sowmya-rajendrands-rewriting-of-the-toxic-culture-of-the-submissive-little-girl/.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Project Gutenberg Canada ebook #1227, 2015.

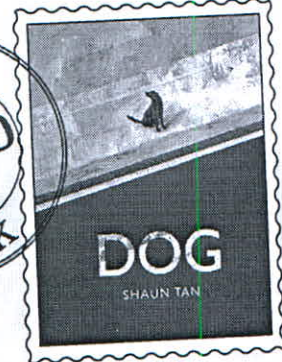
Komal Tujare is working as an assistant professor at St. Mira's College for Girls, Pune, affiliated to the Savitribai Phule Pune University in Maharashtra, India, where she teaches undergraduate and postgraduate students of English literature. She is currently pursuing her PhD research: "A Study of Gender Conditioning through Contemporary Children's Literature in India." Her key areas of interest include children's literature, gender studies, and translation studies. She has worked on the portrayal of women in Disney films as part of her postgraduate dissertation and has been a speaker at international conferences including one at the University of the Balearic Islands, Spain, where she represented India.



Australian author Shaun Tan is the winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal in 2020, received for **Tales from the Inner City** (2018), including **Dog**. The theme of creating and solidifying the human-canine affiliation has the potential to resonate and appeal emotionally across generations of readers. We can watch their walk through both time and space together. Their bond is indicated within a relationship of action and reaction in which the expression of one is mirrored in the behavior of the other.

Dog is a miniature of high artistic quality, with its precision and thoughtfulness in verbal, visual, and graphic forms. Its compact nature along with its semantic and expressive brevity cater to various perceivers, from less patient to more demanding and thoughtful readers. **Dog** confirms Tan's acceptance speech for the Greenaway award: "Good books, good words and images...are at least the start of new conversations."

Olga Kubecková



Dog

Shaun Tan
London, UK: Walker Studio,
2020. 48 pp.
ISBN: 9781406397147
(Pictorial book; all ages)

