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## Critical Analysis on Tangled: Fairy Tale and Movie

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### ABSTRACT

Fairy tales have always been an integral part of literature, with Rapunzel being one of the most popular stories. However, the modern retelling of this classic tale in the form of Disney's Tangled has raised questions about gender dynamics and societal expectations. This essay critically analyses the gender role implications of the narrative structure and character development in Tangled's Rapunzel by exploring the themes of power, patriarchy, and femininity. The narrative structure of Tangled suggests that power is gendered.

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### INTRODUCTION

The fairy tale of Rapunzel has been a popular story for centuries, with various adaptations and retellings. Tangled, the Disney animated film adaptation, has brought a new perspective to the classic tale. The film portrays Rapunzel as a strong and independent protagonist who takes control of her own destiny. Tangled (2010) is a feminist retelling of The Grimm Brothers' Rapunzel. The concept of Feminism is nothing new and a lot of critics have defined it differently (Mubeen, 2015).

Fairy tales with their princesses and witches have always attracted children and one of the most popular fairy tales of all time is "Rapunzel." (Suchismita, 2016). Another noteworthy aspect of Tangled is the development of the relationship between Rapunzel and Flynn Rider. Instead of falling in love at first sight, their relationship grows and evolves over the course of the film. This portrayal of a more realistic at first sight, their relationship grows and evolves over the course of the film. This portrayal of a more realistic and organic romance is refreshing, and adds depth to the characters and their motivations.

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### CHARACTERS ANALYSIS

The male protagonist, Flynn Rider, subverts expectations by being vulnerable and emotional, while Rapunzel, the female protagonist, lacks agency and is overly emotional. This character dynamic reinforces traditional gender roles and reinforces the patriarchy's idea that men are the natural leaders. The female characters' strength in Tangled is portrayed through traditional feminine empathy, rather than through assertive or independent behaviour. Furthermore, the film reinforces the societal expectation of the virgin/whore dichotomy. Rapunzel is inherently "pure," while the female antagonist, Mother Gothel, is sexualized and portrayed as evil. This portrayal reinforces traditional power dynamics that women who are not sexualized are good, while those who are sexualized are good, while those who are sexually active or sexualized are bad.

Dame Gothel is very evil, cruel, selfish, possessive and violent. She was so unmerciful that after knowing about the prince, she cut off Rapunzel's long hair and "banished" her to a "desert where she had to live in great grief and misery" (Grimm 2004, 106). Whereas the antagonist is cruel, "wicked" and "venomous" looking (Grimm 2004, 106) in Rapunzel, she has not been described in such evil and wicked terms in Tangled (Mubeen, 2015).

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### THEMES ANALYSIS

Despite the problematic themes, Tangled does have some positive moments of female empowerment. Rapunzel's journey towards self-discovery, independence, and taking control of her own life, is a feminist message. However, it ultimately falls short of fully subverting traditional gender expectations.

One of the most interesting aspects of Tangled is the way it subverts traditional gender roles. Instead of the typical handsome prince saving the helpless princess it is Rapunzel who saves Flynn Rider, the male protagonist. Rapunzel is also portrayed as a skilled artist and a quick learner, which challenges the stereotype that women are not as intelligent or capable as men.

Furthermore, the film also explores the theme of parental control and the importance of independence. Rapunzel's mother figure, Gothel, keeps her locked away in a tower, claiming that it is for her own safety. However, Rapunzel begins to question the validity of Gothel's claims and ultimately discovers the

truth about her past. This theme of breaking free from parental control resonates with many viewers, especially teenagers and young adults who are navigating their own paths towards independence.

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## GENDER ROLES SHOWCASED IN TANGLED

While *Tangled* subverts some traditional gender roles, it also perpetuates certain gender stereotypes. One stereotype is the idea that girls and women must have long, flowing hair to be considered beautiful. This is evident in the plot of the film, as the length of Rapunzel's hair is a key component of her character. This perpetuates the harmful idea that women must conform to certain beauty standards to be considered attractive.

Another gender stereotype in *Tangled* is the portrayal of the male characters as strong and muscular, while the female characters are slender and delicate. Flynn Rider, the male protagonist, is muscular and physically capable, while Rapunzel is portrayed as frail and in need of protection. This perpetuates the stereotype that men are physically stronger and more capable than women.

Additionally, the film reinforces the idea that women are emotional and irrational, while men are logical and level-headed. This is shown through the character of Gothel, who is manipulative and emotionally volatile, while Flynn Rider is portrayed as rational and pragmatic. This stereotype can be harmful, as it reinforces the idea that women are not capable of making sound decisions. Certainly the Mother Gothel of *Tangled* is a selfish woman who continuously reminds Rapunzel that the outside world is a dangerous place, "intolerant of joy and happiness and will destroy any ray of sun shine it finds" so she should always stay in the tower (Greno and Howard 2010).

In conclusion, while *Tangled* offers a fresh and empowering perspective on the Rapunzel fairy tale, it also perpetuates certain gender stereotypes. It is important for media to challenge these stereotypes and promote more diverse and inclusive representations of gender.

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## THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST IN GENDER ROLES: RAPUNZEL

The fairy tale of Rapunzel, as adapted in *Tangled*, has some instances of gender biasness. While the film does subvert some traditional gender roles, it also perpetuates certain stereotypes and biases. Also, Rapunzel's long hair serves as a symbol of her femininity and beauty. It reinforces the notion that women's worth lies solely in their physical appearance (Avni, 2023).

One example of gender biases in the film is the portrayal of Gothel, the mother figure who raises Rapunzel in isolation. Gothel is depicted as manipulative and emotionally volatile, which reinforces the stereotype that women are overly emotional and irrational. This portrayal of a female villain perpetuates negative stereotypes about women and their behaviour.

Another instance of gender biasness in *Tangled* is the characterization of Rapunzel as a damsel in distress. While the film does ultimately empower Rapunzel, she initially relies on Flynn Rider to rescue her and provide her with protection. This perpetuates the stereotype that women are weak and in need of male protection.

Furthermore, the emphasis on Rapunzel's physical appearance, particularly her long hair, reinforces the idea that a woman's value is tied to her physical appearance. This perpetuates the harmful notion that women must conform to certain beauty standards to be considered attractive or valuable. She only interacted with mother Gothel. She has always been socially isolated. This made it difficult for her to adapt to her new surroundings after her escape with Flynn (Gandhi G, 2016).

In conclusion, while *Tangled* does attempt to subvert some traditional gender roles, it also perpetuates certain stereotypes and biases. It is important to recognize and challenge these biases in media and work towards more diverse and inclusive representations of gender.

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## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Tangled*'s Rapunzel offers an interesting retelling of a classic fairy tale, but it does have some problematic elements in its representation of gender roles. Its narrative structure and character development reinforce traditional power dynamics that privilege masculinity and conformity to traditional feminine qualities. While there are moments of female empowerment in the film, they are limited and fall short of fully dismantling gender expectations.

This analysis highlights the importance of critically examining popular culture and its impact on societal perceptions of gender. *Tangled*'s adaptation of the Rapunzel fairy tale offers a fresh and empowering perspective on the classic story. Through its subversion of gender roles, exploration of parental control, and development of realistic relationships, the film has become a beloved classic in its own right.

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