A narrative blind eye: Visual disability representation within the Brothers Grimm folk tales

Leah Laxdal
University of Windsor

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A NARRATIVE BLIND EYE:
VISUAL DISABILITY REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE
BROTHERS GRIMM FOLK TALES

by
Leah Laxdal

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through English Language, Literature and Creative Writing
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

"A Narrative Blind Eye: Visual Disability Representation within the Brothers Grimm Folk Tales" explores the disability representations within Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's nineteenth-century *Children's and Household Tales*. The Grimm tales contain numerous characters (dwarfs, giants, one-eyed daughters, etc.) Often the disabled Grimm characters are villains or disabled on account of the tale's villain, connecting blindness metaphorically to evil or punishment. The Grimms feature disability as a narrative device, suggesting that disability embodies deviance and/or non-ideal Otherness. Specifically turning to, and building upon, the arguments within *Narrative Prosthesis* by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, *Enforcing Normalcy* by Lennard J. Davis, Roland Barthes's structural and semiological analysis of narratives and Jack Zipes' scholarship of the Grimm tales, I examine how disability operates within literature at a metaphorical level. My thesis advocates the literary dissection and understanding of narrative structuralism and devices within folk tales in order to challenge existing visual disability ideologies.
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INTRODUCTION:

A Narrative Blind Eye:

Visual Disability Representation within the Brothers Grimm Folk Tales

My thesis examines the representations of visual disability within Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s nineteenth-century Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children’s and Household Tales); specifically, my thesis examines Grimms’ seventh edition (1857) of the folk tales. By focusing on the narrative and textual visual disability content and context in which the folk tales’ motifs, themes, and events are set, and by correlating and analyzing those unexplored affinities, my thesis discerns visual disability patterns and theorizes the Grimm folk tale premise of the “Othered” visually disabled body. Namely, that visual disability (whether blindness or varying degrees of visual impairment) signifies imperfect, deviant character and punishment for that character flaw/problem body.

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1 For the purpose of my thesis, I define the term disability as a physical and/or cognitive bodily condition that causes a social and political minority experience and status. Within the Brothers Grimm tales, the disabled characters share the same social status of the Other; the Grimms name the disabled characters with their bodily conditions (dwarfs, giants, one-eyed daughter, and so on) and position these characters as antagonists—characters who occupy the social status of the Other villain next to the able-bodied hero.

2 Throughout my thesis I do not refer to the Brother Grimms’ literary work as fairy tales, as the term was not used by the Brothers Grimm. The Brothers Grimm called their tales Märchen, which originally meant news or gossip in Old High German (Zipes “Breaking” 119). The Märchen was commonly termed as Volksmärchen which meant “folk tale (of medieval origins)...[as the term] signifies that the people were the carriers of the tales” (ibid.). Thus, fairy tale is a “misnomer” when used for the German Volksmärchen as it is a French term that “refers to the literary production of tales adapted by bourgeois or aristocratic writers in the 17th and 18th centuries such as Basile. Perrault, Madame D’Aulnoy, Madame de Beaumont, Mausaus and others, who wrote for educated audiences” instead of for the common folk in which folk tales originated (ibid., original italics). Such a distinction is significant to my argument because folk tales contain lower class protagonists who journey towards monarchical power and position (a life of ideals), whereas fairy tales include “bourgeois” protagonists (ibid. 130) that “desire to alter social relations” (ibid. 124) (such as the adventure of a middle class hero instead of that of a prince or pauper). I argue that the Brothers Grimm folk tales often represent able-bodied protagonists achieving the ideal life (with their ideal bodies), whereas the disabled Grimm characters represent the non-ideal and devious Other characters who rarely journey towards idealism, thus presenting the metaphorical trope of the imperfect and/or devious disabled body within narratives.

3 Throughout my thesis, I shall use Nicole Markotić’s definition of the problem body as “the difficult body, the deviant body[,]...the extraordinary body, the excessive. [and] the abnormal...” body (“Icarus” 14) as
The Brothers Grimm's representations of visual disability is not uncommon: throughout narrative history, visual disability often represents deviancy, punishment and supernatural powers that position the visually disabled characters as an evil "Other" against the able-bodied characters. For example: within the Bible, God punishes people with the "blemish" of blindness for their sins (King James Bible, Deut. 15:20-21): as well, God heals and "redeems" people of their blindness and restores their body to a Christian converted "whole" state (King James Bible Mark 10:46-52), which implies that the blind possess an incomplete or partial body with their disability—a flawed body in need of repair to a "whole-like" state. Polyphemus, the villainous one-eyed Cyclops in Homer's *Odyssey*, is punished with blindness for his hungry appetite for Odysseus and his men. Tiresias is the blind prophet in Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* who narratively represents the "other" because of his soothsaying supernatural knowledge of the future (which Oedipus profusely insults). *Oedipus Rex* s Oedipus blinds himself as self-punishment after discovering that he killed his father. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Rochester is fearful that Jane will not want to marry a blind "cripple" (483)—a man with a flawed body. H. G. Wells s short story, "The Country of the Blind," presents a community of blind people (in a "mysterious mountain valley, cut off from all the world of men") as a "pit of sin," of which the sighted main character believes he is the blind community's "Heaven-sent King and Master" who should teach them about sight and "cure" their blindness (Wells "Country"). And finally, Jose Saramago's novel *Blindness* depicts blindness as a plague that spreads social chaos and suffering. These historical
literary visual representations of disability position the visually disabled body as
d villanous and/or undesirable. From Classical and Biblical stories to contemporary
fiction, blind characters signal a disruption in the physical body that metaphorically
present a disruption in the story’s conflict. Similarly, the Brothers Grimm place visually
disabled witches, one-eyed step-daughters, and blinded princes in their Grimm tales as
narrative plot device characters who signal a particular narrative disruption or problem.
Throughout their entire collection of folk tales, the Grimms align visual disability with
imperfection and villainy. 16 of the Grimm 210 tales include one or more blind
characters that signify evil. Others in comparison to the good and successful able-bodied
characters.

Representations of narrative visual disability often elevate able-bodiedness and
degrade characters with disabilities into secondary, antagonistic roles. Blind or one-eyed
characters rarely occupy the protagonist position (which are mainly reserved for the
physically intact characters, and instead they intentionally signify difference that
interferes and challenges the main character(s). David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder
describe the disruptive oppositional role of the disabled character(s) as a distinctive

4 I shall only count the 16 Grimm tales that include characters described as “blind” or having “poor
eyesight,” instead of counting the 12 other tales that contain witches, even though the Hansel and Gretel
narrator explains that all “witches have red eyes and cannot see very far” (Grimm 57). Since the other 12
Grimm tales with witches do not specifically label the witches with visual disability within their respective
tales, nor do the witches possess qualities or experiences of being visually disabled, I do not classify the
non-Hansel and Gretel witches as being visually disabled. The Hansel and Gretel narrator may identify all
witches as somewhat blind, yet I feel that this statement only applies to the witch within the Hansel and
Gretel (singular) folk tale world and not the entire collection of Grimm folk tales and the multiple fairy tale
worlds of each tale.

5 Throughout my thesis I mainly use the phrase disabled characters over the phrase characters with
disabilities. In Enforcing Normalcy. Disability, Deafness and the Body, Lennard J. Davis prefers the term
persons with disabilities over “disabled person” since the former term implies a quality added to
someone’s personhood rather than the second term’s reduction of the person to the disability (xiii). Similar
Linton, on the other hand, welcomes the phrases disabled body, disabled person, and disabled women
she claims it is a way to identify herself “as a member of the minority group—disabled people—[which] is
a strong influence on [her] cultural make-up, who [she is], and the way that [she] think[s]” (My Body).
idiosyncrasy...that differentiates the [disabled] character from the anonymous background [/fictional setting] of the ‘norm’” (Narrative Prothesis 47, my emphasis).

For example, the Grimm disabled character is often the sole disabled character among roughly a 3-5 able-bodied cast. The popular phrase “odd man out” comes to mind, because the inclusion of the disabled character sets up an automatic contrast between the normal able body and abnormal disabled body when readers are exposed to a large cast of able bodied characters. The normal able body represents the idealized majority within the Grimm tales, and disability signifies the “odd” imperfection. Thus, literature leans on disability as a characterization device that enables a contrast between the “normal” able-bodied characters and the Othered abnormal disabled characters.

In my thesis, I explore contemporary disability theory that analyzes how physical disability operates within literature at a metaphorical level, specifically turning to, and building upon, the arguments within Narrative Prothesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder and I rely on Lennard J. Davis’s Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body. Specifically, I contextualize disability according to the two primary literary disability representations that Mitchell and Snyder discuss in Narrative Prothesis: Disabilities and the Dependencies of Discourse: “first as stock feature of characterization and, second, as an opportunistic metaphorical device” (47). Mitchell and Snyder use the phrase narrative prosthesis “to indicate that disability has been used throughout history as a crutch upon

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Politic 118). For the purpose of my thesis, I shall use the term ‘disabled characters’ to identify a minority group of characters within the Brothers Grimm tales. Similar to the way Simi Linton identifies herself as a disabled person to politically and socially be defined among the specific minority group of the disabled (Claiming Disability 12), I prefer the term ‘disabled characters’ to signify the characters with “a range of physical, emotional, sensory, and cognitive conditions...who are bound by a common social and political experience” (Linton 12)—that of the villain and/or “other” secondary character.
which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight" (*Narrative Prosthesis* 49). Mitchell and Snyder argue that literary narratives lean on disability narrative devices (such as stock characterization, tropes and metaphors) to position the disabled body as "a potent symbolic site of literary investment": "Disability lends a distinctive idiosyncrasy to any character that differentiates the character from the anonymous background of the 'norm'..." (*Narrative Prosthesis* 49). Disability functions as a narrative device upon which stories lean for literary symbolic support. As the disabled bodies represent various symbolic identities, narratives use the disabled body for their difference and Otherness signifiers. The Grimms' use of disability as a stock feature of characterization manifests through the Grimm disabled characters' Other social and physical identities.

In Lennard J. Davis's *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, he provides an argument about normative bodies. Mitchell and Snyder expertly summarize Davis's argument that a normal body is "a theoretical premise from which all bodies must, by definition, fall short" (Mitchell and Snyder *Narrative Prosthesis* 7): "The body is up against an abstraction with which it cannot compete because the norm is an idealized quantitative and qualitative measure that is divorced from (rather than derived from) the observation of bodies, which are inherently variable" (ibid.). Davis situates the normal body as an "unattainable" body (*Enforcing Normalcy* 25), claiming that the normal body (like the ideal body) embodies a fictitious average that is never attainable in a world of varying bodies...except in literature, where only certain bodies can attain the normal and ideal status and/or form. In mythology, for example, Davis illustrates that Aphrodite is an "an ideal of beauty" (*Enforcing Normalcy* 25); and within the Brothers
Grimm tales (which Joseph Campbell calls “the child’s myth” as the tales contain several mythological motifs [Power 138]), I argue that the able-bodied characters attain and possess normative ideal bodies whereas the disabled bodies “fall short” of this ideal form and represent the abnormal-bodied characters.

Throughout my analysis, I also turn to Roland Barthes’s structural and semiological analysis of narratives; Jack Zipes scholarship of the Grimm tales; Moshe Barasch’s examination of Western representations of blindness in literature and arts; and, Joseph Campbell’s examination of mythological patterns and themes.

The first chapter of my thesis, entitled “The Other Abnormal/Disabled Grimm Bodies,” explores the Grimms’ overall inclusion of physical, mental, and social disability within their folktales. I discuss the various types of disabilities within the Brothers Grimm folktales, and I investigate the metaphorical capacity and stock characterization of each disability representation. Namely, that the majority of the disabled Grimm characters are Othered as abnormal non-ideal bodies and the able-bodied characters represent the ideal normal body within the folk tales.

The second chapter of my thesis, entitled “An Other Grimm World for the Other Dwarfs, Giants and Witches,” explores the Grimms’ use of character and setting description for trope signification; specifically, how descriptions of the disabled character’s ominous appearance and isolated forest home produces the sign of the ominous, isolated disabled body.

The third chapter, entitled “Eye Spy Disability: The True Grimm Colours,” focuses the analysis of disability representations within the Brothers Grimm tales to visual disability representations. I discuss the one-eyed step-sisters in Cinderella, the
one-eyed daughter in *Brother and Sister*, the poor-sighted witch within *Hansel and Gretel*, and the evil eye imagery within Walt Disney's filmic adaptation (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*) of the Grimms' *Snow White*.

The final chapter, entitled "Odd-Eyed Out! No Golden Apples or Handsome Princes for the Visually Disabled." provides a detailed analysis specifically on how abnormal bodies (with physical disabilities) begin to challenge normative/ableist categories within the Grimm tale *One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes*, which ultimately favour a normative narrative legend with ableism representing good fortune and social status. Disability plays the fool, and the Grimms manipulate the narrative to illuminate the irony of having a disabled heroine/hero instead of allowing disability a spotlight outside of Otherness.

The Grimms' tales have been explored from numerous theoretical perspectives over the years: Freudian, Jungian, Marxist, feminist, racist, social-historical, formalist, anthropologist, religious, philosophical, linguist, psychological, folklorist, political, and many more However, to date, I have found very little scholarship that examines the disability content and themes within folktales. Even the scholar of children's literature and Brothers Grimm, Jack Zipes, does not recognize the dominant use of disability as narrative device for characterization—specifically, the villainous antagonist. Zipes generalizes the Grimm antagonist as "marginal figures" or "other smaller creatures or outcasts," (*Brothers Grimm* 81), but he never clearly defines those "marginal...outcasts."

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6 Simi Linton, in her text *Claiming Disability Knowledge and Identity*, uses the terms *ableist* and *ableism* to refer to an able-bodied ideology which favours people without disabilities and positions persons with disabilities as inferior to those without disabilities, Linton suggests that "the construction of the terms *ableist* and *ableism*... can be used to organize ideas about the centering and domination of the nondisabled experience and point of view" (9). In my thesis, I shall rely on this notion of ableism to critique the category of "able-bodied."
as disabled—a dwarf, giant, one-eyed captain, etc. Zipes does not recognize the Grimms signature metaphor of the villainous disabled body. My thesis adds to the almost non-existent academic research on disability and folktales, while furthering research within the nascent field of disability studies.

Scholars David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder explain that, "while literary and cultural studies have resurrected social identities such as gender, sexuality, class, and race from their attendant obscurity and neglect in the social and hard sciences, disability has suffered a distinctly different disciplinary fate" ("Introduction" The Body and Physical Difference 2). A scientific medical lens often examines disability (disability as incapacitation through illness or injury), rather than giving it a Humanities focus (disability as a literary trope). In contrast, my Masters thesis places the subject of disability as the focal point of critical inquiry and analysis. The intersection of Literary Theory, Disability Studies, and Children's Literature provides a rich field of enquiry for my project.

The Grimm tales continue to be widely read, translated and published. They remain influential texts for children, but also for contemporary writers. Several popular motion pictures and television programs continue to reproduce the tales, and this international saturation of the tales heavily influences the literary culture of children, most of whom are familiar with versions of the Brothers Grimm tales. The Brothers Grimms' idealized able-bodied main characters live separately from the disabled—the able-bodied characters live in villages of able-bodied characters whereas the disabled characters live isolated in the woods; the able-bodied characters fear the disabled "evil" "Other" characters; and most Grimm characters seek and desire a "cure" 'prosthetic
for disability. My thesis examines the literary significance such representations of the abnormal, imperfect, and evil Other disabled bodies have within children’s literature.

Defining Disability: The Giant Between the Lines

When discussing disability, it is important to understand the socially-constructed views and discourse that regulate and inform the way readers think about persons with disabilities, the body of the person with the disability, and the symbol and identity of disability. Since definitions of disability vary from culture to culture and person to person, defining disability is challenging as there are many social, physical, and physiological elements that one needs to factor into the definition. For example, in 1983 the United Nations defined disability as “[a]ny restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being” (qtd. in Wendell Rejected 13); however, disability scholar and activist Simi Linton believes the term disability—once predominantly medically signified and associated with “incapacity, a disadvantage, [and] deficiency” (Linton Claiming Disability 11)—now describes a common social and political experience. Linton, in her critical book Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity, argues that the category of disability “has become more capacious[,]...incorporating people with a range of physical, emotional, sensory, and cognitive conditions...[who are] bound by common social and political experience” (12). Linton insists that various disability scholars, rights activists and persons with disability took “control over the naming of their experience” and reassigned the meaning of disability instead of removing the existing label (ibid. 10). As a result, this newly signified disability category politically and socially defines a specific
minority group. The new identity group helps disability activists label and identify themselves for social and economic convenience, Linton explains (ibid. 10), and also “function[s] as a basis for political activism” (ibid. 12). For the purpose of my thesis, I shall use Simi Linton’s definition of disability; while analyzing the Grimm tales, I shall use the term disabled characters to signify the characters with “a range of physical, emotional, sensory, and cognitive conditions...who are bound by a common social and political experience” (ibid. 12). For example, I name Grimm giants disabled because they possess a shared physical condition and resulting common social and political experiences as characters because of their physical condition; Grimm giants—described with bodies that are taller and stronger than the able-bodied prince and princesses—live in the forests, and are for the most part excluded from wealth, marriage, and regal status.

The Grimms’ Prosthesis

I began exploring the topic of disability and folklore after recently viewing Walt Disney’s 1937 production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs with my three-year-old niece.7 I had my finger on the fast-forward button of my remote control, ready to fast-forward through all of the “scary” parts, when I began to question which parts of the movie were acceptable viewing material for such a young child. Should a child be exposed to a humpbacked-witch and her walking cane as the villainous antagonist? Should a child see seven dwarfs isolated in the middle of the forest, working as underground laborers who rarely come in contact with able-bodied individuals? Or should any person view the disabled body as occupying multiple villainous and inferior

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7 I discuss my niece’s experience of Walt Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in chapter two.
roles against those of able-bodied characters? What type of bodily metaphors, themes and patterns does Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* present?

**Within a few days of viewing Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.** I read the preface of Robert Bogdan’s *Freak Show* and discovered that he too questioned the characterization of disability within filmic narratives. Bogdan describes an occasion where he once observed his ten-year-old son and his son’s friend view the Disney remake of the film *Treasure Island*. Bogdan overheard his son’s friend ask, “Who’s the bad guy?” to which Bogdan’s son replied, “If they look bad, they are bad” (*Freak Show* vii).

Intrigued by his son’s remark, Bogdan decided to examine the physical depictions of villains within horror and adventure movies.

Following Bogdan’s research, he concludes that “disability is the black hat…of adventure stories,” where villains are often “marked by various disfigurements and disabilities, such as missing limbs and eyes”; and in horror films, disability often presents evil “monsters” with “scarred, deformed, disproportionately built, hunched over, exceptionally large, exceptionally small, deaf, speech impaired, visually impaired, mentally ill, or mentally subnormal” bodies (vii). Bogdan provides the example of Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, where the beautiful queen needs to transform into a “wart-nosed hunchback before she [can] set out to accomplish her hideous scheme” (vii). Reading Bogdan’s observation reminded me of my own Disney experience and questions regarding the original Brothers Grimm tale. Like Bogdan, I question the characterization of disability within filmic narratives and also question the characterization of disability within literary narratives. As a result, I decided to pursue research regarding disability theory and the Brothers Grimm folktales—the Grimms’
literary folktales and some Walt Disney’s representation of those tales. Specifically, the
disability representational practices of the Brothers Grimm interest me because these
narrative devices largely carry the weight of an important part of a story’s plot—the
folktales’ rising action and conflict (as the disabled characters are mainly antagonists)—
labeling disability and the disabled body as an imperfect Other evil body. This narrative
production of the disabled antagonist cements the trope of the opposing disabled body:
the disabled body signifying antagonism—the “active opposition” “opposing force”
according to the online Oxford English Dictionary (“Antagonism”). This antagonistic
disabled body occupies the role of the Other, which the able-bodied champions against,
and wins, thus devaluing disability under ableism. The Grimm tales separate and oppose
the disabled and able-bodies against one another, with ableism defeating disability; the
conclusion of the Grimm tales hosts the able-bodied characters happily-ever-after ending
while the antagonistic disabled body often dies or remains in the forest (in a separate
world away from the able-bodied characters). Metaphoric disabled characters serve to
challenge and oppose the protagonist, functioning as a literary disruption that advances
the plot towards a climax and resolution and then disappear from the narrative. The
Grimm disabled characters occupy cameo roles that advance the able-bodied characters,
but often end up terminating their own lives. Basically, the Grimms invoke disability for
plot twist. Confining disability within antagonistic roles enforces the literary motif of the
disabled villain.  

The Grimms did not create the trope of the disabled villain. Originally the
Brothers Grimm transcribed folk stories from other sources as a way of documenting and

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8 Throughout my thesis I shall use the Merrill-Webster Online definition of villain: the “character in a
story...who opposes the hero” (“Villain”).
preserving oral folktales, thus, transcribing existing stories and their existing disability metaphors. Folk tales were "entertainment within homes, around camp fires, and within market places," according to Grimm critic Ruth Michaelis-Jena (2), and the Brothers Grimm originally intended their literary collection of these tales to be exact transcriptions of the oral folk tales. They believed the tales to be "debris of myths, primeval beliefs, religion, early customs and law" (Michaelis-Jena 3), necessary for preservation of European culture. In the 1812 preface to the folktales (the first edition), the Grimms insisted on their accurate transcription, writing:

> We have tried to collect these tales in as pure a form as possible... No details have been added or embellished or changed, for we would have been reluctant to expand stories already so rich by adding analogies and allusions. They cannot be invented... Had we been fortunate enough to be able to tell the stories in a specific dialect, then they would no doubt have gained much; here we have one of those cases where a high degree of development, refinement, and artistry in language misfires, and where one feels that a purified language, as effective as it may be for other purposes, has become brighter and more transparent, but also more insipid and would have failed to capture the essentials. (Tartar "Annotated" 406)

Even though the Grimms insist that they preserved the tales in their original "pure" form, the latter part of their preface reveals that they "refined" and "purified" the dialect of the oral storytellers. After seven revisions of the tales, the Grimms' so-called exact transcription of folktales morphed into new creations due to their creative and liberal editing and rewriting. Ruth Michaelis-Jean explains that the märchen language
and story details continued to change over the course of almost fifty years and seven editions/versions of the tales as Wilhelm Grimm often "enhanced" the "flat pieces of narrative into enchantment" (by replacing indirect speech with direct speech making animals talk, and adding details about the scenery), instead of documenting exact transcriptions of oral folklore (4). I agree with Michaelis-Jena in her belief that the Grimms may have originally viewed the oral folktale "as a document not to be tampered with," however their transcription methodology is faulty (4). The Grimms’ published purified translations of the oral tales do not present "pure" oral folklore. Instead, the Grimm tales blend the voice of the oral storyteller and the "purified," "developed" and "refined" voice of the Grimms.

The Brothers Grimm are not accountable for the Grimm tales’ disability metaphors. The number of storytellers confuses the origin of the metaphors, and yet the Grimms’ "refined" narratives continue to host the trope of the disabled villain. The Grimms transcribed and "refined" the tales’ disability metaphors, perpetuating the antagonistic symbolism of disability; and subsequently, the Grimm nineteenth-century disability representations have been widely published throughout the world, and contemporary translations continue to negatively label disability and the disabled body within contemporary filmic and literary fairy tales. The Grimms help canonize the villainous disabled body within children’s literature as their disability themes, tropes, and metaphors position the disabled folk characters and the disabled body as narrative prosthetics within the Grimm tales—falsely identified Others who signify deficiency. Shaped by David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder’s narrative prosthesis theoretical premise within Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse, my
thesis exposes the Grimm disabled characters and their disabled bodies as illusory narrative devices that devalue disability and perpetuate the trope of the disabled villain.

Within the Brothers Grimm folktales, Mitchell and Snyder’s narrative prosthesis representation of disability exhibits the Othered disabled antagonists next to the idealized able-bodied protagonists. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children’s and Household Tales) contain numerous characters with physical and cognitive disabilities, upon which the narrative leans for the symbolism of imperfection and deviance. In fact, within 129 (61 percent) of the 210 Grimm tales, there are one or more references to disability—visual impairment, muteness, deafness, absent or impaired limbs and digits, and height “abnormalities,” lameness, the aging body, excess bodily hair, learning disabilities, obesity and depression. The tales include dwarfs (grey, black or little dwarfs), elves, giants, gnomes, little men, old men and women with canes, a hedgehog with crooked legs, Hans Dumb/Dumb Hans, Simpleton, Thumbling, a one-eyed captain and stepsister, a maiden without hands, Lazy Heinz, Tall Lenz, Fat Trina, a changeling with a fat head and glaring eyes, poor-sighted witches, a flat-footed woman, a woman with a droopy lip, a woman with an immense thumb, misshapen children (some shaped like apes), devils with one cloven foot, blind and lame horses, blind and lame brothers, Sister Three-Eyes, and many more. Nearly half the Grimm characters possess various disabled physical and cognitive bodies (bodies with differing disabilities among the unified disability-identity), while the remaining characters have the undiserning able-bodies. The Grimm characters with disabilities possess not only different bodies to that of the able-bodied characters, but they also possess the double-difference of not having the same disability as their disabled peers. As a result, disability signifies difference
within the Grimm tales. The Grimms position these disabled characters as difference markers against the preponderant idealized able-bodied princes and princesses within the narrative; the disabled characters' differences in physical and cognitive abilities situate the disabled characters as strange, mystical, magical and deviant compared with the often beautiful, good able-bodied protagonists. Often, the able-bodied protagonists consciously treat the disabled characters as Other because of the disability difference—the able-bodied characters situate their own bodies as the ideal body, and the disabled bodies as the Other imperfect and deviant bodies unworthy of the same social and marital advances. For example within *The Old Man and His Grandson*, the young adult children of "a very old man, so old that his eyes had grown dim, his ears were hard of hearing, and his knees trembled" force their father to "sit in a corner behind the stove" while he ate so that they did not have to watch him spill and drip food on himself (266). The children do not like their father's aging body and its subsequent "disgusting" movements (266), while their own youthful bodies non-problematic. The aged father is not worthy to sit at the same table as his youthful children. This Othering of the disabled body positions disability as the potent symbol of imperfection and deviance within the tales. The Grimms lean on disability and its imperfect and deviant Otherness to contrast the perfect normative able-bodied characters. The disabled villains and/or forest-dwelling helpers function as the abnormal outsiders who are only worthy of temporary roles/appearances (usually as antagonists) rather than beginning and ending the tale as heroic protagonists. The Grimms use disabled characters for their interruptive Other bodies and antagonism to

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9 I cite all Brother Grimm tales from the third edition of *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* by Jack Zipes (Toronto Bantam, 2003) unless otherwise noted
off-set the (often) able-bodied protagonist and his or her journey towards regal and marital ideals.

Mitchell and Snyder in *Narrative Prosthesis* theorize that disability acts as a narrative prosthesis within the majority of literary and film sources; the Brothers Grimm tales are among those sources. Within the tales, disability functions as a prosthesis—an artificial device that replaces a missing part of the body of the text. Often, the disabled characters antagonize the able-bodied protagonists. The protagonist battles the disabled character. He or she wins, and this win generates the protagonist's social and marital reward. Without characters with disabilities, the Grimm tales have fewer antagonists, less antagonism, and the protagonists encounter personal strength and wit challenges rather than disabled opponents. The Grimms rely on the disabled body for their villainy trope. Some of the Grimm tales contain able-bodied antagonists (for example there are evil stepmothers) and animal antagonists (such as foxes, lions and cats); but for the most part, the Grimms use the disabled body to signify Otherness and antagonism.

Jonathan Culpeper, author of *Language and Characterization: People in Plays and Other Texts*, reports that various structural literary scholars—such as Vladimir Propp, Claude Lévi-Straus. A. J. Greimas and Northrop Frye—categorize characters by specifying lists of “features or sèmes that distinguish one character from another”:

“Usually, the features considered form binary opposites [such as] male/female, adult/child, good/bad, beautiful/ugly similarities and contrasts between characters” (Culpeper 48). Greimas, for example, pairs binary characters into six roles: “sender/receiver, subject/object and helper/opponent” (ibid. 50). Many of the Grimm characters fit within Greimas binary roles and several other character categories of the
literary structuralists outline. For example, several Grimm tales include: kings or fathers that send (occupying the role as sender) their children (receivers) in search of various magical objects (such as potions or golden eggs), wealth or marriage; forest dwellers who either assist or fight the story’s protagonist; beautiful princess versus ugly step-sisters; poor brothers against rich brothers; and more. The idea of binary semes lends itself well to my thesis. I focus on the protagonist/antagonist and able-bodied/disabled Grimm character roles and the structural narrative elements and devices that contribute to those roles and their subsequent bodily metaphors. By using Roland Barthes’s structural and semiological analysis of narrative, I shall mirror his arguments that literary texts contain established systems which allow for the articulation of content. As well, coinciding with Mitchell and Snyder’s narrative prosthetic theory of disability, I specifically examine the way that the Brothers Grimm narratives lean on bodily and character descriptions (which Barthes calls indices\(^{10}\)) to communicate stock representations of disabled characters.

In Barthes’s 1966 essay, *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives*, Barthes breaks down the structure of narrative into three interconnected parts—Functions, Actions, Narrative—which sequentially operate on levels that demonstrate meaning. Barthes explains, “a function has meaning only insofar as it occurs in the general action of an actant; and this action itself receives its ultimate meaning from the

\(^{10}\) Indices, Barthes describes, are narrative units that do not refer to:

…a complementary and consequential action [of the narrative], but to a more or less diffused concept, though one necessary to the meaning of the story: character indices concerning the characters, information relative to their identity, notations of ‘atmosphere,’ etc.; the relation of the unit and its correlate is then no longer distributional (frequently several indices refer to the same signified and their order of appearance in the discourse is not necessarily pertinent), but integrative; in order to understand the ‘use’ of an indicial notation, we must pass to a higher level (actions of the characters or narration), for it is only here that the index is explained…(*Semiotic Challenge* 107).

Basically, Barthes summarizes *indices* to “imply metaphoric *relata*...” “[t]he ‘character’ of a character can never be named, though ceaselessly indexed” through narrative *indices* (ibid. 107). For example, the majority of the Grimm antagonists are indexed with the metaphor of antagonism through their disabled body. The Brothers Grimm use a disability index to signify the narrative’s antagonist/villain.
fact that it is narrated, entrusted to a discourse which has its own code” (Semiotic Challenge 103). Graham Allen summarizes Barthes three-part combination process:

Functions integrate into Actions and Actions integrate “at the level of Narrative” (Roland Barthes 58). Narrative, the final level of the structure of narrative, “is the stake of communication: there is a giver of the narrative, and the receiver of the narrative” (Barthes Semiotic Challenge 122). At the level of Narrative, stories communicate meaning from author to reader.

Barthes breaks down the first level—Functions—of his three-part narrative structure into two types: distributive functions and indices. Distributive Functions are narrative elements that provoke the narrative actions and generate immediate meaning to the reader. For example, the distributive function of Snow White’s wicked queen knocking on the door of the dwarfs’ cottage to attract Snow White to the door, immediately is understood as the narrative detail that causes Snow White to answer the door. Indices, on the other hand, are collections of narrative details that produce a kind of meaning that applies to the narrative atmosphere, setting, and/or characters. By themselves, Barthes argues, indices generate less meaning when not paired with Actions. For example, when examining the Snow White queen’s “old peddler woman” disguise (185) and her throbbing hateful heart that “turn[s] in her breast each time she sees Snow White (182), Barthes theory of narrative structuralism implies that these two descriptions of the queen hold minimal meaning until they attach to the queen’s Actions. The combination of the queen’s disguise and hatred towards Snow White with the queen’s attempt to kill Snow White holds more significance to the narrative than if the story just described the queen’s appearance; together, with the queen’s murder attempts at Snow
White (her actions), the queen’s hateful heart and peddler disguise (indices) are narrative details that add background significance to the reason why and how the queen wants to kill Snow White (for example, the queen’s hate for Snow White explains why the queen wants to kill her, and the queen’s peddler costume explains how the queen tries to murder Snow White), and yet these details are not necessary to forward the tale’s plot. Indices, as Rick Rylance summarizes Barthes, “are dispensable: if a description of atmosphere were omitted, the narrative might be the poorer, but it would survive” (Roland Barthes 53). For Barthes, Actions contribute more to the narrative than character indexes. Therefore, a Barthesian reading of the Snow White example suggests that the Grimms description of the queen’s Actions add more to the narrative than the description of her emotion, clothes and aged body. Or do they? I shall push Barthes’s structural narrative analysis a little further and claim that the combination of Indices and Actions doubly forms bodily tropes; indices alone create the first level of tropes and the addition of Actions increases and doubly intensifies trope signification. Yes, the disabled Grimm body becomes an obvious antagonistic villain once the disabled character physically tries to harm or hinder the able-bodied protagonist; however, prior to the Actions, indices themselves also host bodily metaphors that communicate disability messages. For example, the description of an old woman, her poor clothing, and the ominous, isolated setting and atmosphere around her creates a negative trope of the aged body. The combination of the narrative’s textual descriptions of aged female (signifiers) and the reader and writer concept of these descriptions (signified) produces the sign of the impoverished, ominous, isolated aged female body. Indexing the aged female character with signifiers such as “ugly,” “poor,” and “wicked” establishes strong signified
messages that compares disability with ugliness, poverty, and villainy and ultimately creates the linguistic sign of the ugly, poor, and wicked disabled body—the metaphorical villainous disabled character. Narrative indices display the first layer of metaphorical meaning and narrative Actions provide the second layer that within the Brothers Grimm narratives, doubly metaphorizes the villainous disabled body.

Overall, structurally within narratives the Grimms use disability as the narrative function (indices) capable of creating and representing antagonism. The Grimms position the disabled body as a villainous body that causes problems for non-disabled characters. The Grimms prosthetize disability as the signified bodily character-identity that compensates for the lack of signified difference between the protagonists and antagonists. The Grimms use disability as character representation, creating bodily tropes, and when added to the Actions of the narrative, these tropes solidify the antagonistic identity of the disabled body. As a result, the signified disabled villain communicates the message—the Barthesian myth—of the evil disabled body and character. Disability acts as a tool of communication that collectively represents evil character within the Grimm tales, affecting reader’s disability ideologies, and consequently affecting social, cultural, literal, and historical representations of the disabled body. The signified disabled body communicates the message of villainy. Barthes describes this process of signification, signified and sign writer “communication,” and reader “appropriation,” as myth—“a system of communication. a message. a type of speech” (Myth Today).

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11 Throughout my thesis, I shall differentiate between myth (form of literature that traditionally depict[s] and explain[s] universal concerns and fundamental issues, such as the creation of the world, the reasons why humans speak different languages, the origins of social classes, and the like [Ashiman 198]) and the Barthesian myth (ideologically motivated messages and or cultural representations) with italics. I shall use italics when referring to Barthesian myths and non-italics when referring to literary myths or false notions (the fictitious myth).
inventor-writer transforms the image of the disabled body into a symbol of villainy of which the reader consumes and forms the concept of the villainous disabled body “freezing” the form of the villainous disabled body into a false representation of a “natural” symbol (ibid) However, Barthesian myths are not natural forms, they are motivated by social ideologies and constructed through a semiotic language system. In short, myths are “messages or cultural representations that appear harmlessly ‘natural’ [but] are motivated by ‘ideology’” (Ribiere Roland Barthes 15)

Barthes combines the etymology of myth—“(the Greek muthos. speech, therefore ‘message’)” (Moriarty Roland Barthes 19)—and myth’s signification of a fictional story or belief to newly define myth as a message, but continue to signify myth with the notion of falsity—non-‘naturalness’ “For the myth-reader,” Barthes explains everything happens as if the picture naturally conjured up the concept, as if the signifier gave a foundation to the signified the myth exists from the precise moment In fact, what allows the reader to consume myth innocently is that he does not see it as a semiotic system but as an inductive one Where there is only an equivalence, he sees a kind of causal process the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship [T]he myth consumer takes the signification for a system of facts myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiotic system (Myth Today)

Basically, Barthes views language as an organizer of ‘reality’ instead of a reflection of reality (Ribiere Roland Barthes 22), in which the structural form of language, as myth.

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12 The Oxford English Dictionary conceptualizes myth as a story involving supernatural beings or forces which embodies and provides an explanation aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon,” and a widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief (Myth)
communicates. Even though myth-readers believe Barthesian myths as natural they are entirely socially constructed. Like Saussure, Barthes scholar Mireille Ribière explains, Barthes did not view words and thoughts as separate, but as inexplicably bound together. This means that when we learn a language we acquire a certain view of the world—a particular way of thinking about reality. If in order to think, we need words and if these words already carry a particular conception of the world, then language is bound to shape the way we think (ibid 23).

Barthes intertwines linguistic signifying practices and world views, and believes that a myth is a semantically produced message that persuades and affects social ideological positions. In fact, Barthesian myths operate between ideologies, or rather in a reciprocal relationship: ideology creates myth and myth creates ideology and so on. Myths are an act of communicating, while the “narrative, as object, is the stake of communication (Barthes Semiotic Challenge 122) and the object from which writers give and readers receive myths/messages. Thus, narratives and their functional units (Functions, Actions and Narrative) are the fundamental building blocks of myths. Character’s signified bodies (such as the villainous disabled body) are the narrative units that aide in the communication of myths.

Throughout my thesis, I name the Grimms’ use of disability tropes as myths in the Barthesian sense. As Barthes says that language organizes real world views via structural functions/semiotics, I argue that the Grimm indices and metaphorical use of disability perpetuates ideologies of the Other abnormal, wicked and non-ideal disabled body.
CHAPTER ONE:
The Other Abnormal/Disabled Grimm Bodies

Mitchell and Snyder argue that disability and literary scholars first examined the literary representations of disability through a binary negative-versus-positive lens (Narrative Prosthesis 17). Scholars such as Leonard Kriegel, Deborah Kent, and Paul Longmore categorize the common narrative stereotypes of disabled devious characters, nonrealistic (inaccurate and misleading) portrayal of characters living with disability, disability deserving isolation, and disability marked with pity, punishment and ill-"fate" as negative disability images (ibid. 17-19). Labeling the stereotypes with the common negative term provides an accessible threshold for social understanding of the disability characterizations, and yet also presents a precarious platform. The overarching negative identity is indistinct: what one person believes to be a negative representation, another may view as positive—an equally difficult identity. For example, I believe that the Grimms' use of blindness as punishment is a negative representation of visual disability, but another critic may disagree. Indeed, several ancient texts (such as the Bible, Hecuba, and the Iliad) include characters losing their sight because of their commitment of crime or a "grave fault" (Barasch Blindness 23), of which blinding is characterized as a positive justified punishment for their sins (Oedipus, Polyphemus, Polymestor, etc.). While these texts present blindness as a positive proper punishment (for example, Hecuba blinds Polymestor for killing his son). I argue that these representations position blindness as a non-ideal physical condition of which the able-bodied characters do not desire, thus negatively signifying and representing the condition of blindness. As another example, as one critic may view the "friendly" (181) and "good" (182) dwarfs in Snow White as a
positive representation of disabled characters; the dwarfs are friendly and helpful to Snow White (they revive her twice after the “wicked queen” (185) poisons her, and they build her a glass coffin) which exhibits disabled characters with positive qualities and roles within the Grimm tales. Yet I argue that the Grimms negatively portray dwarfs in a permanent non-ideal social status (working as miners who can never achieve monarch status) in an isolated world (away from the other able-bodied characters).

Disability and literary scholars needed a gateway for disability studies, and the negative versus positive categorization sparked attention of existing literary disability representations and generated further disability research and analysis. Mitchell and Snyder point out that, “the analysis of negative images helped to support the idea that disability was socially produced…[and it] attempts to rehabilitate public beliefs” *(Narrative Prosthesis* 20). Examining the negative and positive literary and filmic historical representations of disability provided a historical archive of social attitudes towards disability, of which critics, scholars, readers, and writers could “assess ideologies pertaining to people with disabilities” (ibid.)…and possibly re-evaluate and change their own disability ideologies and discourse practices. The discussions of negative imagery challenged the existing misguided attitudes about people with disabilities and opened the politics of the literary and filmic “suffering angel of the house, overcompensating supercrip, the tragically innocent disabled child, the malignant disabled avenger, and the angry way veteran” (ibid. 25). These generic negative categorizations for disabled characters exposed the historical use of disability as an unnecessary metaphor for social ills, and attempted to reform social ideologies of these stereotypes.
Recent scholarship rarely categorizes disability as either negative or positive. Scholars avoid absolute classifications and instead they theorize disability according to "difference and its social meaning" (ibid 42). Difference being yet another compounded term with a definition that continues to morph with ever-changing social ideologies—cultural experiences, attitudes and beliefs. 

"[The] disability culture remains largely 'reactionary'" insist Mitchell and Snyder. "[It] continues to levy its critiques of contemporary and historical representations while playing the trickster's game of being everywhere and nowhere at once (ibid 44). In other words, the critique of disability representations is tricky because individual and social disability attitudes and beliefs are ever-changing and very diverse. What one person may view as a negative disability representation, another person may view as positive. Even though my thesis analyzes disability representations through the perspectives of various dated and contemporary disability scholars, the catalogue of the Grimms' disability representations and its analysis remains fluid. However, as Kriegel and Longmore's research on negative disability imagery originally opened the literary discussion of the direct correlation between debasing [disabled] character portraits and demeaning cultural attitudes toward people with disabilities" (ibid Snyder 18), I too shall begin my analysis of the Brothers Grimm's disability representations through the same negative-versus-positive lens. 

Explaining the negative and positive Grimm character descriptions (indices) supports my structuralist analysis of the Grimms' representational modes of negative, antagonistic disabled bodies and positive, able-bodied protagonists, as it lays the semiotic ground for my discussion of narrative negative and positive disability representations.
The Grimm narratives include bodily descriptions that label characters as either antagonists or protagonists/good or bad depending on whether the tales describe the characters with what Krieger and Longmore (as well as myself) would generalize as positive or negative connotative terminology. The Grimms use the term "beautiful," which often signifies a good and positive description of appearance, to describe able-bodied heroines, whereas the Grimms often apply negative connotative terms, such as "ugly" and "evil," to describe the disabled villains. The Grimms pair negative characterizations with the antagonists and the positive characterizations with the protagonists to present oppositional conflicting characters, and the character's bodily appearance and disposition coincide with one another. The character's body informs its identity. Able-bodied characters are beautiful, good, well-behaved, and in (or aspire to) the position of royalty, whereas the disabled characters are ugly, evil, naughty and peddlers. Able-bodiedness signifies good/positive Grimm characterization and disability signifies bad/negative Grimm characterization. Grimm characters present bodily tropes that inform readers which characters are heroes/heroines and villains even prior to the characters' heroic or villainous actions. To paraphrase Barthes' narratology theory, indices inform identity, and indices and Action communicate narrative. Indices are the foundational narrative elements that determine a character's identity and inform his or her subsequent identity-related (protagonist or antagonist) actions. Indeed, the characters' actions further communicate the characters' role within the narrative (protagonist or antagonist); however, alone, the indices still function to metaphorically identify characters into specific roles. And in the case of the Grimms' metaphorical disabled villain, the Grimms use disability as stock characterization to communicate antagonism.
As an illustration, a large number of the Grimm tales describe the disabled Grimm characters with several negative characterizations and situations: 56 tales (27 percent) link disability with wickedness; 12 tales (6 percent) link disability with ugliness; 10 tales (5 percent) link disability with punishment; and 68 tales (32 percent) link disability with isolation. As well, in addition to being called “evil” or “ugly,” the Grimms identify the disabled characters as “monstrous” (435; 402), “horrible” (303), “nasty” (497), “mean” (478), “miserable creature[s]” (74), “disgusting” (266), “naughty” (315), and “shrewd” (313) within their tales. Overall, the Grimms imply that disability is a negative character trait that appropriately fits the role of the antagonist.

However, as mentioned earlier, indices are disposable narrative functions that inform readers of extra narrative detail such as atmosphere, setting and character detail; indices are not necessary details that advance the plot. Without indices, the plot remains unchanged (Cinderella’s step-sisters remain antagonists, trying to marry Cinderella’s prince, even if the Grimms do not mention that the sisters have “nasty and wicked hearts” [79]). Therefore, the Grimms use disability to signify opposition—the Other antagonist. The disabled and nondisabled characters are in opposition to one another—they host opposite bodies, morals, homes, worlds, social and marital status, etc.—and the disabled characters metaphorically represent antagonism. The antagonistic disabled character creates challenges and conflicts for its opposing able-bodied protagonists, and provides the necessary binary relationship (protagonist/antagonist, good/evil, disabled/able) for the Grimm plot—disability prosthetizes the otherwise missing gap of conflict/opposition.

This repetitive representation of the negative disabled body furthers the narrative stereotype that disabled characters do not deserve favourable living conditions, roles and
identities. As very few of the Grimm tales illuminate characters with disabilities in favourable situations, with favourable identities: this minimal exposure of a good, beautiful and successful disabled body deprives literary history of a positive portrayal of the disabled body. The Grimms position disability as the “black hat” (to use Robert Bogdan’s phrasing) (Freak Show vii) within 103 Grimm tales (71 percent of the folk tales that include disabled characters), contributing to the stereotypical devious disabled body trope. Only 29 percent of the Grimm tales (that include disabled characters) describe the characters with disabilities with positive adjectives and in helper roles (helping the protagonists). For example, The Brave Little Taylor includes a “brave” little man (73); The Elves contain “two cute little naked elves” (139); the dwarfs in Snow White are “friendly” (183) and “good” (184); the little taylor in The Two Travelers is “handsome[...and]...always merry and in good spirits” (353); the dwarf in The Jew in the Thornbush is a “merry fellow” (367); the old woman in The Goose Girl at the Spring is “a wise woman who meant well” (525); and, The Peasant and the Devil contains a “smart and crafty little peasant” (547). Against the multitude of negative folk tale disability representations, these few positive disability descriptions provide paltry portrayals. Very few tales link disability with positive bodily image, and thus, a very small percentage of the tales challenge traditional characterizations of the devious disabled body. The plethora of wicked dwarfs and giants eclipse the few positive characterizations of a good-natured, helpful disabled character and continues to cement the fictional and social ideological trope of the wicked disabled body. The concept of the villainous disabled body transfers from the Grimms to the narrative to readers, allowing the Barthesian myth of the
villainous disabled body to overpower and diminish any myth of a good-natured disabled body.

Exposing myths, according to Barthes, diminishes the myth's power (Ribière Roland Barthes 14). Exposing the Grimm myths for what they are (sociologically produced metaphors of the disabled body) lessens the affect that they have on readers ideologies of the villainous disabled body. Barthes intends this demystification process “to open the eyes of the public to the fact that what might appear ‘innocent’ and ‘perfectly natural’ was largely the result of distortion and misrepresentation” (ibid. 14).

For example, recognizing that the disabled villain is a socially-constructed metaphor and not a biological truth, deconstructs the social view of evil disability—that disability signifies evil—and thus, diminishes the use of disability as a metaphorical device.

Consequently, I hope that my exposure of how the Grimms use the Othered disabled-body, challenges conventional practices and views of contemporary writers and readers.

Idealized Folktale Resolutions and the Disabled “Outside” Forces

Historically, according to Susan Wendell in The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections of Disability, various societies view persons with disabilities as the “imperfect ‘Others’” (63). Wendell observes, “In societies where there are strong ideals of bodily perfection to which everyone is supposed to aspire, people with disabilities are the imperfect ‘Others’ who can never come close enough to the ideals” (63). Wendell suggests that persons with disabilities possess imperfect, non-ideal characteristics which ostracize them from the perfect/ideal ableist category. And
ultimately when disabled bodies do not measure up to the ideal they qualify among the outside Other ranges.

Throughout this chapter of my thesis I argue that the Brothers Grimm’s able-bodied heroes and heroines manifest strong ideals of perfection while the characters with disabilities embody the “Other” imperfect body, characteristics and social status. Often, the tales narrate the story of a poor, deprived, or wronged able-bodied protagonist (who is “generally clever, reasonable, resolute, and upwardly mobile”) and their journeys towards a better life that includes fortune and power (Zipes Brothers Grimm 81, my emphasis). Very few of the Grimm protagonists possess a disability\(^\text{13}\) the majority of the Grimm characters with disabilities are either villains or helpers who assist the protagonist on their journey but remain behind in the woods. The Grimm’s able-bodied protagonists acquire the perfect princess/prince, castle, and desired social status of wealth and fortune, whereas the disabled characters remain isolated in the woods, and their Othered bodily characteristics and social status does not change. Thus, the Grimm characters with disabilities function as the social rejects whom the able-bodied characters use for their own advantage and ultimately ostracize in the forest, kill, or deny a lifestyle similar to theirs. The Grimm social outcasts/characters with disabilities remain outside the able-bodied characters’ social advances and happily-ever-after conclusions\(^\text{14}\).

\(^{13}\) In fact, out of the 210 tales, there are only 21 protagonists with disabilities (10 percent) 19 male and two female characters

\(^{14}\) For instance, very few disabled Grimm characters improve their social status, marry and live happily-ever-after in royalty. Only four of the 210 Grimm tales depict disabled characters marrying princesses. The Queen Bee’s Simpleton “marries[s] the youngest and loveliest daughter and becomes king after her father’s death (233) The Golden Goose’s Simpleton “inherits[s] the kingdom and lives[s] happily ever after with his wife (238), The Clever Little Taylor’s little man character ‘marries[s] the princess [and] lives[s] as happily as a lark with her (382), and, The Griffin’s Dumb Hans marries the king’s daughter and becomes king (493). The remainder of the Grimm tales subject the disabled characters either to permanent isolation or death the disabled characters exit the narrative (via isolation or death) once their role as the antagonist or helper is no longer needed within the story.
literary representation of Othered outside characters with disabilities echos Wendell’s historical social observation of the “imperfect ‘Other’” disability-identity, and positions disability and ableism in opposition to one another. The Grimm text implies that able-bodied and disabled characters cannot live long together in the same fictional societies (under the same social desires and success ideals) as they are different bodies fit only to live within different worlds/societies. The Grimms use disability as a difference marker between bodies. The character with a disability is different from the character without a disability and vice versa. This difference—whether it be physical, mental or social—categorizes characters against one another, and such a category division divides bodies into normal versus abnormal identities. The similar bodies being that of the normative identity while the differing bodies identify as abnormal.

Barnett Savery, in his historically important article, "Identity and Difference," explains that Otherness relationally generates diversity.

Plato tells us that when we assert that black is not white we are asserting that black is other than white. Otherness is a fundamental concept existing in the realm of forms, it is a concept without which diversity would be meaningless. Otherness is a relation that connects, or, if you will, separates entities. Without the relation of otherness, everything would be identical (205).

Plato’s analysis of Otherness sets up the narrative function of protagonists and antagonists within narratives, as the theme of most plots centre around “man” versus an Other conflicting oppositional character/role such as “man, environment, society, and self (Golds “Integrative Arts 10”). Narratives embody conflict between two opposing characters and/or forces for plot development. Otherness is a fundamental plot device.
within narratives that instigates the rising action of the story. Therefore, narration posits Otherness as it functions an intentional site of diversity—the conflicting binary protagonist versus antagonist theme.

As an illustration, the Grimm narratives pit the able-bodied and disabled characters against each Other, and the characters often judge the differences between each Other group—often elevating their own bodily and social status and diminishing the Others. Specifically, within *One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three Eyes*, a mother separates her One-Eye and Three-Eyes daughters from her Other Two-Eyes daughter who has “two eyes like all other human beings” (424, my emphasis). The woman tells Two-Eyes “You’re no better than the ordinary folk! You don’t belong to us” (Grimm 424). The woman disassociates herself (and One-Eye and Three-Eyes) from her ordinary-like Other child and creates an extraordinary versus ordinary Two-Eyes feud. In opposition with the majority of the Grimm tales hosting an able-bodied protagonist judging and punishing the Other disabled imperfect and wicked antagonists, *One-Eye Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes* situates the disabled characters as the ideal who judge the able-bodied character as non-ideal/imperfect. The Grimms’ traditional antagonism between able-bodied and disabled characters reverses in the beginning of this tale and the disabled characters Other the able-bodied, usually the Grimm able-bodied “good-natured and behaved” protagonists punish the evil disabled characters for their wickedness (for example, *Brother and Sister* able-bodied king punishes the one-eyed “ugly as sin,”

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15 The beginning of *One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes* reverses the roles of the characters, allowing the abnormal disabled body the stature of protagonism while the normal able body becomes the Othered antagonist; however, the conclusion of this tale presents the traditional happy-ever-after marriage between two normative able-bodied characters. I analyze this exceptional Grimm tale in detail in chapter four of my thesis.
"evil" daughter with death after she tries to trick him [by locking] up his wife [41]). The exceptional story of One-Eyes, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes still posits disabled and able bodies against one another in opposition/conflict. as do the remainder of the Grimm tales. On the whole, the Grimm tales pit the able-bodied and disabled characters against one another so that the bodies are always in competition (with unequally valued bodies and social opportunities), communicating a myth of binary bodies—abled-bodied protagonists versus the disabled antagonists. The Grimms use ableism and disability to structurally format protagonism and antagonism within the folk tale narratives. Ableism becomes a mythic sign of good behaviour while disability, the mythic sign villainy. and together, these oppositional-described and combative bodies become a well-known stigmatized trope for relational conflict within the Grimm folk tales; thus the able and disabled-body myths join to display a new myth of binary body narrative conflict. A myth communicating that characters with varying bodies live in conflict with one another.

Understanding the Ideal, Non-ideal, Normal and Abormal Grimm Body

Frederick Beiser, author of the comprehensive introduction to Hegel’s philosophy titled Hegel, summarizes the Romantic ethical notion of the ‘ideal’ as “self-realization” or “excellence”—meaning a “unity with oneself, consist[ing] of three basic components: (1) totality, that a person should develop all his or her characteristic human powers, (2) unity, that these powers be formed into a whole or unity, and (3) individuality. that this whole or unity should be individual or unique, characteristic of the person alone” (39). The Romantic ideal is a philosophical thought, an abstract idea towards which an individual can strive, and yet can never tangibly achieve. Hegel’s ‘ideal’ mental state of
self-excellence suggests that a body’s mind can attain idealism, but the body—the arms or legs—do not. Hegel’s concept of ‘ideal’ includes the notion of the body, instead of the actual physical body. Consequently, as my thesis discusses the bodies of the Grimm characters, I shall not use the philosophical concept of the ‘ideal.’ Instead, I shall use the ‘ideal’ definition that combines the concept of excellence with actual ‘things’ (tangible objects, including bodies). Specifically, I shall not use the online *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of ‘ideal’ (noun) as “[a] conception of something, or a thing conceived, in its highest perfection, or as an object to be realized or aimed at; a perfect type; a standard of perfection or excellence.” but I shall use the following *Oxford English Dictionary* ‘ideal’ definition: [a]n actual thing or person regarded as realizing such a conception, and so as being perfect in its kind; a standard proposed for imitation. (‘Ideal,’ my emphasis). Despite the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries’ philosophical discussions of idealism as “[i]deals, which can only be approached, but never reached.” and “[something] existing only as a mental conception[—]an imaginary thing” (ibid.), I shall use the terms *ideal* and *idealism* as the perfect standard (bodily, social, marital, etc.) when discussing the Brothers Grimm protagonists’ attainable idealized journeys. Similar to the way Henry Cockeram uses the term “Ideall” in *The English Dictionarie* (the first documented definition of “Ideall”) as a “proper man,” I shall also use “ideal” to signify a perfect tangible form (a body). This adjectival *ideal*, that I use in here, designates qualities of perfection: “Conceived or regarded as perfect or supremely excellent in its kind” (ibid.). The idealistic journey that I later refer to, describes the Brothers Grimm characters’ journey towards their conception of perfection—which I argue is royalty and wealth (often attained through marriage), and an able body.
The earliest descriptions of the *normal* body’s function and appearance (vague as they may seem) set the *normalcy* standard and category for “typical” bodies, or rather bodies “constituting or conforming to a type or standard: regular, usual, typical: ordinary, conventional” according to the online *Oxford English Dictionary* (“Normal”). Just prior to the Romantics movement, the term “normal” surfaced as a bodily description. In 1777, the online *Oxford English Dictionary* cites that the *Pennsylvania Gazette* first documents the usage of the word normal to describe the normal actions of a horse: “A dark brown horse...normal” (ibid.). In 1825, a Zoological Journal describes a part of a mammal’s vagina as normal: “These three states of genital products require three distinct situations, which in the normal mammifera. are found within the sexual canal” (ibid.). In 1843, Robert J. Graves (in *A System of Clinical Medicine*) describes a body temperature as “Temperature of the body normal” (ibid.). The normal horse, body temperature and vagina, document some of the first attempts to organize the body under a bell curve of averages—where the normal body resides in the middle majority of the curve.

Lennard J. Davis illustrates the social shift from the philosophical ideal body to “a new kind of ‘ideal’” (*Enforcing Normalcy* 35) called normalcy, in his essay “Bodies of Difference: Politics, Disability, and Representation.” He explains the concept of normalcy/normativity and its social significance as a body measurement:

[Since] the development of statistics and of the concept of the bell curve, called early on the normal curve [...] the majority of bodies fall under the main umbrella of the curve. Those that do not are at the extremes—and therefore are abnormal. Thus, there is an imperative placed on people to conform, to fit in. under the rubric of normality. Instead of being resigned to a less than ideal body
in the earlier paradigm, people in the past 150 years have been encouraged to
strive to be normal, to huddle under the main part of the curve. (100-101)

Davis differentiates between the two types of bodies by claiming that normalcy splits
bodies into categories of either normal or abnormal—of which people with disabilities
are the abnormal "deviations and extremes" (Enforcing Normalcy 29)—whereas
"culture[s] of the ideal" (the concept of the ideal) place all bodies under "varying degrees
of imperfection" ("Bodies" 100) with "a non-ideal status" (Enforcing Normalcy
29)...with the exception of these bodies depicted within mythological narratives.

Mythology. Davis argues, contains ideal bodies such Venus or Aphrodite ("herself an
ideal of beauty") (Enforcing Normalcy 25). Myths contain a variety of heroes who
journey, battle, outwit, and win, displaying powerful actions and accomplishments that
position their bodies as ideal heroic examples. I also believe that myths display example
ideal bodies that set standards of what the extreme body of the highest ideal embodies.

The Brothers Grimm folk tales, as an illustration, contain several able-bodied
protagonists who achieve ideal spouses, castles, wealth and bodies—representing the
characters who achieve the highest level of perfection. The folktale plot focuses on
social struggle and its rewarding change; often a lower class protagonist (usually the
victim of social injustice) desires better living conditions, he sets out to fight for a
powerful position as monarch, and achieves success (Zipes "Breaking" 124). Once the
Grimm protagonists achieve royal status (often by marrying a prince or princess), the
tales quickly end. Royalty is the highest ideal. Once at that status, the kings and queens
stop their betterment journeys and no longer journey towards any other lifestyle. The
Grimm protagonists live happily-ever-after, usually as kings or queens with able-bodied
or ideal bodies, and the disabled Grimm antagonists die and/or remain in the forest ever-af
ther (without the ‘happily’).

Mythology scholar, Joseph Campbell, asserts that fairy\textsuperscript{16} tales contain “typical
mythological motifs”—thus making them myths (\textit{Power} 138). In fact, Campbell
believes, “fairy tales\textsuperscript{[}are\textsuperscript{]} the child’s myth” (ibid.).\textsuperscript{17} Campbell pairs the Grimm
protagonist’s adventure with what he calls the mythological hero-adventure “formula” of
“separation—initiation—return,” where: \textit{A hero ventures forth from the world of common
day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a
decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the
power to bestow boons on his fellow man} (\textit{Hero} 30, his emphasis). For example, Hansel
and Gretel and Simpleton’s folk tales present the myth formula that Campbell discusses:
Hansel and Gretel separate from their parents. the children encounter a candy house with
an “very old” blind villainous witch (56), they defeat the witch and then return to their
father with wealth; and Simpleton, in \textit{The Golden Goose}, ventures off to chop wood and
“learn something” in the forest (236), Simpleton gains a magical golden goose, outwits a
king with the help of a dwarf, and he then leaves the forest and earns the reward of the
king’s daughter. I agree the with Campbell’s reading that the Grimm folk tales do
contain the myth “separation—initiation—return” formula that he discusses within \textit{The
Hero With a Thousand Faces}, and yet throughout this chapter of my thesis I shall push

\textsuperscript{16} As mentioned earlier, Jack Zipes explains that the term \textit{fairy tale} is a misnomer of the Brothers Grimm
\textit{folk tales} in his article. “Breaking the Magic Spell: Politics and the Fairy Tale.” but I follow Campbell’s
term here, rather than interchanging the two terms.

\textsuperscript{17} In this passage, Campbell specifically refers to the Brothers Grimm tales as \textit{fairy tales} clearly
describing the Brothers Grimm tales with the common misnomer \textit{fairy tales}. Campbell, as do many
literary scholars, often use the misnomer \textit{fairy tale} (instead of the correct designation \textit{folk tale}) because it is
presently is an established English name for all make-believe stories (\textit{Ashliman Folk and Fairy Tales} 32).
Even Jack Zipes, Brothers Grimm scholar who explicates that the Grimm tales are folk tales instead of fairy
tales in “Breaking the Spell: Politics of the Fairy Tale” and \textit{Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of
Folk and Fairy Tales}, often uses \textit{fairy tale} over \textit{folk tale} when referring to the Brothers Grimm tales.
his argument further, and assert that the "decisive victory" and "power" that the majority of Grimm protagonists win is that of idealism: an ideal happily-ever-after conclusion with and ideal life—an ideal marriage, wealth, social status and an ideal body. I argue that the majority of the male and female Grimm protagonists separate from their able-bodied families and communities, journey through the forests (where they encounter various conflicts and disabled antagonists) and return to able-bodied regal families. Even though the protagonists journey from one family and/or community and return to a new family (through marriage) and castle, the hero and heroine return to ableist societies instead of remaining within the forests with the disabled antagonists.

Ultimately, Grimm protagonists represent the ideal: antagonists the non-ideal: able-bodied character are normal and ideal: disabled characters are abnormal and non-ideal; heroes are normal; and antagonists are abnormal. The following account explains how the Brothers Grimm tales employ these disability metaphors as stock characterizations of non-ideal and abnormal Otherness.

The Ideal Expert Huntsman and Superhero Simpleton

The Brothers Grimm wrote and rewrote Kinder- und Hausmärchen (Children's and Household Tales) volume one and volume two during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth-century in Germany. when the concept of the ideal was prevalent (Zipes "Breaking" 121) and normalcy was non-existent (Davis Enforcing Normalcy 23).

Accordingly, within the Grimm tales, idealism is the goal of most of the protagonists. The majority of the Grimm protagonists desire, journey toward, and achieve a variety of ideals: ideal marriages to princes, princesses, kings and queens; ideal love; ideal castles;
ideal wealth and ideal bodies. Jack Zipes, author of *The Brothers Grimm: From Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, summarizes the common plotline of a Grimm folk tale into five parts:

1) the departure of the protagonist to explore the great wide world; 2) several encounters (generally three) in which the protagonist either helps needy creatures or obtains gifts from strange, but helpful people; 3) an encounter with a powerful person or ogre who threatens to deprive the protagonist of obtaining success and happiness; 4) the demonstration by the protagonist that he or she is resourceful by using the gifts obtained or by calling upon the needy creatures that he or she had once helped; 5) the reward in the form of wealth or a perfect union with someone else. (26. my emphasis)

Ultimately, the majority of Grimms' protagonists, and their idealized "whole" able-bodied bodies, journey towards social idealism whereas the disabled non-ideal/imperfect antagonists generate the problems for the protagonists or aid the protagonists with gifts (bettering the protagonists’ lives instead of their own lives). The ogres, one-eyed witches, dwarfs, giants and so on are left behind in the forest as the protagonist moves on towards his ideal wife, kingdom and utopian dreams. The disabled antagonists—dwarfs, giants, witches, and so on—fight the able-bodied protagonist and lose. they die, or they remain in the same social, monetary, and marital status—isolated as an Other in the outside forest, usually penniless, always unmarried. The disabled antagonists never join the able-bodied in social wealth.

Zipes describes the typical male Grimm protagonist as a soldier, tailor, or the youngest son of a family who "tend[s] to be adventurous, cunning opportunistic, and
reasonable” (Brothers Grimm 64); Zipes insists: “What unites these types—the soldier, tailor, and youngest son—is the need for survival and a strong desire to improve their lot, no matter what risks they have to face” (“Brothers” 65). Zipes acknowledges that it is the Grimm character’s journey “to improve their lot”—a journey towards an ideal life and body of enhanced value and quality (a life and body of higher value and quality on the idealism hierarchy of imperfection versus perfection)—that composes a Grimm protagonist.

The Expert Huntsman provides a useful illustration of the typical Grimm journey towards the ideal. Within the tale, a young man leaves his father to “go out into the world and try his luck” (369). Luck, representing a supernatural force (often in the form of conflict or assistance by the antagonistic disabled characters) that generates good fortune or an enhanced value or quality of some sort, which drives the protagonist and foregrounds the entire tale. Throughout the huntsman’s journey he becomes an ideal huntsman; desires and marries a princess that is “so beautiful that he stop[s] in his tracks...and [holds] his breath” (371); and gains the wealth and social status of the king (373) (including rich clothing that which cause the Huntsman to resembles a “foreign lord”—symbolizing the Huntsman’s full transformation into a man of extreme ideal wealth and political authority) (373). The huntsman begins his journey as a pauper (an imperfect social status) and ends as a king (the ideal, perfect social status). Along his journey, the Huntsman changes nearly everything about himself, except for his able-bodiedness. The Huntsman remains able-bodied throughout the entire tale, revealing that the Grimm protagonist can change his economic and social status, marital class and hunting skill, and yet his character race, physical appearance, gender and able-bodiedness
remain the same. Ultimately, the protagonist's body does not change because his role within the narrative does not change; protagonists remain protagonists and antagonists remain antagonists, there is no crossover of roles. And accordingly, the protagonist's body continues to signify his or her protagonism.

Similarly, the few Grimm protagonists that start out disabled also remain disabled throughout the entire tale. These disabled protagonists achieve an idealized life similar to those able-bodied protagonists, although their bodies remain Othered next to the able-bodied characters. Thumbling remains "perfect in every way but no bigger than a thumb" (132, my emphasis); within The Queen Bee, the narrator claims that Simpleton's brothers are "much more clever" than Simpleton (232); the Six Swan's Queen believes that the mute princess is "not worthy of a king" (170); and the Grimms insinuate that the "stupid" brother who "can neither learn nor understand anything" is a burden compared to the "smart and sensible [brother who can] cope in any situation" in A Tale About the Boy Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was (11).

The only difference between the able-bodied and disabled protagonists is their bodily descriptions—the narrative indices that metaphorically identify their bodies as opposing characters. Structurally, all the Grimm protagonists journey along the same mythical narrative formula (separation, initiation and return); the able and disabled protagonists' actions narrate the same type of heroic plot (where the able and disabled protagonists journey toward, and accomplish success) while the protagonists' bodies remain fixed throughout their journey. Disability and able-bodiedness appear as fixed character marks for most of the Grimm characters. For example in The Golden Goose, Simpleton (named with less-than-ideal mental abilities—common sense), leaves his home
and desires to marry the able-bodied king’s able-bodied daughter. and yet at the end of the tale, Simpleton remains Simpleton when he acquires his newly ideal wife and royalty. Simpleton’s name and cognitive ability does not change, he remains disabled while living among the able-bodied characters in the end of the tale, and he “live[s] happily ever after with his wife” (238) similarly to the other able-bodied prince protagonists. Since the happy-ever-after ideal outcome is the same for both able-bodied and disabled characters, why do the Grimms write Simpleton – Hans Dumb, Thumbling and the boy who went forth to learn what fear was as protagonists? Why do only a handful of disabled characters act in the protagonist role? How are these disabled characters different from the ones left in the forests?

Is it possible that these disabled protagonists function as the ultimate superhero? Others within the folk tale narratives? Do the disabled protagonists with their disabled other bodies, appear as greater heroes (superheroes) if the average non-disabled prince and princess journeys to the idealized folk tale ending with able bodies? Indeed, I believe that the disabled protagonist’s act of overcoming their disability in order to succeed in the able-bodied world establishes the disabled protagonist as the superhero. Other alongside the villainous disabled characters and the able-bodied protagonist heroes. The Grimms use disability as metaphorical prop (a narrative prosthesis according, to Mitchell and Snyder) to signify a less-than-ideal protagonist in order to present the disabled protagonist’s extraordinary success against all odds (the odds being his body’s disability.

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18 Simi Linton in Claiming Disability. Knowledge and Identity explains that “[t]he popular phrase overcoming a disability, is used most often to describe someone with a disability who seems competent and successful in some way [even though] it is physically impossible to overcome a disability (17). The Brothers Grimm portray Linton’s definition of overcoming disability when the disabled character, despite their struggle with bodily physical and mental conditions (e.g. Thumbling, Simpleton Hans Dumb, and the boy who went forth to learn what fear was) work harder than the able-bodied characters to achieve the same idealized goal.
and the obstacles that able-bodied heroes face in comparison with the able-bodied characters). The disabled protagonists appear to overcome several obstacles despite their disabled bodies, and the Grimm tales highlight the protagonist’s demi-god/hero ability to win the fight against nature and their disabled bodies. The disabled protagonists function as superheroes (in comparison with other able-bodied protagonist heroes) as they work harder than the able-bodied protagonists, compensating for their disability in order to reach the same idealized goal. In fact, the disabled protagonists possess an ideal disabled body-type, the only disabled body able to achieve an idealized life compared with the remainder of the disabled antagonists who often die or remain isolated within forests. Only Simpleton, Hans Dumb, Thumbling and the boy who went forth to learn what fear was have the superhero-type of disabled body that can physically allow them to accomplish tasks similar to the ideal-achieving able-bodied protagonists. These disabled protagonists are Othered because of their superhero ability to overcome their disability and achieve an idealized life. In fact, they are triply Othered because of their disability, protagonist role and their superhero overcoming ability; they are abnormal disabled protagonists against the normal able-bodied protagonists and the abnormal disabled antagonists. The disabled superhero protagonist is a narrative prosthesis—a narrative device—on which the folk tales lean for character representation of the abnormal superhero.

However, aside from the few disabled protagonists, the majority of characters with disabilities function as secondary characters or antagonists with non-ideal bodies and characteristics. Often, the characters and animals possessing disabilities symbolize moral or social imperfection next to the ideal able-bodied characters. For example: the
able-bodied characters do not value the blind and lame horses as much as the other seven able-bodied horses that "glistened in the sunlight" in *The Poor Miller's Apprentice and the Cat* (353); the disfigured changeling in the third tale of *The Elves* is taken away by elves and replaced with "the right child" (141); *King Thrushbeard*’s heroine finds "fault with each one of her suitors" and attacks their abnormal bodies for being "too tall and thin," "too fat," "too short," "too pale," "too red," not "straight enough," and a "crooked" chin (177); and, the father in *The Griffin* calls Hans Dumb a "dumb thing [who has to] wait until [he is] smarter" before he can help the king (489). These illustrations of the imperfect/non-ideal disabled body depict the disabled body as deficient; the Grimm protagonists often cast aside the disabled characters for something or someone better, more suiting of perfection, positioning the disabled body as inferior—something to discard, cast away, not marry, etc. As the Grimms use the disabled body as a metaphor of imperfect Otherness, this bodily *myth* contributes to the social ideologies of disability. Despite being a Barthesian *myth* created within the fictional folk tale myth, posing as a fictional characterization of the disabled body, Barthes asserts that all forms of language (images, attitudes or patterns, specific actions or events, as well as everyday objects) (Ribière *Roland Barthes* 10) communicate messages that organize world views. Fiction does not communicate to another fictional world; fictitious literature transfers into the real consciousness of human beings. Stories may be about fictional characters and fictional situations, but the act of listening, understanding and receiving a story is real. A reader internalizes a story’s metaphors, the metaphors become a part of his or her discourse, and formulate meaning. Literature is an ideological form (Balibar and
Macherey 61) that produces and reproduces social ideologies. Balibar and Macherey, in “Literature as an Ideological Form.” explain:

> Literature is the production of a certain reality, not indeed...an autonomous reality, but a material reality, and of a certain social effect... Literature is not therefore fiction, but the production of fictions: or better still, the production of fiction-effects (and in the first place the provider of the material means for the production of fiction-effects). (64)

Balibar and Macherey are basically summarizing Barthes to say that literature is the place where reality is organized (Ribiere 22). Balibar and Macherey use the phrase fictions and fiction-effects to describe the social ideologies that literature holds and produces, similar to how Barthes uses the term myth. Both fictions and Barthesian myths reflect the perception of a socially-constructed, non-natural conception of the world, and they both reflect communication. Myths and fictions host and communicate world views, and shape the way readers think. And the Grimms’ representation of disabled characters communicates the social ideology that disability is an Otherness characterization. The Grimms communicate the myth of the non-ideal and deviant disabled body. David Mitchell, in “Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor.” observes:

> Disability proves an exceptional textual fate in that it is deployed in literary narrative as a master metaphor for social ills; thus the characterization of disability provides a means through which literature performs its social critique while simultaneously sedimenting beliefs about people with disabilities. (24)

In other words, the Grimms’ disability metaphor of bodily and social ills pervades literature and society, communicating the message of the socially ill disabled body—the
abnormal body next to the normative able-body. Thus, the Grimms’ Other the disabled body within their text and for their text’s readers and critics.

**Permanent Disability = Permanent Antagonism**

For the most part, Grimm able-bodied protagonists only temporarily become disabled. Grimm able-bodied protagonists can visit disability (only if they are born able-bodied), and then return to their normative able-bodies. For example, male Grimm protagonists often visit blindness. *Rapunzel’s* prince loses his sight for “many years [of] misery” before Rapunzel weeps “two tears” into his eyes which cause his eyes to “be[come] clear, and he [can] see again”(45), and within *The Prince Who Feared Nothing*, a giant “poke[s] out both of [the prince’s] eyes” but then a lion sprays water into the prince’s eyes which make the prince’s eyesight return and his eyes “brighter and purer than they had ever been before” (397). Original able-bodied protagonists regain their able-bodies for their happy ending and yet no disabled antagonists have their disabilities temporarily removed. Only able-bodied protagonists can temporarily visit disability, while the able-bodied antagonists acquire permanent disability (due to their malicious behaviour) and the disabled antagonists permanently live within their disabled bodies from start to finish throughout the tales.

Grimm antagonists, on the other hand, are/or become permanently disabled. As the Grimm antagonists remain antagonists throughout their tales, their disability does not disappear because their antagonistic actions do not disappear. The Grimms lean on disability to represent the characters’ evil identity. For example: *Cinderella*’s blinded stepsisters remain blind after pigeons pluck out their eyes for their “wickedness and
malice” (84): and the queen in *Snow White* remains within an aged body (remaining disabled) between her attacks on Snow White even though the text states that the queen “disguise[s] herself as an old woman” (185) prior to her attempts to kill Snow White. The queen may disguise herself as an old woman, but she is just changing her appearance from one old woman to another. Even without her old woman “disguise,” the Grimms still portray her as an old woman compared with Snow White. Once the queen looks in her magic mirror and discovers that Snow White replaces her as the “fairest of all” (181), the queen falls from her own beauty-ideal and she understands her newly aged-beauty as disabling. The queen’s less-than-ideal beauty (against Snow White’s ideal beauty) positions her body as non-ideal—similar to the Other non-ideal disabled Grimm antagonists—and ultimately, as the “old woman” she disguises herself as. The disguise is not necessary: the queen’s aged-beauty signifies her place as the “old[er] woman” over Snow White without the queen’s extra disguise. *Snow White* positions age as a non-reversible disability. The queen’s disabled body and villainous character remain joined and non-reversible when the queen returns to her mirror (after she thinks Snow White is dead) to ask who is the “fairest of all” (184)? Therefore, fittingly (according to the Grimms’ trope of the villainous disabled body), the queen does not lose her aged body and villainous character between her attacks as she remains Snow White’s antagonist throughout the entire tale.

Interestingly, only one able-bodied protagonist becomes permanently disabled, and remains disabled even after she marries the able-bodied king in the happy ending. An old woman within *The White Bride and the Black Bride* “stop[s] up the ears of the white maiden so that [the maiden] bec[omes] half deaf” (441). and the maiden keeps her
disability in the conclusion of the tale. "The king marrie[s] the beautiful white [half-deaf] bride" (443), and this maiden becomes the only disabled female character to become queen. This half-deaf maiden is an anomaly, and I suspect that the Grimms intended that the omission of the maiden's deafness at the end of the tale signifies her return to a non-problematic body, as I agree with Davis that literary bodies are often thought of as "whole, entire, complete, and ideal," unless disability is mentioned ("Nude Venuses" 68). When the half-deaf maiden, trapped in the body of a "snow white duck" (442)...turn[s] into a most beautiful maiden" at the end of the tale (443), I assume that the Grimms' description of the most beautiful maiden does not include a beautiful maiden who is half-deaf, a complete transformation fitting with previous protagonists who became disabled within the tale and then regain their able-bodies. The maiden's non-identification of disability (at the end of the tale) labels her as physically perfectly able, similar to all the other normal able-bodied protagonists.

Straddling Normativity and Abnormality

There are only two female Grimm protagonists that experience temporary disability—straddling the normal/abnormal line: the "beautiful and good" heroine from The Maiden Without Hands loses her hands for a few years (111), and the "beautiful, gentle and delicate" heroine from The Twelve Brothers does not speak for twelve years (34). The heroines are first able-bodied, then disabled, and the tale concludes after they regain their able bodies. Interestingly, the temporary disability in these tales does not position the heroines as antagonists during their disabled state, but they do position the heroines as non-ideal (imperfect) for part of the narrative. The Maiden Without Hands
and *Twelve Brothers* heroine bodies do not become villainous once they become disabled but other Grimm characters (disabled and able) view the disabled bodies as reflecting villainy and/or imperfection. For example, the “evil woman” in *The Twelve Brothers* calls the mute maiden “a common beggar girl” who may be plotting “mischief” because “[a]nyone who doesn’t laugh must have a bad conscience” (35). The “evil woman... accuse[s] the maiden of so many wicked things that the king finally let[s] himself be convinced and [he] sentence[s the maiden] to her death” (35). The maiden’s muteness signifies “wickedness” and “bad conscience,” imperfect characteristics and therefore a non-ideal body. However, once the maiden “[tells] the king why she had been silent...the king [is] glad to hear she [is] innocent, and they all [live] together in harmony until their death” (36, my emphasis). When the king hears (with his able non-deaf body) the maiden’s returned voice, he accepts her “innocence” and lives happily-ever-after with her. Only when the maiden’s body returns to an ideal form does the king accept that the maiden is not wicked or guilty of evil. Once the maiden’s disability disappears, the maiden becomes once again worthy of marriage to a king and a happy idealistic ending. The Grimms represent the disabled body as undeserving of idealism and deserving of suspicion and death, unless cured.

The maiden’s disabled body within *The Maiden Without Hands* reflects imperfection instead of villainy. Even though a gardener describes the maiden as an ideal religious icon (a “spirit” and “angel”) (110), the king displaces the maiden’s idealistic persona and makes the handless maiden prosthetic silver hands *before* he marries her (111). The maiden does not live handless with the able-bodied king, which suggests that the maiden needs prosthetic hands prior to being worthy for the ideal state of marriage.
The king does not share the gardener's belief that the handless maiden is an ideal "angel," and instead, the king makes the maiden silver prosthetic hands, suggesting that her body needs improvement/betterment rather than accepting her body without hands and believing that a handless body is perfect. The king does marry a disabled maiden with prosthetic hands, but the prosthetics hands seem to improve the disabled maiden's body and marriageable status. The Grimms position the prosthetic disabled body as superior to the handless disabled body, and the prosthetic body is less of an Other body compared with the disabled body. Prosthetics mask or temper the maiden's disabled body and allow her to marry the king; however, the king does not actually live with his prosthetic-bodied wife (the king leaves her to fight in a war for seven years and then the king searches for her for another seven years) and eventually he reveals his desire for a wife with an able non-prosthetic and non-disabled body. The king's heart lightens when he discovers that his wife's "natural hands" grew back (113). "By the grace of God and through [the maiden's] own piety[,] her hands that had been chopped off grew back again" (112), and the king confesses, "A heavy load has been taken off my heart" (113). The maiden’s hands grow back after her “piety” (the maiden’s perfect devotion demonstration through her idealistic performance of prayer and religious practice).  

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19 Jack Zipes claims that Wilhelm Grumm often added "Christian motifs" to the Grimm tales (Happily Ever After 48), and I am in agreement with Zipes that several Grimm tales reflect Christian morals and themes. Grimm protagonists often call upon God for help. For example within Hansel and Gretel, Gretel calls out, "Dear God, help us!" when she discovers that Hansel is "going to be slaughtered" (57). As well, several of the Grimm tales contain religious morals that communicate obedience to the Biblical Ten Commandments. For example, Mother Trudy conveys the importance of following the Bible's Fifth Commandment "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Deuteronomy 5:16, King James Bible), when a young girl disobeys her parents and succumbs to her "stubborn[n]ess and cunio[s]ity," she journeys towards the house of a "witch" (who is also described as a "devil with a fiery head") and the witch kills her (147-148). Also, "the grace of god" rescues various Grimm protagonists from challenging situations or bodies. For example, Bearskin regains his "human form" (after possessing the body of a "monster" with a "face covered by hair," "claws" and a "dirty" face) (341) "through the grace of God. [a]nd I[ ]become[s] clean again" (343) Bearskin loses his monster bear-like body once he has completed his deal with the devil, and is free from evil. Bearskin's loses his disabled body once his Christian faith is restored, and thus, the disabled body
her body regains its ideal "real" form (113) to which the king feels less heavy-hearted.

As the maiden’s “real hands” relieve the king, the Grimms imply that her prosthetic and absent hands emotionally and physically distress the king. The maiden’s disability and non-ideal, “non-real” body causes the king’s “heavy...heart” which only the maiden’s ideal “real” body can cure. Both the maiden’s problem disabled body and the king’s problematic heart need a cure for the story to end—the cure of ableism (the maiden’s renewed able-body relieves the king’s “heavy...heart”). The king and maiden can only achieve happily-ever-after in able-bodies. This tale displays the disabled body as imperfect, problem-causing (as the maiden’s prosthetic hands cause the king’s heavy heart), and in need of a cure. The disabled maiden is a misfortune, whereas her able-body a celebrated blessing and stress-reliever. The maiden and king’s restored able-bodies function as the tale’s denouement—narrative site of resolution. The cure of disability functions as a conflict resolution. Only when ableism defeats disability can the narrative happily conclude. Thus, the maiden’s piety cures herself, her husband’s heavy heart, and the narrative ends with the maiden and king’s second wedding: “There was rejoicing everywhere, and the king and queen had a second wedding and they lived happily ever after” (113). Even though the king firstly marries the maiden with her prosthetic silver hands, the disappearance of disability brings the king happiness and the king and queen celebrate with a second wedding. Their first marriage with the maiden’s problematic prosthetic body does not seem to count, as her body signifies stress and unhappiness and not the traditional “happily-ever-after” marital Grimm conclusion. As a result, the maiden and king marry a second time with their ideal and unstressed able-

signifies the evilness of the devil. Bearskin’s seven-year disabled bear-like body is a symbol of his seven-year pact with the devil.
bodies in order to achieve the ideal happily-ever-after ending. The disabled/prosthetic body signifies a non-ideal problematic body, and the able-body signifies an ideal, perfect body deserving of a lifetime of happiness.
CHAPTER TWO:

An Other Grimm World for the Other Dwarfs, Giants and Witches

The only time in which it might be possible to allow an idea of the past, an idea of
the world of knights if you will to blossom anew within us and to break away
from the norms (Sitten)\(^{20}\) that have restricted us until now and shall continue to
do so is generally transformed into a forest in which wild animals roam about.

- Jacob Grimm, April 18, 1805. in a letter to Wilhelm Grimm

(cited in Zipes *Brothers* 45)

As Jacob Grimm insists that the forest is the world “away from the norms” in his
1805 letter to his brother Wilhelm, he illuminates a world full of the abnormal\(^{21}\)—
abnormal houses made out of candy, abnormal wells that transport characters into other
worlds, abnormal golden apple trees, abnormal glass mountains, abnormal grey-bearded
dwarfs, abnormal talking frogs, abnormal giants, etc. An abnormal world that
accommodates abnormal social norms, morals, beliefs, desires, and customs, where the
protagonist can survive for days and years without food, water, shelter or money; talk
with animals, angels, and devils; kill and not be persecuted; turn into an animal; possess
enormous strength and agility; rescue princesses and win their hands in marriage and
their wealth; and, so on. Mythologist Joseph Campbell would name Jacob Grimm’s
world “away from the norms,” “a zone unknown” from the protagonist’s known society

\(^{20}\) *Sitte* is a German term often found within the Brothers Grimm’s letters and scholarly writings which translate as a norm or custom—a “value to be cherished both within the family and society” (Zipes “Brothers” 21).

\(^{21}\) Even though Zipes uses the contemporary normative frame of reference in his translation of Jacob Grimm that did not exist during the early nineteenth century (during the time of Jacob’s letter), Zipes still manages to capture the Grimms’ intentional separation of and antagonism between disabled and able-bodied characters. Similar to my earlier argument regarding ideal able-bodied versus imperfect disabled Grimm characters, Zipes categorizes the disabled characters as abnormal and the able-bodied characters as normal. Ideal and normal characters are elevated, while the imperfect and abnormal characters are Othered and ostracized from the ideal’ and normal.
After the mythical hero or heroine is "called to adventure," Campbell claims that the hero enters a:

...fateful region of both treasure and danger[...]; a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or about the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable tortments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight. (ibid. 58)

I argue that the Grimm abnormal forests resemble Campbell's description of a place "beyond the ordinary" (Campbell \textit{Power} 123) for the hero. The Grimm forest "away from the norms" and Campbell's "unknown" zone, "beyond the ordinary," are both escape routes for the hero when he “[feel] there's something lacking in the normal experiences available or permitted...[within] his society” (ibid., my emphasis). As well, both places host extraordinary, abnormal magic via "strangely fluid and polymorphous beings"—the abnormal disabled characters with their fluid forms of disability. These abnormal, extra-ordinary worlds are where the protagonists can temporarily experience out-of-the-ordinary events and spiritual transformations. Magic, an extraordinary power, is only present within the extraordinary forests and the extraordinary disabled characters.

The Grimms pair magic's Otherness (extraordinary) quality and signification with the disabled body, so that the disabled body reflects the trope of the extraordinary disabled body. The Grimms combine the fluidity of magic and disability into one morphous narrative function—the Othered body for the able-bodied protagonists.

The abnormal forest world ("away from the norms") that Zipes translates Jacob Grimm as describing by his German word Sitten, highlights a temporary Other world for
the knights—but not a permanent home—where the folktale’s fictional societal norms and customs are absent. Zipes recognizes that there are two (very different) worlds within the Grimm folktales: the valued community (whether it be in the form of a village or town) with its ambitious and adventurous inhabitants, and the devalued enchanted forest. This chapter of my thesis analyzes these two worlds and their narrative function within the Grimm tales. I examine the separation of able-bodied and disabled characters into towns and forests, and the oppositional relationship that this creates within the narrative. The setting details contribute to the metaphorical Othered disabled Grimm body. The Othered disabled Grimm bodies live in a world of Otherness: in their bodies and in their forests.

Jack Zipes describes the two narrative locations of the castle and the woods as the “earthly world” and the “other sacred world.” and he argues that the “marginal” “small creature or outsiders [which I argue are characters with disabilities]...live on the border between wilderness and civilization, between village and woods, and between the earthly world and the other sacred world” (Brothers 81). Zipes’s claim rests upon the assumption that the outsider characters always live “on the border” instead of living in either the “other sacred world” or the “earthly world.” By this claim, Zipes suggests that the marginal characters straddle a nowhere land unfit for the earthly or sacred—each world displaces and Others the disabled characters. The disabled characters do not fit in any world, and they belong nowhere. They do not belong in a world that characteristically resembles the same “earthly” world upon which we live, nor do they belong to a “sacred”/holy world—often defined as “worthy of religious veneration” and “highly valued and important” (“Sacred”). As a result, according to Zipes’s claim that
the Grimm "outsider" characters live in a border world "between wilderness and civilization" (Brothers 81), the Grimms position disabled characters without a society, customs, or any norms (that the able-bodied characters have) and not worthy of a "place" in society or elsewhere valued. Zipes recognizes that the displaced, marginalized Grimm characters are not a part of the idealized earth-like setting of the tales, nor do they belong in a valued and "holy" location—a world between the sacred holy world of idealized angels and gods, and earthly society of idealized able-bodies. Instead, the marginalized characters live "on the border"—the outer edge—of these worlds, with devalued bodies in devalued lands.

However, contrary to Zipes’s belief of a "border" world for the "marginal" "small creature or outsiders (Brothers 81), I argue that the Grimm disabled antagonists live directly within the forests—the abnormal "other" world—as a way to signify their Otherness character and social status. The forest signifies the same Otherness status as the abnormal disabled characters. and its strange, scary and magical happenings provide a unified Othered place for the disabled characters, away from the social norms of the normative able-bodied characters and communities. The Grimms use the forest location (outside the able-bodied community) to highlight the disabled characters and their Otherness status. The forest signifies a world away from the able-bodied protagonists; it is the opposing location from the castles, and thus presents a binary relationship similar to the opposing able-bodied protagonists and disabled antagonists. Nevertheless, the description of the forest is not the important story detail; the forest is just a description of the setting where the disabled characters live. The forest is an index that, when repeatedly used, becomes a metaphor for Otherness because of the Othered bodies that
live within it. In fact, the forest could have been replaced with a variety of other locations—such a cellar, cave, rooftop, ditch, garden, etc. The location description does not generate meaning itself, until paired with the disabled bodies, and then the action of the disabled bodies. Indices by themselves generate less meaning than if paired with Actions.

The actual location of the narrative Othered world has historically variety from myth to myth. For example, in the Bible, Jonah is swallowed by a whale and it is in the dark place of the whale belly which the hero needs to pass through to come out transformed (Campbell Power 146). As well, within Greek mythology, Theseus ventures into a dark labyrinth, kills the minotaur and exits the labyrinth a hero. Like the Grimm protagonists, Jonah and Theseus journey into Other worlds and are challenged within these worlds by antagonists and/or antagonistic situations. These stories reside on the same premise—the descent into the “dark,” the defeat of darkness (of the dark antagonist and/or antagonistic situation within the dark Othered world), and the elevation of the protagonist to hero status. The dark location is only a setting detail—an index—that hosts the Action of the antagonistic character (such as Jonah’s whale, Theseus’s minotaur, and Hansel and Gretel’s witch). The journey of the hero is more important (the Action of the hero and his or her antagonist) than where the action takes place. The setting details, as Barthes claims, are the indices that hold minimal meaning until they attach to the hero’s Actions. Together, the hero’s journey and the setting of the journey combine to reflect the metaphorical dark nature of the labyrinth, the abnormal forest and the whale’s belly. Thus, the description of the dark whale’s belly, labyrinth and the
Grimms’ forest only reflect the dark Othered abyss when the hero encounters situations with which he is not familiar. Campbell explains:

[In] the descent into the dark, the hero leaves the realm of the familiar, over which he has some measure of control and comes to a threshold where a monster of the abyss comes to meet him. There are two possibilities: the hero is taken into the abyss to be later resurrected—a variant of death-and-resurrection theme. [or] on encountering the power of the dark, [the hero] may overcome and kill it (ibid. 146).

Darkness metaphorically represents either the situational death and rebirth of a part of the hero’s character or the death of an antagonist, but only because the dark experiences of the protagonist are set within a dark location. The dark setting gains the meaning of a border world for the protagonist only when the actions of the protagonist signify that the setting relates to the protagonist’s hardship and conflict. For the most part, the Grimm able-bodied characters live in communities (of which Zipes describes as the “earthly world”) and the Grimm disabled characters live in the Other enchanted forest as a way to separate and differentiate the two body types. The Grimms use the setting to narratively separate the characters’ bodies into opposite roles: the Grimm earth-like communities reflect social norms and host normative able-bodied protagonists who seek ideal community homes (i.e., castles), whereas the Grimm disabled characters with their abnormal bodies and their antagonistic actions are Othered within forests (living in isolated cottages or mountains) outside of the normative village and/or castle communities. The Grimms separate the able-bodied and disabled characters by location and body as a way to narratively structure opposition and a basis for conflict.
Rarely do the two able-bodied and disabled Grimm characters live in the same dwelling. Usually, within the forest, the earthly able-bodied protagonists have temporary contact with the Other disabled characters and they leave the forest-world to live out the remainder of their able-bodied life without disability. Often the protagonist desires an able-bodied spouse and an improved social status, and thus, since the forest does not provide the protagonist with this goal, he or she leaves the forest to achieve his or her idealized success. The able-bodied hero leaves the woods to return to other able-bodied characters, and the disabled antagonist is left alone in the isolation of the trees.

None of the tales include able-bodied characters desiring to live permanently among the disabled characters in the forest, and the reason being is that none of the Grimm able-bodied characters desire an Othered disabled body. Only one tale includes able-bodied characters desiring a life of disability. Cinderella’s able-bodied step-sisters purposely maim their bodies (one cuts off her toe and the other cuts off her heel) in order to try to fit.

23 As earlier mentioned, Thumbling is one of the few disabled characters who is born in the able-bodied earthly world. He is a character who is as small as a thumb, is born on a farm with ideal-sized able-bodied parents, and yet he leaves his parents and the farm to adventure on his own. As well, Simpleton and Hans Dumb are characters with mental disabilities born to able-bodied farmers, and yet they too leave their homes and journey to the forest. Only after Thumbling, Simpleton and Hans Dumb prove that they can perform abilities like other able-bodied normal characters, do the three return home to live among the earthly able-bodied. This story, thus, posits that the Grimms only allow disabled characters who can perform with ableist abilities to live outside of the forest—only supernatural disabled characters and their normative prosthetic abilities can live among a normative world.

24 The maiden in The Maiden Without Hands allows her father to cut off her hands but does not desire it to happen. She tells her father, “[d]o what you want with me” (110). The disabling is her father’s desire rather than her own.
footwear that will assist in one of them marrying a prince. The step-sisters disable themselves in an attempts reach their idealized goal, and yet not as a way to intentionally Other themselves. Instead, the sisters desire the prince, his wealth and royalty over that of the Othered disability status and body.

Nevertheless, if the prince did marry one of the disabled step-sisters, would the disability experience and status resemble that of the forest giants and dwarfs? Or, is the royal life of disability different? Do the sisters desire to have both royalty and disability because of disability’s insignificance within castles? For example, prior to the removal of the toe and heel, the sisters’ mother tells them, “Once you become Queen, you won’t have to walk anymore” (83). The step-mother welcomes disability and royalty for her daughters, as though there is no need for ablesim when wealthy. The step-mother describes the disabled royal lifestyle as an ideal home full of accommodation. Thus, the step-sisters may desire a disabled royal life (where their disability will be catered to) as opposed to the disabled forest life of isolation, no aide, and a lower social status. Cinderella’s step-sisters desire a utopian disability life with a prince, where immobility (due to their lack of toes or heels) is not problematic—a world where there is no need for ability after achieving the idealized royal and marital status.

No matter why the step-sisters desire disability, the reason for their disability is clear: the Grimms give the step-sisters disabled bodies as a way to highlight their role as antagonists within the tale. The prince does not marry either of the disabled sisters who have “nasty and wicked hearts” (79) and instead he marries the able-bodied “beautiful maiden” Cinderella (84). The newly disabled bodies of the step-sisters reflect their wicked actions against Cinderella, as the Grimms use disability as a metaphor for
malicious character. Cinderella and the prince share in their marriage and "good fortune" while pigeons peck out the step-sisters' eyes in punishment 'due to [the step-sisters'] wickedness and malice' (84). The disabled sisters are thus false brides—abnormal brides with disabled bodies—who do not deserve the traditional 'fortunate' normative fairy tale ending and ideal husband, wealth, and royalty. Instead, the step-sisters become permanently disabled to fit their narrative role as the permanent antagonists throughout the tale.

Zipes, on the other hand, argues that "the forest serves in a majority of the tales as a kind of topos—it is the singular place that belongs to all the people; it levels all social distinctions and makes everyone equal" (Zipes Brothers 53). I believe, however, that the forest does not present equal ground between the able and disabled characters. The able-bodied characters view the forest as a temporary home and the forest's disabled characters are temporary acquaintances. The disabled characters often possess magical powers whereas the able-bodied do not, the able-bodied characters desire wealth, marriage and power and the disabled characters often desire ill for the protagonist. The forest represents a narrative world where various ideals and non-ideals constantly challenge one another. Such a world in the binary division of good and evil, male and female, king and commoner sets up two categories: one as the ideal, and the other as the Other, undesirable, imperfect. The Grimms shape their nineteenth-century tales with social and political inequality. Within the Grimm tales, castles, kings and queens represent the ideal social status; the commoners represent a lesser ideal status (a sort of middle social ground), and the characters with disabilities occupy the lowest, non-ideal social rung. (In fact, the Grimms do not appear to consider their disabled characters social
citizens as the Grimms banish them into the woods—into a different *mystical* world—far away from where the able-bodied characters live [actually in a *society*]. Contrary to Jack Zipes’s belief that the “forest allows for enchantment and disenchantment, for it is the place where society’s conventions no longer hold true...[and] the source of natural right. thus the starting place where social wrongs can be righted” (ibid. 45). I argue that the forest does not banish social customs. Which social wrongs are righted in the forest? The able-bodied character corrects his own social wrongs, and yet he leaves the abnormal forest and its abnormal disabled characters in the same social Othered status. The able-bodied protagonist is at first lost among the Other abnormal characters and setting, he struggles with or against them, succeeds, and then leaves the forest with the power to change his original social position...and yet, the disabled antagonists remain socially stagnant. The protagonist never invites the dwarf, giant or old witch to join him in his rise to social power. Instead, the able-bodied protagonist selfishly changes his own destiny while the disabled forest characters remain magical in their lower, marginal roles. Zipes says that the “[forest] is the source of natural right” (*Brothers* 45). Zipes uses the word “natural” (which disability scholars could protest is a synonym for normal), as the forest of “natural right” is actually a place full of abnormal disabled characters of which the able-bodied normal characters do not feel is the “naturally right” place for them...or else why wouldn’t the able-bodied characters stay within the “naturally right” forest? The able-bodied characters leave the forest to return to their right and normative lives in castles and able-bodied communities. The Grimms represent disability as the opposite of naturally right; an abnormal status and body that permanently Others the disabled characters from the able-bodied characters. Thus, the forest functions as a place of
disenchantment rather than enchantment; the able-bodied characters are not deeply moved or affected by the disabled characters. The able-bodied characters keep their original opinions about the disabled characters, and they are not enchanted by their differences. Conversely, the able-bodied protagonists are quick to leave the disabled characters, forget about them or kill them.

Overall, the contrasting location of where the disabled and able-bodied character live contributes to the Grimms’ oppositional depictions of the disabled and able-bodied characters. Everything about the Grimms’ able-bodied and disabled characters opposes one another; however, such constant opposition contributes to the myth that disability and ableism should operate in conflict. Readers of the Grimm text materialize the metaphor of the Othered disabled body and its meaning affects their social views of persons with disabilities. Thus, the fictional binary of good and evil bodies does not entirely remain fictional once readers access these messages. The reader’s reception of the good and evil/able and disabled body binary contributes to the author and reader transmission of information and subsequently affects the reader’s perception of binary bodies.

The Present Disability Problem

As well as locating the Grimm disabled antagonists within isolated forests (separate from the able-bodied protagonists), the Grimms name the abnormal characters with their disabiling condition as a way to further differentiate the disabled characters from the able-bodied characters. The Grimms often name the able-bodied characters by their social or economic status—prince, princess, maiden, king, queen, Hunstman, Tailor, etc.—while the disabled characters are giants, dwarfs. Hans Dumb, Thumbling, old
woman, one-eyed stepsister, and so on. This naming of disability often signifies the character's problematic body and/or situation. In his article, "Nude Venuses, Medusa's Body, and Phantom Limbs: Disability and Visuality," Davis explains that literary normative bodies are often thought of as ideal, unless disability is mentioned:

In general, when the body is mentioned in literature or depicted in drama and film, it is always already thought of as whole, entire, complete, and ideal. In literature, central characters of novels are imaged as normal unless specific instruction is given to alter that norm, and where a disability is present, the literary work will focus on the disability as a problem. (68, my emphasis)

Davis describes normal literary characters and their bodies as “whole, entire, complete, and ideal” unless otherwise identified, of which the disabled problem body is then highlighted and signified as the abnormal body against the ideal normal body. For example, if a narrator describes a character as a beautiful princess, Davis argues that the audience pictures a “normal” able-bodied character even though the narrator does not describe whether the character is missing any body parts or experiencing a disabling condition. Readers assume characters are Caucasian, young, heterosexual and able-bodied unless the text confirms otherwise. Indeed, within the Grimm narratives, readers assume that the Grimm beautiful princesses and handsome princes are normal able-bodied characters. Adjectives, ‘beautiful’ and ‘handsome,’ often signify non-disabled characters. The protagonists’ non-identification of disability in fact labels their bodies as physically and mentally perfectly able—as normal bodies. Only the disclosure of the disabled body notifies readers of the disabled characters’ problem bodies and actions— their abnormality.
Within the Brothers Grimm folk tales, the Grmmms only mention a disabled body as a way to signify a character's abnormal Otherness against the normative able-bodied characters. Within Snow White, for example, the Grmmms describe the queen as "beautiful" although not as "fair" as Snow White (181). The Grmmms overshadow the queen's beauty by telling readers that Snow White's beauty surpasses the queen's ("Snow White is a thousand times more fair") (181). The queen's beauty is less-than-ideal compared to that of Snow White, and thus with her less-than-ideal aging body, the queen becomes the antagonist next to the fair and youthful able-bodied Snow White. The Grmmms use the aged body as a trope to signify antagonism. Snow White's youthful beauty fair higher than aged beauty, and the once "beautiful" queen, becomes "wicked" and "evil" and "old" for the remainder of the tale (184-185). Disability affects the queen's body and actions, and doubly casts the queen as the antagonist.

Indices, Rick Rylance summarizes Barthes to say, "are dispensable if a description of atmosphere were omitted, the narrative might be the poorer, but it would survive" (Roland Barthes 53). Since Barthes' Actions contribute more to the narrative than character, a Barthesian reading of the Snow White example suggests that the Grmmms' combined indices and Actions represent the antagonistic villainous and Othered disabled body. But alone, the indices simply describe a character's emotion, clothes and aged body. Or do they? Indices alone create the first level of tropes and the addition of Actions increases and doubly intensify trope signification. Yes, the disabled Grmm body becomes an obvious antagonistic villain once the disabled character physically tries to harm or hinder the able-bodied protagonist, however, prior to the Actions, indices themselves also host bodily metaphors that communicate disability messages. For
example, the description of an old woman, her poor clothing, and the ominous, isolated forest setting and atmosphere around her creates a negative trope of the disabled aged body. The combination of the narrative’s textual descriptions of aged female (signifiers) and the reader and writer concept of these descriptions (signified) produces the *sign* of the impoverished, ominous, isolated aged female body. Indexing the aged female character with signifiers such as “ugly,” “poor,” and “wicked” establishes strong signified messages that compares disability with ugliness, poverty and villainy, and ultimately creates the linguistic *sign* of the ugly, poor, and wicked disabled body—the metaphorical villainous disabled character.
CHAPTER THREE:

Eye Spy Disability: The True Grimm Colours

The following chapter focuses my discussion of disability specifically on visual disability—blindness, poor sightedness, and one-eye impairment. As the discussion of disability and its multiple meanings and types can be vague at times, this chapter will focus the disability discussion to one particular kind of disability and its representations within the Grimms’ tales and also within Walt Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs production of the Grimm tale Snow White. I examine Disney’s filmic representation of the Brothers Grimm’s Snow White because of the film’s great dependence on “evil eye” imagery and signification. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs use the evil eye and disabled villain tropes to inform audiences of evil character, similar to the way that the Brothers Grimm use disability (specifically blindness) as a narrative index of antagonism.

As a whole, visually disabled characters act as narrative prosthetic in the Grimm tales. Without the visually disabled characters, the able-bodied characters would not encounter the necessary plot twist that aides and advances the able-bodied characters along their journey towards social success. Like Charles Dickens’s blind Bertha in The Cricket on the Hearth, the visually disabled Grimm characters are present only for the advancement and pleasure of others. Just as blind Bertha remains alone, unmarried, providing the music for all the dancing sighted characters (plucking her harp on the sidelines), the visually disabled Grimm characters are ineligible for marriage and social success as they remain the tale’s undeserving, but necessary, villains. Without Bertha the

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25 For further discussion, see Elisabeth G Gitter’s 1999 Studies in English Literature article titled, The Blind Daughter in Charles Dickens’s Cricket on the Hearth.
dance would not have music, and without the visually disabled Grimm characters the Grimms' able-bodied protagonist would not reach his or her destination into the arms of a prince or princess. The visually disabled characters generate the plot's necessary antagonism that propels the often able-bodied protagonist towards his or her happily-ever-after.

The Adapted Eye: Disney's Eye for the Evil Snow White Queen

I began exploring the topic of visual disability and folklore after my three-year-old niece insisted that pictures of eyes against black backgrounds reminded her of witches, and one particular picture of a cluster of eyes on one of my black t-shirts caused her to point at my shirt and frightfully whisper. "Witch...there's a witch right there." The shirt's picture of eyes swirls into a decorative wave across the chest area with no other images, yet my niece adamantly believed that the shirt's picture portrayed a witch. Confused, I explained to her that I was not wearing a shirt with a witch on it and nor was there a witch nearby. Since my imagination did not pair witches with clusters of eyes, I could not understand why my niece continued to believe that my shirt had some sort of connection to witches. Usually when I pictured witches, I recalled the image of aged female bodies dressed in black dresses with black pointy hats, broomsticks, black cats, and long crooked noses. I did picture a few witches with evil eyes along with their black hats and broomsticks; however. I did not view an eyeball and immediately think of a witch.

I then remembered that my niece had recently viewed Walt Disney's 1937 production of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, where the queen transforms herself into
a witch-like old woman with large white eyes and a black-hooded robe (and that hood resembles a stereotypical pointy black witch-hat). I decided to review the film for images of evil eyes and witches that may have caused my niece's fear of eyes. Indeed, several of the film's scenes use various eye-imagery to signify villainy and evilness: the queen's eyes loom as she creates an apple that will poison Snow White: a black bird stares one-eyed through a human skull; the black bird peers out from behind its wing at the queen with only one eye: the film shows the black bird's profile, thus showing only one eye; two vultures are drawn in profile so that only one-eye stares after the queen: and multiple haunting shadows, resembling eyes, frighten Snow White in a forest. These evil eye representations coincide with the historical belief that with only a glance, a person can cause harm to another person. Amica Lykiardopoulos, in her Folklore article "The Evil Eye: Towards an Exhaustive Study," explains the widespread belief of the evil eye throughout the world:

The belief that a glance can damage life and property, commonly known as evil. ...has been found in ancient Babylonia, Egypt, the Graeco-Roman world, and Talmudic Judaism, and also in India, China, Africa, as well as among the Eskimos and American Indians. [And ultimately,] the belief in the evil eye is the fear of potentially harmful powers outside the sphere of human control, projected to certain members of the community (222-223. my emphasis).

People fear the evil eye's harmful powers/witchcraft, and similarly within narratives, characters fear Other characters with evil eyes. Characters who possess evil eyes are feared for their harmful powers and their evil Other bodies signify villainy.
Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* visual narrative embodies feared evil-eyed characters—a black bird, vultures and queen—of which Disney intends viewers to fear that these evil bodies will harm Snow White. Disney uses the evil-eyed bodies, largely representing evil-eye symbolism through the image of asymmetrical or one-eyed bodies, and negatively stereotypes disabled bodies with deviousness. The following account analyzes the scenes within Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* that include evil-eyed characters and evil one-eyed imagery.

Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* first "evil eye" scene follows the queen's first attempt to kill Snow White: the queen orders a huntsman to kill Snow White, the huntsman does not follow through with the queen's orders and he lets Snow White run away. Snow White then cowers in the dark forest while multiple yellow- and white-coloured eyes, drawn in angry expressions, glare out of the shadows. Through this sequence of events, Disney climaxes the horror of the queen's murder request, Snow White's fear of losing her life, and Snow White's isolation in the forest as the evil eyes surrounding Snow White and cause her to crumple to the ground. The eyes represent the evil eyes of the queen and forest animals that may harm Snow White. After escaping the queen and her murderous command, Snow White's imagination transforms the forest shadows into her dominant fears: of being harmed by the queen and by animals in the forest. As a result, the eyes of the queen and animals haunt Snow White. Such a haunting image further transfixes the fearful evil eye image within filmic narratives and others the "glare" and image of eyes against dark backgrounds. Contrasted next to the images of brightly lit animal eyes of happy bunny rabbits, birds, fawns. Snow White and dwarfs (with the exception of Grumpy of course), the glowing eyes in the dark scenes
intentionally signify the Other darker side of the eye and the body with the evil eye.

Similar to historical folklore’s belief that the eyes or glance of a person can tell a lot about her or him (Lykiardopoulos “Evil Eye” 223), Disney’s evil-scheming queen reflects her evil intentions through her eyes. Disney sets up good and evil eyes against one another as if there are different types of eyes—good eyes and a bad eyes—where the eyes of a villain are different and look different from the eyes of a “good” person or animal; good eyes belong to smiling good-hearted animals and characters, whereas bad eyes often glare and cause harm.

Disney’s filmic representation of eyes is not uncommon throughout literature. According to traditional folklore and cultural belief, Amica Lykiardopoulos explains that possessors of the evil eye have “squinting or unusual eyes” from birth (ibid.). Lykiardopoulos does not fully clarify what “unusual eyes” are, and yet she sets up an oppositional relationship between “unusual” evil eyes and “usual” eyes through her terminology. She uses the term “unusual,” a synonym of “uncommon” and a related word of abnormal,” “uncommon,” “irregular,” and “atypical” (“Unusual”), which Others “unusual eyes” into a category opposite what is normal, regular, common and usual. As well, Lykiardopoulos explains that these persons born with abnormal eyes are “avoided and/or hated by the community” (ibid. 225) which also signify their physical, social and spatial Otherness position from the normal-eyed bodies. Just as the Grimms ostracize the villainous blind, one-eyed and poor sighted characters within their tales, Lykiardopoulos suggests that folklore has historically Othered bodies with abnormal eyes within their narratives.
However, historical folklore, the Grimms' folk tales and Walt Disney’s filmic representation of contrasting eyes falsely asserts that eyes signify character. Eyes are traditionally known as "the window mirror of the soul" (ibid. 223)—thought to reflect a person’s inner moral and emotional self—and yet this analogy falsely asserts that a person can know everything about another person’s character with one look at his or her eyes. The analogy of window/mirror eyes presents the belief that body parts reflect character; and this belief—this Barthesian myth—communicates the message that bodies can reflect good or evil. The belief that eyes are windows mirrors of the soul stems from the narrative device of the metaphor. The comparison between eyes and mirrors and/or windows signifies that eyes adapt the mirror and window quality of reflection. However, this eye myth and myth operates in the same manner as the trope of the villainous disabled body and the trope of the evil eye. They are, ultimately, metaphors that juxtapose two objects and/or ideas to create the message that the physical body can communicate meaning through its narrative role as indices within a story. As well, these metaphors build in meaning once tied with narrative Actions. In other words, the narrative description of the body can reflect character meaning, but the bodily description and character’s action formulate more meaning. But what kind of meaning? Bodily metaphors do signify character, for example the one-eyed villain; however, what do readers do with these metaphors?

I argue that metaphors never really stay within the fictional narrative realm of the page. Bodily metaphors become Barthesian myths that affect social ideologies about the body, and subsequent literary and filmic representations of the body. And as an illustration, Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs translates the historical evil eye
within its film continuing to produce the metaphoric evil eye, and continuing to
affect ideologies of body parts. Disney does not stop at the eye, and instead, uses the
whole body as an identity marker in the same way that the Grimms’ disabled bodies
reflect villainy. Disney’s animated film pairs several full-screen drawings of the queen’s
aged disabled body with various ‘evil’-related eye imagery from black birds and skulls.

For example, when the queen transforms herself into an old hunch-backed apple
peddler to try and trick Snow White, her hair turns white, her smooth hands become
knobby and crooked with swollen joints, her nose grows a wart, her voice becomes raspy,
her royal dress becomes a long, hooded black robe, and the queen’s eyes grow large and
round with droopy grey bags underneath. The scene closes with the queen, fully
transformed, peering out from behind the sleeve of her black cloak and cackling. Against
the black robe, which hides the queen’s body and most of her face, the queen’s large
white eyes are striking. The queen ages her body for the purpose of killing Snow White,
and her evil intention glows out of her eyes towards the viewer. The queen’s
transformation from beautiful to haggard, from young to old, affects her entire body, and
yet her personality and her evil agenda remain the same. Disney intends that the queen’s
evil personality, agenda and desire reflects from her wide white eyes and aged body.

Similarly to the Grimm, Disney uses disability and the body to signify villainy.

Following the queen’s transformation, a black bird falls into a human skull sitting
on a nearby wooden table and the bird peers through the skull’s eye sockets with one
eyeball. Switching from socket to socket, the black bird watches the old woman, with
one eye. In literature, a skull represents death and the black bird—either a raven, crow


\[26\] Shakespeare’s Hamlet picks up Jorick’s skull and reminisces about the dead fool dead Ophelia and the
mortality of human beings in Act 1, scene 1.
or blackbird—often symbolizes omens of death. These death symbols in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* enhance the scene’s ominous tone and context of the bodies within this dark scene. The human skull in Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* alludes to the queen’s death wish for Snow White and also signifies the death of a previous victim of the queen (which she now proudly displays in her potion workshop). Disney’s black bird sitting inside the skull doubly symbolizes death, and appropriately suits the scene where the queen searches for the Sleeping Death potion for Snow White. The black bird’s peering one-eye, the non-fleshed skull (still a body part), and the humpbacked old queen combine to triply reflect the queen’s death wish for Snow White. Disney intends that all three body images reflect villainous character. Disney plants the ominous black bird and the suggestive skull of a dead human to create a menacing backdrop for the queen and the black bird’s glowing eyes.

One of the final scenes in Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* pairs one-eyed vultures with the evil queen. The queen (transformed as an old hunchbacked woman in a black robe and pointy hood) poisons Snow White with an apple and then runs away from the angry dwarfs. The dwarfs corner the queen on the side of a mountain and two vultures watch the queen fall off the mountain to her death. Drawn in profile, viewers see the vultures glare at the queen just before the vultures swoop down after the witch’s presumed dead body. Disney’s close-up on the vulture (a bird that feeds off dead animals) and the vultures’ single eyes repeats the same evil-eye imagery that signals

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27 Several poems surfaced in the early seventh-century that included ravens signifying death and villainy. Edgar Allan Poe’s poem *The Raven,* contains a “grim, ungauntly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird” of which the narrator calls a “Prophet...thing of evil...bird or devil or fiend”; and, an anonymous poem published in the magazine *Fraser* March 1839, entitled “The Raven, or, the Power of Conscious” describes a tormenting raven with a “demon...in his throat who the speaker wants “dead at [his] feet” (Jones “The Raven” and “The Raven” 187)
distress and peril to viewers. In the one instance, viewers fear for Snow White's life as the queen plots Snow White's death, whereas in this final scene the vultures' evil eyes foreshadow the queen's death. Disney uses evil-eye imagery to reflect death. In the Disney film, the eye embodies the metaphoric quality of death. Not an evil arm, foot, or any other body part. Disney uses the eye to communicate the meaning of death to its viewers, thus promoting the Barthesian myth of the evil eye.

The film's images of the black bird peering through a skull's eye socket with only one eye and the one-eyed vultures present what has become a classic cliché of the one-eyed villain. Following Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, several films include characters with one eye or eye patches as villains. For example: the western film True Grit (1969), and the film's sequel Rooster Cogburn (1972) include the one-eyed anti-hero Reuban J. "Rooster" Cogburn; one-eyed Emilio Largo is second-in-command of a terrorist organization in the James Bond film, Never Say Never Again (1983); the Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country's (1991) assassinator. General Chang, has a metal eye-patch plate riveted over one eye; Kurt Russell's character Snake Plissken in Escape from New York (1981) and Escape from L.A. (1996) is an eye-patch-wearing anti-hero—a criminal who is pardoned for his crimes if he protects the president and finds a series of explosive satellites; Austin Powers's film series (1997-present) feature an eyepatched character, Number 2, second-in-command of Dr. Evil's empire; Kill Bill's one-eyed and then blinded, Elle Driver, is a sword-slaying villainess (2003-2004); O Brother Where Art Thou (2000) contains a one-eyed Ku Klux Klan member, named Daniel "Big Dan" Teague; Spider Man III's (2007) evil alter-ego, black-suited Peter Parker brushes his hair down over one of his eyes, blocking the vision from one of his eyes. the moment
after his transformation from good to evil and many more. This clichéd filmic image dates back to the Middle Ages where several religious texts parallel the villainous Antichrist/demon with asymmetrical eyes. Moshe Barasch in *Blindness: The History of a Mental Image in Western Thought* explains the various textual resources that describe the Antichrist’s eyes.

In the Midrash *va-Yosha*, possibly of the tenth century, it is said of the Antichrist that he shall be bald-headed with a small and large eye. An early Irish Apocalypse, off roughly the same time (late tenth century), describes the body and face of the Antichrist with one eye shining like the dawn. Though nothing is said about the other eye, one feels that it lacks the qualities of the shining one.

Barasch acknowledges that the text does not directly say that the small, large or shining eyes are blind (causing the Antichrist to only have vision in one eye), however, he does explain that the Antichrist descriptions caused visual artists to interpret the visual representation of the Antichrist as such, portraying the Antichrist in the profile position—only displaying one eye.

As well, Barasch insinuates that the missing eye of the Antichrist “lacks qualities that the remaining ‘shining eye’ has, the missing body part implies a deficiency—a body of lesser value and quality. By describing the one eye as ‘shining like the dawn,’ Barasch suggests that the other eye does not shine but rather is cloudy or dull in comparison—a less valid eye and thus, a less valid body. The Antichrist’s body hosts a ‘not’ condition, the repudiation of ability that Simi Linton

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78 I argue that Barasch’s description of the climactic image of the one-eyed demon parallels that of the one-eyed Antichrist as both demons and the Antichrist represent evil characters opposite godly ones. As well, the Oxford English Dictionary defines a demon as a devil (*Demon*)—the common synonym of Antichrist.
describes disabled bodies to possess within Claiming Disability (30), as the Antichrist’s lacking body signals his “not” godly condition. The lack of the Antichrist’s hair, normalized eyes and two shining eyes signifies his devious body. Descriptions of a body failing to measure up to normalized standards, positions the Antichrist as devious—an Other. A lacking body, a disabled body: metaphor for evil.

Barasch believes that one of the earliest one-eyed images of the Antichrist was drawn by Corbie Pslater around A.D. 800 (75). Barasch describes the Pslater’s image as follows:

The Antichrist’s large head is abruptly turned backward, and is seen in a sharp profile position. Only one eye is visible, oversized, and strongly accentuated in colour and shape. It convincingly suggests that the Antichrist is one-eyed. [...T]he movement leading to this posture is not motivated by the story illustrated, nor is it required by the composition. [...] In view of supporting examples, it is not exaggerated to assume that the artist chose this twisted posture to display the Antichrist’s face in such a way that only one eye is visible. (75-76)

Barasch argues that Corbie Pslater profiled illustration of the Antichrist was intentional. Barasch describes a famous fresco in the Church of Santa Maria in Porto Fuori, painted about 1330, that intentionally displays Christ’s full frontal face and the Antichrist’s profiled, one-eyed face (one on either side of Christ) (77). Just as Disney intentionally presents a black bird peering out of a skull with only one eye and two vultures watching the queen’s death with one eye each, the Pslater illustration and the Church of Santa Maria fresco intentionally twists the Antichrist’s head so that only one eye shows, displaying the trope of the evil-eyed villain. That such imagery has persisted in art and
literature for over 1500 years indicates an entrenched visual metaphor for the embodiment of evil.

Pslater’s illustration and the Porto Fuori fresco’s one-eyed images are some of the historical visual beginnings of the trope connecting blindness (including the partial blindness of living with eyesight in one eye) and evil; however, the literary trope of the one-eyed demon, Barasch insists, dates back to late antiquity, beginning with the association between missing body parts and demons and “climax[ing] in the image of the one-eyed demon” (75-76). Barasch describes the progression beginning with a one-winged demon in the “Testament of Solomon, a Greek text of the Gnostic period,” advancing to a one-breasted devil in “late antiquity magical literature,” then to “a demon without a head,” and concluding with the one-eyed “demon” (75-76). Barasch’s descriptions of demons with missing body parts, one-eyed demon and/or Antichrist, sets the historical context of the disabled literary and filmic villain. Historically, disabled demons represent evil characters next to their godly counterparts (gods, goddesses, and angels); similarly, disabled villains represent evil characters (possessing demonic, criminal and villainous) next to their good or pure counterparts. Villainous witches, for example, are often elder women who need the mobility assistance of canes, they have crooked noses and fingers, and according to the Brothers Grimm, “witches have red eyes and cannot see very far” (56). These Barthesian myths of the disabled villain may appear as harmless fictional representations of the body; however, on the contrary, they help to organize social real-world opinions and beliefs about the visually disabled body. The disabled villain myth communicates a social ideology that persons with disabled bodies
are villains. The metaphor does not stop on the literary page; instead, it communicates to readers and affects their perspective upon viewing disabled bodies.

The One-Eyed Myth

Disney’s film adaptation of the Brothers Grimm’s *Snow White* folktale and the Brothers Grimm 1957 version do not similarly link visual disability with villainy. None of the Brothers Grimm *Snow White* characters are visually disabled, nor does the *Snow White* text describe any scenes with one-eyed black birds, vultures or scary eyes peering out of darkness. Disney chose to add the evil-eye imagery to the Grimm tale to enhance the queen’s evil character. Disney chose to doubly identify the queen with villainy and give the queen evil-looking eyes to go along with her aged, humpback, swollen jointed wart-nosed body as a way to make sure that viewers understood that the queen is the antagonist within the film: Disney visually depicts the queen with two bodily metaphors to doubly signify her antagonistic character—her disabled aged body and glaring evil eyes.

However, even though the Grimms do not include the one-eyed villain cliché in *Snow White*, the cliché is dominant within three other Grimm tales: *Brother and Sister*, *The Expert Huntsman* and *One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three Eyes*. *Brother and Sister* includes a scheming one-eyed “ugly as sin” daughter (41); *The Expert Huntsman* includes a lying “ugly, one-eyed captain” (372) and *One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three Eyes* includes a mean and vicious one-eyed and three-eyed sister. All the Grimm one-eyed characters occupy the role of antagonists, and this sole characterization continues to cement the historical trope of the one-eyed villain.
Within the Brothers Grimm's tale *Brother and Sister*, for example, the narrator describes the villainous evil stepmother's biological one-eyed daughter as "ugly as sin" (41). The one-eyed daughter's mother, referred to as an "old woman" and an "old witch." and the one-eyed daughter, are the tale's antagonists. The witch schemes against a king and his queen by locking the queen in the bathroom and placing her own disabled daughter in the king's bed. The witch gives her daughter the "shape and features of the queen... [however, since the witch cannot] replace the eye that [her] daughter ha[s] lost...[the witch makes her] daughter...lie on the side [of her body] where she had no eye. That way the king would not notice anything amiss" (41). In the end, the king discovers the witch and her daughter's scheme, and "[t]he [one-eyed] daughter [is] taken into the forest, where wild beasts [tear] her to pieces, while the witch [is] thrown into a fire and miserably burned to death" (42).

The first question that comes to mind is: why can the witch give her daughter the "shape and features of the queen," but cannot replace the missing eye? Why does the one-eyed daughter remain disabled? I argue that it because the one-eyed daughter remains a villain throughout her transformation. The Grimms do not remove the disability identity for the one-eyed daughter because the girl's character does not transform to resemble the queen's good-nature; the one-eyed daughter remains one of the antagonists throughout the entire tale, and thus, she keeps her disability marker to identify this to readers.

Indeed, the one-eyed daughter remains a fake queen in the king's bed: deceitful in character and body. In fact, the image of the one-eyed daughter parallels that of the Antichrist/demon, as the one-eyed daughter embodies an opposite body and character
next to the godly-graced beautiful queen (42: 40) similar to the way that the Antichrist is the opposite body and character of godly Christ. Both the one-eyed Antichrist and daughter characters are villains, and their one-eyed bodies reflect their villainy. As the Antichrist is forever marked with the one-winged, one-breasted, no headed, one-eyed identity marker for his depiction against God (his counterpart), the one-eyed Grimm daughter remains marked with her visual disability to signify her role as antagonist against that of the protagonist king and queen.

As well, the image of the one-eyed Antichrist reinforces the elevated Otherness status of the supernatural being for any of Grimms’ one-eyed characters. If meant to represent the Antichrist, Grimms’ one-eyed evil characters represent fallen fixtures of the supernatural world, as opposed to characters fitting in amongst the humans on earth and with the holy ideal supernatural world. Reminiscent of Jack Zipes’s argument that the Grimm ogres and giants live within border worlds, the one-eyed Antichrist-like characters embody the abnormal Othered status—not the non-normative, able-bodied, earth-like body and not the ideal normative godly body of Christ, but a fluid Othered body somewhere in-between.

_Brother and Sister_ concludes with the death of the witch and her one-eyed daughter. As a way to signal a true ideal happily-ever-after ending where the king and queen will no longer run into further conflict, the Grimms permanently remove the evil witch and her one-eyed daughter by murder. With their death, the king and queen can live out the remainder of their folk tale lives “happily until the end of their days” (42). The Grimms only remove disability from the tale when the need for antagonism is over. Disability functions as a device of characterization that only fills the void for antagonism
(functioning as Mitchell and Snyder's narrative prosthetic—"a potent symbolic site of literary investment" [Narrative Prosthesis 49]).

And fittingly, within several of the Grimm tales, one or more of the disabled characters dies before the protagonists can experience his or her happy ending:

Rumplestiltskin commits suicide (196); the blind shoemaker (in The Two Travelers) "perishe[s]" in the forest (361); beasts tear Brother and Sister's one-eyed evil daughter to pieces (42); Hansel and Gretel's poor-sighted witch "burn[s] to death" (58); The Expert Huntsman's king throws the one-eyed captain in prison and "[tears him] into four pieces" (373) and the huntsman kills three "wild" and "evil" minded giants by cutting off their heads with one stroke of a saber (371); the "little black dwarf" hangs the old witch "on the gallows" in The Blue Light (385); a bear's paw kills Snow White and Red Rose's dwarf by a "single blow" (480); Strong Hans' Hans kills the "nasty dwarf" with his staff (497); within The Drummer, the drummer throws the "old woman with a brown face," "red evil eyes," "long nose" and "glasses" into the "jaws" of a fire (560-563): Old Rinkrank's king puts "Old Rinkrank" to death (571); and lizards and snakes within Saint Joseph in the Forest sting the "wicked girl" (with "a second nose attached to her own") "to death" (586). Most of the deaths are violent in nature, and the narrator often describes these deaths as joyous occasions (for example within The Drummer, the Grimms write that the fire "clapped together as though they were rejoicing over the opportunity to consume a witch" [563], and Huntsman within The Expert Huntsman, cuts out the tongues of the giants that he killed and then proudly brings them home to show his father [371]). Unlike the able-bodied Snow White, whom the dwarfs entomb/enshrine in a glass coffin upon her temporary death, the able-bodied characters immediate forget
the disabled characters after their death and the narrator or able-bodied characters never again mention them for the remainder of the text. There is no burial for the disabled characters, and the tale continues its story of the able-bodied character and his or her journey. The able-bodied character never expresses sadness, pity, or remorse over the death and/or murder of the disabled character(s), and the able-bodied characters deem the disabled character's death as a necessary part of their able-bodied quest. The able-bodied slays the disabled character(s) to destroy evil and then returns a hero to his idealized world after restoring morality. Disability appears as a conquest, which the able-bodied protagonists must defeat prior to their ideal lifestyle and happiness. And accordingly, the Grimm protagonists must remove the conflict (the antagonists) in order for the tale to resolve. Structurally, folk tale narratives only conclude after the protagonist returns from his journey a hero; and heroism within the Grimm tales often resembles the able-bodied protagonist's defeat over the disabled character. However, these tales communicate the Barthesian myth of the defeated disabled body, and the victorious able-body over disability. Disability is the fallen angel, and ableism is the ideal god. This myth does not only exist within the fictive narrative form of the folktales. Instead, this negative myth communicates to readers and is socially ideological. This myth is bound between the writers' and readers' values and beliefs in an interactive relationship. Charles Schuster, in his critical article on the relation theory of literacy titled "The Ideology of Literacy: A Bakhtinian Perspective," explains the diasporic relationship of language:

Language does not exist in isolation; it is always addressed to a listener who is another user of language. As we speak or write, we are always addressing the other who is simultaneously responding to us—otherwise the world would, quite
literally, fail us. Every meaningful use of language simultaneously engages both self and other: we speaking and conceive of ourselves as being listened to: we write, and the reader is created within the written word, within ourselves. (45)

Writers and addressees experience the same relationship as *myth* and ideology:

writers=adressee=who become writers=who affect other addressees and so on, same as

*myth*=ideology=who create more *myths*=ideology and so on. These relationships are one in the same because they are inextricably linked: writers expose addressees to an ideology through *myth*. The addressee writes the *myth*. and another addressee hears the *myth* and the ideology continues to transfer and transform into another written form, and so on. Basically the writer and addressee exchange meaning through language.

Language is a social experience rather than a static single occurrence. Bakhtin calls this social side of language *utterance*. For Bakhtin, utterance is:

a unit of speech communication...determined by a change of speaking subjects, that is, a change of speakers. Any utterance—from a short (single word) rejoinder in everyday dialogue to the large novel or scientific treatise—has, so to speak, an absolute beginning and an absolute end: its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others... The speaker ends his utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other’s active responsive understanding. (*Speech Genres* 71)

The utterance, Bakhtin describes, is a socially constructed speech genre (in the form of either speech or in writing) between speakers and listeners. Utterance is a system of language that is largely responsive; speakers respond to other utterances. then new
speakers respond to those utterances, and so on in a never-ending chain of responsive utterances.

Charles Schuster describes Bakhtin’s *utterance* as a language vehicle of meaning: An utterance necessarily exists within a social setting. An utterance creates and completes a meaning that is oriented toward another individual or socially constructed reality. *Utterance* is the term Bakhtin chooses to describe language that conveys meaning, that creates expression. Sentences are inert; utterances are interactive, intertextual, transformative. (ibid. 46).

Schuster summarizes Bakhtin’s *utterances* as speech/language meaning makers and conveyers, similar to the way that Barthes describes *myths* as “a system of communication...a message...a type of speech” (*Myth Today*). As Barthes uses the term *myth* to describe a discourse (including narrative) communication form of meaning, Bakhtin uses the term *utterance*, and yet these two concepts are quite similar. They both convey meaning. Barthes scholarship calls attention to the structure of the *utterance*—the *myth*—as a communication vehicle. As already discussed, how the Grimms chose to describe the disabled character as a villain (the narrative’s indices) and show the disabled character’s villainous Actions, cements the trope of the disabled villain and thus communicates this trope to readers in a *Barthesian myth* manner. The Grimm disability indices and Actions convey *myths* that readers ultimately interact with and store within their consciousness and later access, affecting their social ideologies.

For Bakhtin, the concept of reader responsiveness to *utterances* is most important; he believes that “[r]esponsive understanding is a fundamental force...that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an active understanding...” (*Dialogic...*)
Imagination 281). And yet what kind of discourse does the Grimm utterances of the disabled villain create? What kind of understanding do readers really achieve of disability within the Grimm tales, and thus, what kind of disability meanings germinate?

As Bakhtin believes the readers understanding of utterances is a crucial part of the formulation of discourse (I argue as does Barthes) that real understanding of discourse only takes place when readers examine the semiological structure of the utterance myth to uncover the signifying practices that affect the utterance’s myth’s message, and expose the myth for what it is: a meaningless myth (in its tradition definition of “a widespread but untrue or erroneous story or belief” [“Myth” Oxford Dictionary]). Barthes summarizes this structural dissection process of utterances in his response to a questionnaire in Tel Quel:

One could say that literature is Orpheus returning from the underworld; as long as literature walks ahead, aware that it is leading someone, the reality behind it which it gradually leading out of the unnamed—that reality breathes, walks, lives. heads toward the light of a meaning; but once literature turns around to look at what it loves. all that it is left is a named meaning, which is a dead meaning. (qtd. in Critical Essays 268).

Basically, Barthes argues that literature and reality simultaneously operate in an ideological manner. creating meaning only until critics stop to examine literature’s structural creation. When critics expose the structure of literature/discourse, how the signs (signified and signifiers) operate to create meaning, they uncover the “unrealistic status of literature” (ibid. 267) and the non-realistic mythical (false/erroneous) meaning of the utterance. Therefore, analyzing the Grimms’ use of the disabled body as a
metaphor for Otherness exposes the mythical (false/erroneous) meaning of the Othered disabled body within literary and social ideologies.

**Hansel and Gretel’s Witch: Nowhere in Sight**

The Grimms rarely use disability to signify anything other than villainy or the non-ideal body. In fact, *Hansel and Gretel’s* witch is one of the few Grimm disabled characters that has her disability represent villainy and a lack of physical ability—a disability. *Hansel and Gretel’s* witch is the tale’s antagonist, and she is a witch who “cannot see very far” which causes her to experience physical and mental inabilities (compared with that of the able-bodied characters) because of her poor eyesight. For example, Hansel sticks out a little bone instead of his fingers and the witch with “poor eyesight... [thinks] the bone [is] Hansel’s finger” (57). Hansel’s witch does not see or feel the difference between the little bone and Hansel’s real finger, and the witch is “puzzled” when the little bone (in place of Hansel’s finger) does not “get any fatter” after the witch feeds Hansel for a month with her “very best food” (57). The irony of the situation is that the witch touches Hansel’s finger with her own fingers, yet she does not recognize what a real finger feels like. As the witch trusts her fingers as receptors of information, her own fingers fail her when she has to touch another sensory receptor. The witch fails to identify Hansel’s fake finger—the little bone—and the Grimms paralyze her trusted ability. As a result, the Grimms strip the witch of her sound judgment and she is left triply disabled—visually, tactiley (touch), and mentally (unsound judgment [for example, the witch’s desire to eat Hansel and Gretel])—and
therefore triply marked as a villain for readers. The Grimms give the witch three
disabilities to triply signify her role as the antagonist within the narrative.

Hansel and Gretel, on the other hand, "out-able" the witch with their able-bodied
physical abilities. Hansel and Gretel's bodies are nimble and quick whereas the witch's
body "slink[s]" and "lean[s] on a crutch cane" (56). Hansel and Gretel walk without
mobility aides and they later run away from the witch with ease. In fact, Hansel "[jumps]
out of the pen like a bird that hops out of a cage when the door is opened" (58). Hansel's
body moves with bird-like agility, whereas the witch "[slinks] out of [her] house" (56).
As well, Gretel's body has the physical strength to "send the witch flying inside" the
oven (58). Gretel's push appears to be so strong that the witch flies, presumably through
the air, into the oven—which is an impressive physical action for a child pushing an
adult. The scenario paints Gretel as having superhuman strength in comparison to the
witch's lack of physical strength to resist the oven or to stand her ground against Gretel.
Prior to the witch's flight into the oven, she is physically able to capture the children; she
uses her "scrawny hands" to "seize Hansel...[and carry] him into a small pen" (57).
However, later in the tale, the witch does not use her scrawny hands to grab Gretel and
hoist her into the fire as easily as she carried Hansel. The witch becomes unable to
physically save herself, whereas the able-bodied characters use their physical strength to
overpower the witch and run home to their father. Hansel and Gretel's physically able
bodies advance them towards a joyful life outside of the forest, while the witch's lack of
physical strength leads to her death as her body does not allow her to get out of the fire.
The witch's body burns in the fire while the children run home to the open arms of their
father. Hansel and Gretel escape the witch through cunning trickery and their able bodies in comparison to the witch's faulty judgment, eyes and touch receptors.

Blind scholar, Rod Michalko, believes:

"[t]hat sight is considered valuable is shown in how we speak about its absence... We value sight and when we lose something valuable, or if we never had it in the first place, we have a problem. It would be nonsensical to speak of losing something which is not valuable [(i.e. trash)]... We speak of loss only when the object to which it refers is deemed valuable. (25)

Thus, when the Grimms point out the witch's poor eyesight as a way to signify her Other visual status from the normal sighted Hansel and Gretel, the Grimms label the witch with a problematic body through the text's mention of the witch's loss of valuable sight. In the end, Hansel and Gretel's poor-sighted problem-bodied witch communicates the message that able-bodies ultimately succeed and disabled bodies ultimately fail.

**An Eye for a Cane, It is Just the Same**

The majority of Hansel and Gretel's narrative omits the witch's experiences of living and functioning with her visual disability. There are four references that show Hansel and Gretel's witch struggling with mobility difficulties (the witch "slink[s] out of the house," "lean[s] on a crutch cane," towards the children [56], "slink[s] to [Hansel's] little pen" [57], "waddle[s] up to the oven" [58]), the witch struggles to see the difference between a real finger and a bone, and she is physically weak when she cannot prevent herself from being pushed into the fire by a child; however, the remaining accounts of the witch's mobility do not include any slinking or leaning on a crutch, nor any other visual
difficulty. The Grimms hardly show how the witch operates with her impairment. Instead, the narrators tell readers that the witch has “poor eyesight” and yet provides little evidence within the text of her disability while she “[makes] up two little beds,” cooks “the very best food,” “pushes poor Gretel out to the oven” (57), and so on. The Grimms mainly use visual disability within Hansel and Gretel as what Mitchell and Snyder name a narrative prosthesis to metaphorize the witch’s body with villainy and antagonism. Disability hardly functions as a disability within the tale; the narrator does not disclose any details of the witch struggling to know which food is which in the kitchen, how she feels her way around her house, or how she taps her cane between Hansel’s cage and the oven. Surprisingly, the Grimms do not mention the witch’s cane after it is introduced and readers are left to wonder: does the witch need the cane for mobility because of her poor eyesight, or does she use it because of a variety of other possible disability-related diseases that “very old women” may experience, such as arthritis or both? Or, does the witch really use the cane after meeting the children? Is the cane a farce to make the children feel sorry for her when she first meets them, as a way of bribing them into her house? Does the cane disappear, or do the Grimms just not mention the cane’s use throughout the rest of the witch’s mobility experiences within the text? For example, where is the cane when the witch’s “scrawny hands” capture Hansel? Does she continue to hold the cane and Hansel at the same time? Does she put down the cane? Or, when the witch “pushes poor Gretel out to the oven,” is Gretel pushed with the cane? As these questions are not answered within the text, the witch’s visual disability is questionable as it appears to be only temporary (when she cannot see the Hansel’s bone-finger). The Grimms’ minimal mention of the witch’s poor eyesight and
her cane operate as one and the same: tropes that represent villainy instead of descriptions of a real-life visual disability or cane mobility. The Grimms’ description of the witch’s poor eyesight mainly functions as a villainy signifier and as a specific bodily inability that catalyzes Hansel and Gretel’s survival and happy ending. The witch’s visual disability functions as a prosthetic, according to Mitchell and Snyder, that enables Hansel and Gretel’s story: the witch’s poor eyesight enhances Hansel and Gretel’s ability to escape the candy house; or rather, the witch’s lack of eyesight prompts the children’s insight as to how they can survive and outsmart their captor. The Grimm tale not only relies on the visually disabled witch for antagonism against the protagonist children, but also for her inability to see Hansel’s real finger for the children for both the tale and the children’s advancement. And, at the expense and subsequent death of the visually disabled witch, Hansel and Gretel return to their father, learn of the death of their stepmother, and “[after] all their troubles [are] over...they [live] together in utmost joy.” (58). When the prosthetic witch’s antagonistic narrative purpose is over, she burns in a fire and the able-bodied protagonists prosper after the “troublesome” witch and witch-like evil stepmother dies.

The Grimms only include the witch’s cane to mark the witch with villainy and not as a mobility aid. The Grimms announce the witch and her cane at the same time, with the intention that readers immediately read the old woman/witch in the story as an evil antagonist:

Suddenly, the door [of the candy house] opened, and a very old woman leaning on a crutch cane came slinking out of the house. Hansel and Gretel were so tremendously frightened that they dropped what they had in their hands. But the
old woman wagged her head and said, “Well now, dear children, who brought you here? Just come inside and stay with me. Nobody’s going to harm you.” Then she took them both by the hand and led them into her house. (56)

The woman’s aged body and her crutch cane frighten Hansel and Gretel, until the woman calls them “dear children” and tells them that “nobody” is going to harm them. The old woman’s body communicates the message of villainy prior to her verbally informing the children otherwise. The Grimms use the witch’s aged body and cane to signal the antagonist’s presence, and then the age and cane disability markers quickly disappear as the witch takes both children by the hand and her crutch exits the text—no longer a necessary function within the narrative: the witch leads the children into her house, quite physically able, instead of leaning on the children (as they replace her cane). Therefore, Hansel and Gretel’s crutch is not an actual mobility crutch for the witch, but only a villainy marker of the witch’s antagonism narrative status. The witch’s cane actually does not prop up the witch’s body, but props up the narrative role of the antagonist.

Readers should not overlook the naming of disability and then the absent disability experience within the tales. The Grimms’ quick elimination of the witch’s disability marker erases part of the witch’s disabled body. The Grimms strip the witch of a recognizable blind identity (blind woman with her white mobility cane) and instead they describe her through a combination-veil of able and disabled mobility descriptors; the Grimms are quick to announce that the witch possesses a visual disability, but the announcement dissolves behind the lack of any explicit visual disability experiences. Basically, the Grimms name the witch with an identity-skin which she only actually lives
within when she cannot see Hansel's real finger coming out of the pen. The Brothers Grimm do not provide any concrete compensatory mobility skills for the witch's visual disability. Instead, disability is only present in the narrative for the purpose of antagonism and weakness—which Hansel and Gretel use for their escape and personal advancement (for example, the witch's disabilities are the reason that Hansel escapes his own death, and it is the reason that Gretel escapes the cage and is then free to push the witch into the fire). The Grimms mainly use visual disability as a metaphor for villainy, and not as an inability of sight. The Grimms use disability as a character sign, where the disabled body is the signifier and the meaning of the villainous disabled body is the signified, and the *myth* of the villainous disabled body transfers to the social ideologies of readers. And as a result, readers, like Hansel and Gretel, thus only have to witness a disabled body to *fear* the evil body. *Hansel and Gretel*’s witch embodies an evil body (with evil, disabled eyes) in what Amica Lykiardopoulous would describe as the historical *evil eye* belief: where the evil eye reflects "the fear of potentially harmful powers outside the sphere of [able-bodied] human control" ("Evil Eye" 223). Hansel and Gretel and readers fear the witch's eyes and body for their harmful narrative powers/witchcraft within the tale. Just as how Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* visual narrative embodies feared evil-eyed characters—a black bird, vultures and queen—of which Disney intends viewers to *fear* that these evil bodies will harm Snow White, the Grimms use the evil-eyed body of the witch to stereotype her disabled body with deviousness. The Grimms and Walt Disney use evil-eyed bodies to signify villainy and communicate the message—*the myth*—of devious disabled bodies to readers, and to perpetuate the ideology of the literary disabled body.
The Ignorant Visually Disabled Witch

As well as pairing visual disability with a weakened, less-physically-able body, the Grimms also equate disability with ignorance, as Hansel and Gretel’s witch’s “poor eyesight” affects her ability to know what a real finger feels like. The Grimms tie visual disability to ignorance and confusion—a metaphor that pervades literature (Kleege Sight Unseen 21). Often, within film and literature, blind characters ask, “Is that you, so and so?” upon hearing a familiar voice approach, appearing to be ignorant of the voice of their mother, father, son or daughter. For example, within two of Shakespeare’s texts, two men do not recognize the voice of their own son: sand-blind old Gobbo within Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice does not recognize the voice of his son Launcelot Gobbo, and within King Lear Gloucester does not recognize Edgar pretending to be Poor Tom and an Old Man. Within Jane Eyre. Mr. Rochester demands, “Who is it? What is it? Who speaks?” (Brontë 11, original emphasis) to his long beloved Jane Eyre when she returns to him in the end of the novel. Mr. Rochester then needs to “feel” Jane with “his wandering hand” prior to realizing that it is Jane before him (ibid.). These representations of blind characters with weak auditory, sensory (touch), and memory skills parallel the Hansel and Gretel’s witch’s confusion over Hansel’s finger, and communicate the myth of the ignorant and confused disabled body. However, by exposing this disability representation as a metaphoric device to signify an abnormal Other body, readers understand that the Grimms’, Shakespeare’s and Brontë’s messages of the disabled body are semiotically structured (instead of naturally existing within language). and readers thus understand that the narrative myth—the message—of the ignorant and confused disabled body is a false, non-reality reflective belief (affecting
readers’ ideologies of disability). Understanding the metaphoric use of disability uncovers the Grimms’ constructed representation of visual disability in the witch’s character.
CHAPTER FOUR:

Odd-Eyed Out! No Golden Apples or Handsome Princes for the Visually Disabled

For all populations physical and cognitive limitations constitute a baseline of cultural undesirability from which they must dissociate themselves in the quest for civil rights and for a lessening of stigmatization. Consequently, disability has undergone a dual negation—it has been attributed to all “deviant” biologies as a discrediting feature, while also serving as the master trope of human disqualification.

- David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse

Mitchell and Snyder’s Narrative Prosthesis examines the literary inferior identity and trope of disability. Mitchell and Snyder assert that characters with disabilities serve historical narratives only as a contrasting artistic device (Narrative Prosthesis 5) that position bodies “deemed lacking, not functional, or inappropriately functional” as deviant and in need of prothesizing, against superior able-bodied characters (ibid. 6). Readers judge literary inferior and deviant disabled bodies as faulty and in need of repair—of prosthetics—in order to function within the able-bodied majority cast. As already discussed within this thesis, the Grimms represent a majority of their disabled characters as deviant Others in comparison to the good-natured able-bodied characters. The able-bodied characters do not like or desire to marry the majority of the disabled characters. and as a result, those able-bodied characters desire able-bodiedness and prosthetics/cures for the Other disabled bodies. The Maiden Without Hands (discussed in chapter two) is an example of how an able-bodied character desires and receives a prosthetic/cure for his
disabled wife, concluding the tale with both able bodies celebrating a wedding. However, *The Rejuvenated Little Old Man*, is a lesser known tale that displays a *disabled* character’s desire for a prosthetic instead of an able-bodied character’s desire for the disabled character to prosthetize his or her body, but the tale does not end with the same happy able-body ending. By contrast, the disabled characters become more disabled and their heightened disability and villainy is frightful to several able-bodied characters. As an illustration, *The Rejuvenated Little Old Man* contains an “old, half-blind, hunchback mother-in-law” whom a blacksmith tries to cure (462). The blacksmith and his mother-in-law observe the Lord turn a “poor beggar, suffering greatly from old age and illness,” into a “straight, sound, and fit...young man of twenty,” and then the blacksmith asks his mother-in-law if she “want[s] to walk sprightly again like a girl of eighteen” (462). The mother-in-law answers, “With all my heart,” and so the blacksmith prepares a big fire in a similar manner as the Lord did, prior to the Lord’s transformation of the old beggar into a young man (462). The blacksmith then shoves “the old woman” into the forage, but the woman’s “rags [catch] fire” (462). The blacksmith pulls the woman out of the fire and he throws her into water, all-the-while as the old woman shrieks “so loudly that the blacksmith’s wife and daughter-in-law [hear her screams] upstairs in the house” (462-463). The wife and daughter-in-law run downstairs and witness the old woman’s “wrinkled and shriveled face [that] had lost its shape” (463). The aged woman loses the shape of her face and she gains an extra disability—that of a distorted face on top of her blindness, hunchback and aged body. Within this tale, the old woman keeps her Otherness disability marker as her body remains disabled (the cure does not work) and she remains Othered by the able-bodied characters. In fact, two able-bodied characters
view the woman’s face and the sight of disability causes the women to give birth to deformed children. The narrator explains that “[At the sight of [woman] the two women, who [are] both with child, become] so upset that they give birth that very night to two babies who [are] not shaped like human beings but like apes. They ran off into the forest, and it is from them that we have the race of apes” (463). In this evolution story, the woman’s extra disability breeds disability. The mere sight of the old woman’s disabilities, causes the two women to give birth to disabled children. The women somehow internalize that sight of the disabled old woman and their own children adapt a similar disabled form. The pregnant women Other disability as a jarring experience that causes their body shock and early pregnancy, and as a “non-human” shape as their children resemble “apes” instead of “human beings” (463). The Grimms represent damage as a horrific abnormal body that shocks the normative able-bodied women into having abnormal children. The Grimms use disability as a trope of the deviant Other, to not only shock the two pregnant women within the tale, but also readers. The obscure ending of the tale (the abnormal conclusion where the disabled children create a “race of apes” [463]), escapes from the traditional separation—initiation—return mythical formula of most of the Grimm tales, and disability functions as a glamorized plot twist that overshadows any concluding details regarding the old woman or the blacksmith. Disability becomes the scary focus of the tale’s ending, through both the narrative structure and theme. The description of the disability (indices) and the Actions of the disabled babies change the normative happy-ever-after Grimm ending, so that The Rejuvenated Little Old Man encompasses deviant bodies and a deviant ending. Disability ties the narrative structure and plot together and produces a rare Grimm tale—an
abnormal tale about abnormal bodies—with an ending that highlights the unhappily-ever-after of disabled bodies rather than the happily-ever-after of able-bodied princes and princesses and their ideal marriage. The Grimms use disability as a trope of deviancy for character signification and for the tale’s deviant ending. Disability functions as a difference marker for the disabled character and for the abnormal non-ideal happy-ever-after wedding conclusion.

**The Foolish Eye for Otherness**

*One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes* also stands out among the Grimm folk tales as an “abnormal” tale because the beginning of the tale prioritizes disability and disabled characters over the able-bodied characters. The tale begins its narration in a contained world where an abnormal body with differently numbered eyes is the ideal body-type and the normative two-eyed character represents the Othered non-ideal. *One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes* begins with the description of a family of mostly abnormal-bodied women:

There was a woman who had three daughters. The oldest was called One-Eye because she had only a single eye in the middle of her forehead. The second was called Two-Eyes because she had two eyes like all other human beings. The youngest was called Three-Eyes because she had three eyes, with her third eye located in the middle of her forehead like her oldest sister’s. (424, emphasis added)

Interestingly, the Grimms describe the daughters’ bodies and yet they do not mention the mother’s body; the Grimms do not give the mother of the three girls any further physical
description other than "woman," whereas the Grimms offer each daughter's number of eyes and their corresponding name to readers. The Grimms are quick to label the three daughters by their number of eyes, however the Grimms do not disclose any details regarding the mother's body. Unlike all the other Grimm tales, most literary, dramatic and filmic narratives, where unmentioned bodies are “thought of as whole, entire, complete, and ideal” (Davis “Nude” 68)—basically as able-bodies, *One-Eye, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes*’ bodily-unnamed “woman” comes across as disabled by her inability to retrieve apples from a tree and through her favouritism of her disabled children over that of her able two-eyed daughter. For example, the woman favours her two abnormal and disabled children by not letting them do any chores: the woman, One-Eye and Three-Eyes “[push Two-Eyes] around and [give] her shabby hand-me-down clothes to wear and leftover food to eat” (424); Two-Eyes has to tend to the goats in the pasture while her sisters are “unaccustomed” to walking in “the heat of the sun” (425); and, the woman names Two-Eyes after “all other human beings” with two eyes. The woman ostracizes Two-Eyes as an Other and indirectly names her own and her daughters’ bodies as ideal bodies when she devalues Two-Eyes ordinary (normative) as an other human-like body. The woman tells Two-Eyes, “You’re no better than the ordinary folk! You don’t belong to us” (Grimm 424), and by “us,” she refers to herself and her two disabled daughters. The woman places herself in a similar identity-category as One-Eye and Three-Eyes, which signifies that she too is not like “all other human beings” and Two-Eyes hosts an abnormal body like her one-eyed and three-eyed children. Even though the Grimms do not name the woman with an abnormal body within the printed text, the woman indirectly
names herself as abnormal—as well as non-human—through the venomous behaviour and words she directs towards her "other human" child.

As well, the mother and her two disabled children share the exact same physical disability even if they do not share corresponding differently-eyed bodies—they are all physically unable to grab golden apples from the magical tree. One-Eye cannot keep hold of the apple tree’s branches to pick the fruit; Three-Eyes (even though “more agile than her sister, and despite her sharp sight…and three-eyes that can look around better than One-Eye”) cannot grab any fruit; and, their mother also catches “nothing but thin air” every time she tries for the golden fruit (428). The woman, One-Eye and Three Eyes share the same physical experience with the apple tree, whereas Two-Eyes—the child who resembles “other people/human beings”—gathers the fruit easily. In fact, the fruit “drop[s] by themselves into [Two-Eyes’] hand, so that she [is] able to pick one after the other and bring down a whole apron full of apples” (428, my emphasis). Two-Eyes performs as an ableist while the rest of the characters are unable to perform the task, and are thus disabled. Whether the characters with disabilities struggle to grab the apples due to their number of eyes and corresponding different way of seeing with each eye or due to some sort of physical bodily impairment that is not mentioned within the text, the exact type of disability (whether physical or visual or both) is not as important as to why the disability is present within the tale. *How the Grimms* use disability narratively is worthy of more examination and analysis.

As the mother Others her normative able-bodied child and accepts her abnormal disabled children, the narrative breaks traditional normative narrative paradigms and allows readers to witness the abnormal disabled body as valuable. The beginning of this
tale challenges the hegemony of normalcy and the *myth* of the Othered abnormal disabled body, and yet the ending presents the traditional happy-ever-after marriage between able-bodied Two-Eyes and her knight. The beginning narrative reverses the roles of the characters, allowing the abnormal disabled body the stature of protagonism while the normal able body becomes the Othered antagonist. This inversion of dominant ableist ideology allows *One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes* to stand out as one of the few folk tales that communicates a different disability *myth*—an Other *myth*—however, making this narrative reversal a visible anomaly: an Other tale of Otherness. At first glance, it may seem that *One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes* is a different narrative that reverses the traditional presentation of antagonism between able-bodied and disabled characters. And yet, as this folk tale begins to challenge ideologies of normalcy in the first few pages of the story, the conclusion of the tale counters the initial devaluation of normalcy and able-bodiedness once a knight enters the tale and values Two-Eyes over that of her differently-eyed sisters for marriage, happiness and “good fortune” (429). The one-eyed and three-eyed sisters remain alone for the majority of the end of the tale—like the majority of most Grimm tales—while Two-Eyes lives with her handsome knight in a castle.

This mid-way reversal of roles within *One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes*, in fact, actually emphasizes the trope of the antagonistic disabled body and further promotes an able-bodied normalcy ideology as the Grimms expose the abnormal disabled family as non-ideal candidates for a happy ending. Indeed, the Grimms appear to dangle the possibility of a narrative that challenges ideologies of normalcy/ableism by beginning their tale with disabled characters devaluing their able-bodied relative, but then they
switch the tables for a dramatic narrative effect: irony. After devaluing their able-bodied sister, the visually disabled sisters then “envy” (428) her ability to grab golden apples as their bodies are not the ideal body type that can successfully grab golden apples, and thus disability switches to signify the non-ideal body. The disabled sisters’ positive self-valuation of their abnormality changes once their bodies hinder their future (marriageable ability). One-Eyes’ and Three-Eyes’ inability to retrieve golden apples for the prince changes their opinion of disability and ableism; ironically, One-Eyes and Three-Eyes begin to “envy” (428) their able-bodied sister after years of harassing her, and Othering her as “different” from them because of her able-body (424). The disabled sisters ironically become the Othered abnormal sisters (because of their inability to retrieve apples and marry the prince), and the originally Othered able-bodied sister becomes the normative protagonist who gains wealth and happiness.

The Grimms include the tale’s beginning premise of ideal abnormal disabled bodies as a way to set up disability and abnormality as the fool. *One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes* is actually a satire, where the Grimms use the abnormal disabled body as a site of ridicule. The visually disabled sisters are fools to believe that ableism embodies Otherness, while they in fact, represent Otherness in their disabled bodies. Similarly, within *Cinderella*, the step-sisters Other Cinderella as the non-ideal sister, devaluing her status within the family by treating her like the “kitchen maid” (79)—as a peasant compared to their bourgeois status—and yet the conclusion of tale marks the step-sisters as antagonists (the Grimms mark the step-sisters’ bodies with mobility and visual disabilities to signify their villainous character) and presents the disabled step-sisters as the real deviant, devalued bodies. Often within the Grimm tales, disability plays the
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fool—the narrative entertainment of which the Grimms victimize for conflict that
ultimately aides the able-bodied characters’ journey towards their ideal happily-ever-after
resolution.

**Questioning the One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes Disabled Characters**

The Grimms primarily identify the woman as “woman” and “mother” (and
“jealous mother”) (427) instead of a disability, or do they? This woman that the Brothers
Grimm refer to, either representing the nineteenth-century woman or a woman of
previous years, stands within a pre-feminist text of a patriarchal fictive world. Even if
the Grimm woman is not overtly physically or mentally disabled, she still embodies a
disabled social position within the text; she lives separate from the “other ordinary
people” (429) and their “good life” (427); she does not have a *present* husband (the text
does not mention the biological father); she is not able to reach the golden fruit off the
tree; and, she disappears. The woman is last seen growing “more harsh” with Two-Eyes,
and then she disappears. One-Eye and Three-Eyes reunite with Two-Eyes in her castle at
the end of the tale, but the dénouement omits the mother. The mother either remains in
her home away from the ordinary people or she has died off without receiving the same
“kindness and care” from Two-Eyes that One-Eye and Three-Eyes collect. The mother
never apologizes to Two-Eyes for her “evil” behaviour, and the Grimms remove her from
any conclusion. As with the rest of the Grimm antagonists, the Grimms remove the One-
Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes mother once the antagonism is no longer needed within
the narrative. The woman only functions as agent of conflict for Two-Eyes within the
tale, and once the knight rescues Two-Eyes from her disabled family, the Grimms
remove the woman from the tale as the able-bodied character returns to her rightful place (among the other "ordinary folk/human beings" within the idealized world of marriage and wealth). In this tale, the Grimms challenge the traditional "separation—initiation—return" myth formula that Campbell discusses within *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (30), and instead, the protagonist (Two-Eyes) follows a different pattern: "initiation—separation—return," where the wise woman initiates a plan for Two-Eyes to follow in order for Two-Eyes' good luck 'escape from her disabled family, Two-Eyes separates from her disabled family, and then returns to the idealized world of ordinary folk (where she was temporarily displaced from while living with the Other disabled women).

After questioning whether the mother of One-Eyes, Two-Eyes and Three Eyes is disabled, readers may also question whether the young knight is also disabled. The Grimms describe the knight as a "handsome nobleman" (428), however they do not describe his body type. One may assume that he possesses some sort of disability as the disabled sisters do not chastise him for his resemblance to the "other ordinary people" as they do with Two-Eyes. For example, when the knight first encounters One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes, the disabled sisters "see that he [is] a handsome nobleman" and they hide Two-Eyes so that she "won't disgrace [them]" (428). Since the sisters "[cannot] stand" Two-Eyes because "she [does] not look any different from other people," readers may assume that the disabled sisters admire the handsome knight for his lack of resemblance to the "other people" and his resemblance to their differently-eyed selves. Or, do the one-eyed and three-eyed sisters desire to marry an able-bodied knight in comparison to a disabled knight, and thus, they feel the able-bodied knight is handsome because of his ableism?
Although the text remains unclear, the exposure of the Grimms' use of disability as a metaphorical device for antagonism uncovers the knight as able-bodied because of his heroic rescue of Two-Eyes from the villainous disabled family. Corresponding with the majority of the Grimm tales, where able-bodied characters mainly marry able-bodied characters (except for Simpleton, Hans Dumb and Thumbling), I argue that *One-Eyes, Two-Eyes and Three Eyes* 'handsome knight is two-eyed like his Two-Eyed bride. The able-bodied knight rides into the home of the mother, One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes, just as most Grimm male protagonists ride into the woods to discover witches and dwarfs, only within this tale, the able-bodied knight rescues an able-bodied maiden instead of killing any disabled characters, and he then rides back to his human ableist "ordinary"/"human" world/castle to "[live] happily for a long time" (429). The Grimms intend that the handsome characters are able-bodied, just as Lennard J. Davis explains that most readers assume that literary, dramatic and filmic narratives include "whole, entire, complete and ideal" able-bodies unless otherwise identified/"where disability is present" ("Nude Venuses" 68). Therefore, the Grimms' lack of description of the knight's body (aside from his handsomeness and ability to ride a horse) indirectly labels him with an able non-problematic body in contrast to the disabled sisters and mother (and their inability to pick the golden apples). The Grimms do not identify the knight with a problematic body because he is not an antagonist within the tale.

However, *One-Eyes, Two-Eyes, and Three-Eyes* 'knight follows the traditional mythic protagonist journey, "separation—initiation—return." The knight leaves his kingdom, initiates a quest for golden apples between the three sisters and mother, Two-Eyes wins the challenge and leaves with the knight, and then Two-Eyes and the knight
return to his kingdom. The knight returns to his kingdom of “ordinary folk” (424), where ableism represents the norm, and he does not stay with the abnormal disabled family in the forest and fields. If the knight remained with the disabled family, then he would be returning to his disabled roots; however, the knight returns to his able-bodied kingdom with an able-bodied bride and thus, he is able-bodied. Both protagonists, Two-Eyes and the knight, return to the communities that consist of similar able-bodied characters. The disabled characters remain separated from the able-bodied characters, only until the disabled sisters “wander” towards the able-bodied kingdom and “beg” for food (429). At the end of the tale, disability characterizes poverty while ableism signifies wealth. Disabled characters are socially impoverished, while the able-bodied characters socially succeed.

The Apple of the Two-Eyed

Midway through the tale, the disabled mother becomes angry with Two-Eyes for eating food from a magical goat. The “jealous mother” yells at Two-Eyes, “Do you think you can live better than we do? Well, I’ll soon put an end to your taste for the good life” (427). The mother names a life other than their own, quite possibly the life of the “other ordinary people” (429), as the “good life” which then suggests that the lives of the disabled characters represent the bad life. As well, the Grimms further suggest that a life of disability represents a bad life when a wise woman tells Two-Eyes that burying the entails of a slaughtered goat, Two-Eyes will receive “good luck” (427-428). The good luck that the wise woman refers to is Two-Eyes’ departure from her disabled home life, her rescue by the handsome nobleman knight and their marriage and life within his
father’s castle. “Good luck” refers to a life without her disabled family—a life without disability and a life with plenty of food/prosperity. The Grimms portray life without disability as the “good life” of “good luck,” and this representation of disability communicates the myth of disability as misfortune, which perpetuate the ideology of the ill-fated disabled body.

The “good luck” that the wise woman refers to, becomes a “magnificent and splendid tree...[with] leaves...made of silver and its fruit...made of gold[,]... more beautiful and delicious than anything in the whole wide world” (428). The tree grows from the goat entails, I argue that the tree symbolizes the idealized ableist world which only Two-Eyes can attain. For as the golden apples “drop by themselves into [Two-Eyes’s] hand, so that she [is] able to pick one after the other and bring down a whole apron full of apples,” the apples “evade” Three-Eyes’s grip (428). Two-Eyes does not even need to reach for the apples, they simply fall into her hands, whereas the apples avoid Three-Eyes grasp, and One-Eye and the mother cannot attain an apple. The characters with visual non-ideal differences/disabilities do not succeed in gaining the ideal fruit of the ideal tree, just as they do not marry the knight and live “happily for a long time” in a castle. They never reach the idealized golden apples and they never marry or attain a happily-ever-after ending like their two-eyed sister. Instead, the mother disappears from the story without any narration of an exit, and One-Eye and Three-Eyes wander and beg for years until they finally come to Two-Eyes’ castle, where Two-Eyes welcomes “them with such kindness and care that the [Othered sisters] both deeply [regret] the evil that they had done to their sister in their youth” (429). The conclusion of the tale recognizes the disabled sisters’ villainy (“the evil that they had done”) without
retracting the previous antagonism. Instead, One-Eye and Three-Eyes remain the Othered evil sisters, and the metaphor of the villainous disabled body prevails.

Simi Linton paraphrases H. M. Kiebard within *Claiming Disability Knowledge and Identity*, regarding the ideological power of metaphors: “Metaphor is not merely an ‘ornament to speech and writing irrelevant to the task of clarifying and conveying meaning, it is a ‘fundamental vehicle of human thought’ (Kliebard 1992, 206) and as such, has a profound impact on our thinking about people with disabilities” (130). Such a “profound impact” suggests that the Grimms’ use the villainous disabled body is a “powerful [tool] of persuasion” (ibid. 125) which organizes readers’ perspectives of disability. “[T]hese figures of speech further objectify and alienate people with disabilities and perpetuate inaccurate information about disabled people’s experience” (ibid. 128). *One-Eyes, Two-Eyes and Three Eyes* promotes good fortune as ableism, and inaccurately communicates the misfortune of disability. In one poignant line of the tale, Two-Eyes desires to leave her disabled family and tells the handsome knight, “If you would take me with you and free me from all this, I’d be happy” (429). This tale praises the happiness of a “normal” character trapped in an abnormal world and condemns the life of disability, exhibiting a stock characterization of disability that further disables literary and social disabled bodies as these representations fix notions of the correlative body and metaphor.
CONCLUSION:

Against Blind Erasure

In A Narrative Blind Eye, I have argued that the disabled body exists within the Brothers Grimm folktales for the purpose of metaphorical Otherness, perpetuating stock characterizations of able-bodied normalcy and disabled abnormality. Such binary normal/abnormal, ideal/non-ideal able/disabled body representations continue to shape ideologies of disability which communicate the Barthesian myth of the villainous and non-ideal disabled body. The figures of the evil dwarf, ignorant Simpleton, poor-sighted witch, and the handless maiden expose the disabled body as lesser valued bodies than able-bodied characters and thus, the valueless disabled body misrepresents disability—reflecting an inaccurate understanding of disability. The Grimms' persistent use of the Othered disabled antagonist next to the heroic, idealized able-bodied protagonist draws attention to the importance of body spectacle in the creation and interrogation of ideological principles. The Grimms' use of the body's image (the description of the body within the narrative) exposes the body as a vehicle for characterization, and this link between the body's image and character communicates the myth that disability embodies and performs Otherness within and outside literary discourse. In short, the Grimms use disability and the disabled body as an exploitive force that influences and relies on how readers socially perceive the invalounzed disabled body. The Grimm dwarfs, giants and one-eyed villains provide a literary space where social collective values can exist, and multiply, contextualizing the disabled villain and limiting the range of positive disability representations within narrative and popular culture.
Exposing the Grimms' metaphorical use of disability uncovers the structural formation and existence of the disabled villain and debunks the Barthesian myth that the disabled body reflects an accurate feature of villainy and Otherness. Investigating and analyzing textual representations of disability challenges and informs constructions of disability and makes the often invisible disabled body visible within academic and social settings (Brueggemann et al. “Becoming” 503-526). “Disability studies,” explains Brenda Brueggemann et al. within “Becoming Visible: Lessons in Disability,” “invite[s] us all to at least consider the able-bodied agenda lurking in the way we make meaning through so many crippling metaphors, in the way we compose and communicate that disables even as it might be attempting to ‘enable’” (501). The disabled Grimm characters represent the narratively necessary Other, entangling the disabled body with conceptions of imperfection and the non-ideal villainous abnormal body. and communicate the lesson of the happily-ever-after ableist ending and the isolation and death of the Other disabled body. The Grimms metaphorical use of disability entrenches the disabled body as a necessary narrative device, instead of a point of disability individuation or activism. Disability is the highlighted abnormal status, while ableism is the celebrated and successful happily-ever-after conclusion. These Grimm tales continue to trap abnormal bodies within the stagnant narrative form of the mythic villain, offering limited opportunity to challenge normative paradigmatic thinking about disability.
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VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Leah Sigrun Laxdal

PLACE OF BIRTH: Saskatoon, SK

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1980

EDUCATION:
- Carlton Comprehensive High School, Prince Albert, SK 1994-1998
- University of Calgary, Calgary, AB 1998-2002 B.A. English
- University of Windsor, Windsor, ON 2006-2008 M.A. English Language, Literature and Creative Writing