Disability, Difference, and Determination in Grimm's Fairy Tales

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… Normalcy must constantly be enforced in public venues … creating and bolstering its image by processing, comparing, constructing, deconstructing images of normalcy and the abnormal. (Davis 23)

Born in Hanau in the principality of Hesse-Kassel during the later part of the 18th century, the brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, were graduates of the University of Marburg. Originally referred to as *Children's and Household Tales*, the *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales* are rich with imagination, triumph, valor, honor, and wonders of the supernatural. The tales are also dark with graphic depictions of torture, cannibalism, incest, cruelty, seduction, abandonment, and vindictiveness. In the preface to the first edition of the *Children's and Household Tales*, Wilhelm Grimm reflecting on the "universal truth" of the tales stated:

The tales live on in such a way that no one thinks about whether they are good or bad, poetic or vulgar. We know them and we love them just because we happen to have heard them in a certain way, and we like them without reflecting why (205).

At the turn of the 20th century, Grimm's *Children's and Household Tales* had been part of the Prussian and German principalities teaching curriculum for over 30 years (Zipes, Introduction, xxxxiii).

The first English translation of the *Children's and Household Tales* occurred in the late 1800s. In a 1993 compilation of the *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales* (Grimm), published by Barnes and Nobels Books in collaboration with Doubleday Publishing House, there are 211 tales taken from the seventh edition (1857) of the *Children's and Household Tales***.** The 1857 version is the last and "authoritative" version of the tales, representing the additions and deletions made by the brothers Grimm.

Criticism and discussion of the tales have centered on areas concerning gender role expectations (Robbins 109), child abuse (Zipes, Introduction, xxxiv), incest (Tartar 8), cannibalism (Tartar 3), infanticide (Tartar 5), and anti-Semitism (Tartar 21) .There have been few authors in the 21st century specifically addressing issues of violence, child abuse, or abandonment of characters portrayed as mentally incompetent, blind, medically fragile, or physically different in the Grimm's folk tales.

In revisiting the images of the Grimm's tales as "archetypes that augment and explain our experience" whose "background status" has been unquestioned as a "universal truth" (Frank 243), there is an opportunity to reflect on the historical roots of the image and expectations of those considered to be different or exceptional. Scholars dedicated to the analysis of Grimm's, such as Jack Zipes, contend that the tales through depictions of families that faced starvation, children abandoned, and consequential exploitation of the desperate or different, may very well reflect the lived experience and social attitudes of the "family in the eighteen and nineteenth century" (168).

Within the 211 of the *Grimm's Complete Fairy Tales* (Grimm), 67 tales have "dramatis personae" who in the 21st-century would be described as an individual with a disability that conforms to a category assigned using the criteria as described by Roger Pierangelo and George Giuliani in the *Educator's Diagnostic Manual of Disabilities and Disorders*. This work targets for discussion the most significant of these tales where characters whose characteristics are similar to categories commonly associated with disability are depicted, namely: Vision Impairment, Speech Impairment, Emotional Disorder, Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity, Autism, Learning Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairments, and Other Health Impairments. Gigantism and dwarfism as representations in the Grimm's tales are primarily imaginary and, therefore, not included in this discussion as to place them in a category such as Orthopedic Impairment or Other Health Impairment is a stretch.

In order to look more carefully at the characters whose description are within the parameters of a disability as described in the *Educator's Diagnostic Manual of Disabilities and Disorders*, this commentary is influenced by Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. Propp's morphology depends upon descriptive ethnography to study the function of the character. Using a modification of Propp's technique to specifically address a character's manifestations of a 21st-century description of a disability category allows for an examination of image, role, and outcome to expose the function and sphere of action of the character. A preliminary look at the tales is divided by importance or role of the character with a disability, the overall image of the character, and the fate or outcome.

The first focus of this discussion is Grimm characters whose visual impairment is critical to the plot. In the tales of "Cinderella" and "Rapunzel," the mistreatment of the heroine by exploitation is punished by blindness in what seems to be a justifiable revenge of fate. In "Cinderella" the step-sisters, exploiters, have their eyes plucked out by birds because of their wickedness and falsehood. The tale reminds the reader that blindness is a horrible fate that will destine the evil step-sisters to a life of poverty and penance. In "Rapunzel" the prince falls into the thorns and is blinded, destined to wander without hope, hungry and impoverished as a consequence of his unwedded intimacy and exploitation of Rapunzel's innocence. His sight is restored by Rapunzel's tears of forgiveness, and he opens his eyes to see his two children. Both tales reinforce the image of vision impairment, blindness, resulting directly from the deliberate exploitation of another through actions that are based on selfishness, deceit, and immorality. Both tales speak to the folk perception of the times, which equated sinful action with a visual impairment or blindness, a condition that will most certainly lead to poverty, disenfranchisement, and disrespect within the community.

Vision, as a valued treasure, is part of the tale of the "Two Travelers". The tailor in the "Two Travelers" sells his eyesight for food to the merciless shoemaker. With the purchase, the shoemaker takes from the tailor the ability to work and to survive. The tailor, victimized by disability, wanders until he falls alone and helpless below the gallows where two condemned men hang. The gallows and condemned men are reminiscent of the mercy of Christ at the time of His crucifixion. The tailor's miraculous cure results from the information provided by their mercy. Blindness, the affliction, is cured by a miracle, so good triumphs over evil.

The tale continues. As fate would have it, the tailor and the merciless shoemaker are both employed by the same king. Overcoming many an evil plot by the shoemaker, the tailor succeeds king. The shoemaker, now disenfranchised, collapses below the same gallows as once had the tailor. As the shoemaker looks up, two birds fly down from the heads of the condemned men and peck out the shoemaker's eyes. Because of his evil, unrepentant actions, no mercy is shown to the shoemaker. In what might be interpreted as a justifiable fate, the shoemaker's blindness results in madness, and he runs into the woods to die. This portion of the tale implies that blindness results in a state of complete incapacity and is, alone, a fate worse than death. The outcome of the tale speaks strongly to the perception of the times that capacity and worthiness were associated with the ability to work and disenfranchisement and poverty were associated with disability.

In all three tales discussed above, the image of the character with visual impairment was that of an exploiter or victim. The exploiter took advantage of the hero or heroine for personal gain, thus becoming the villain. The victim was exploited, physically harmed, or lost something or someone of value. The role of disability was central to the plot in all three tales. The outcome of the afflicted character was dependent upon one's own moral integrity. The character portrayed as irredeemably evil was fated to poverty or death; those whose integrity was not in question were cured and rewarded, or, at the very least released unharmed. There is little room for argument that in Grimm the "dramatis personae" that is blind has a disability.

The "Knoist and his Three Sons" and the "The Ditsmars Tale of Wonders" both use blindness as part of a grouping of disabling conditions, a grouping that creates an allegorical situation and is the second focus of this discussion. The disability of the characters points out the improbability of their accomplishing the task at hand. They each are the shadow of the "normate" condition of health. Knoist's three sons each have a different disability — one is lame, one is blind, and one is stark-naked. The three sons go out to hunt a hare and "the blind one shot it, the lame one caught it, and the naked one put it in his pocket" (Grimm 581). In a similar fashion in the "The Ditsmars Tale of Wonders" the improbable happens when four fellows, all of whom had crutches, go out to catch a hare. In this tale " ... one of them was deaf, the second blind, the third dumb, and the fourth could not stir a step … the blind man saw the hare running across the field, the dumb one called to the deaf one, and the lame one seized it by the neck" (Grimm 583).

Similar to the significance placed on interpretation in feminist literature, the use of language, that is the words chosen, are not disability neutral but they are "imbued" with the values of the culture (Kolodny 512).

Together these two tales group represent the most improbable situation for a successful rabbit hunt. Even though the characters successfully catch the hare and are therefore capable of completing the task, it is obvious to the reader that this is just the opposite of what should have occurred. Each person in the tale was specifically charged to perform in their area of disability and was only successful because the disability was temporarily abated. The ability to hunt was a skill essential to success within the rural community of the 18th century, and the tales serve as a parable where disability in any form is equated with the incapacity to provide for self or others. Yet, the tales are thought provoking and may well have the opposite effect on the reader illustrating that when a society works together as a team with each member using their unique talents, wonders can be accomplished. One may come away from both tales wondering if the man who was deaf saw the hare in the grass, the man who was blind used his hearing to locate the hare, the man who was naked ran after the hare, and the man who was lame dressed the game they all would have shared a dandy supper.

A third focus of this discussion is the four Grimm tales centered on a heroine whose disability is a consequence or sacrifice for wrongdoing. In tale of the "The Twelve Brothers", the sister picks the flowers that guard the safety of her eleven brothers. This action releases the witch's spell that turns the brothers into ravens. The witch agrees to remove the spell if the sister will be "dumb" for seven years. Her consent to remain silent is a form of selective global aphasia (Pierangelo and Guilliani 89). In the tale, the sister marries a king but ironically becomes the victim of the intolerance of her new mother-in-law. Because she refuses to speak or laugh, she is tied to a stake to be burned alive. Just as the fire begins to crackle, the seven years end, she speaks and is exonerated. The tale of "Six Swans" also has a sister who volunteers to become mute to save her brothers from an evil spell. Again the maiden marries a king and is the victim of an evil mother-in-law who steals the maiden's newborn children and accuses the young queen of infanticide. Once again the spell fades, the maiden's voice is restored, and the brothers are saved. The pattern continues in the tale of "Our Lady's Child" where Our Lady, Mary the Mother of Christ, takes a human maiden as her child. The young maiden refuses to admit to a transgression against Our Lady and is cast back to earth, condemned to be mute, until she tells the truth to Our Lady. She too marries a king, and her children are taken by Our Lady to heaven as part of the maiden's punishment for unrepentant sinfulness. Accused of infanticide, the maiden, unable to speak in her own defense, is sentenced by an earthly court to burn at the stake. At the last minute, she confesses to Our Lady who restores the maiden's voice and her children.

The image of the characters with global aphasia is that of a victim. They are main characters, and the disability is central to the story. Although this study does not concentrate on gender image, it is significant that the "dramatis personae" of consequence in Grimm who manifest selective global aphasia are always female. With the loss of voice came the loss of power, the disrespect of the community, and the inability to protect one's own children. The association of global aphasia with divine retribution supports the misconception that a disability can be the result of unrepentant sinful action.

Perhaps the most upsetting of all the Grimm tales from the perspective of consequential disability is that of "The Girl without Hands". In this tale, the young maiden becomes the sacrificial offering that saves her father from his rash promise to a wizard. "Do with me as you will: I am your child" (207) is her reply to her father's request to cut off her hands. She ties up her "stumped arms" and leaves home. The young maiden, a person with a definite orthopedic impairment, marries the king and gives birth to a child she names Pain Bringer. The vengeful wizard finds the letter announcing the birth of the King's son and replaces this letter with an announcement of the birth of a changeling. The king replies that all care should be taken of mother and child but the wizard also intercepts that message. This replacement message tells the mother-in-law to cut out the tongue of the baby and to put out the mother's eyes. Showing a flash of compassion, the mother-in-law banishes the two rather than following the orders contained in that letter. The young queen flees to the woods where a good fairy takes her and her son into protective custody. She remains in the fairy cottage for many years and because of her "pious" nature and "goodness" her hands grew again.

In all four tales of these tales where disability is "inflicted" or "assumed," it created a disruption in the traditional order of relationships. It is the interpretation of the disability, social construct, which precipitated the threat of starvation, murder, abandonment and the inability to ensure the safety of children. Sherilyn Marrow and Terra Ryan, in an exploration of "The Girl without Hands", determined four portrayals within this tale that spoke to areas of disability.

These tenets were in effect: 1) religious practice can affect a cure, 2) disability is a punishment for family or personal wrongdoing, 3) the disabled are isolated and abandoned, and 4) physical support is necessary to survive while emotional support is an option. These four tenets and the "underlying message that evil people lose their completeness through disability; if it had not been for the wrongdoing (or someone very close to that person) they would still be whole" (354) are visibly present in the four tales and illustrate a consequential or sacrificial disability theme.

When looking candidly at the plight of the heroine in three tales "Our Lady", "The Six Swans", and "The Girl without Hands"**,** it is too easy to forget that there were little babies involved in these plots. These maidens married and became mothers. The children in "Our Lady" and "The Six Swans" were taken from their mother who then was accused of infanticide. The children in these tales were ancillary, and little regard is made as to their emotional state. Nothing is said about the mother's reaction to the kidnapping of her children. It is as though she views their deaths as fated. The baby boy in "The Girl without Hands" is a critical part of the disruption within the plot, and as such plays a strong ancillary role. As a changeling, his life would also be at risk. He and his mother flee into the woods for safety. It is not completely clear in the tale as to why the mother names her little son Pain Bringer. He was strapped to her back and screaming as she entered the fairy house. Did she, following societal structure, perhaps, hold him in less regard because his pseudo disability was the cause for her exile? This seems a likely interpretation given the medieval view of a changeling birth.

The disability, or disadvantage of a child, played a role in several Grimm tales. Changelings' stories, up to the time of the Enlightenment, were a common folklore explanation for what are now recognized medical conditions as described in the *Educator's Diagnostic Manual of Disabilities and Disorders*: Prader Willi syndrome, hydrocephalus, thyroid disorder, and Cornelia de Lange Syndrome. As such the child cries often, sleeps little, and always seems to be hungry. This description also agrees with the criteria for a changeling presented to the German people by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (213), an inquisition doctrine of the 15th century. Changelings in the 15th century were regarded as the devil's spawn placed in the crib of the rightful child by witches or elves. This medieval perspective justified killing the changeling child if proper incantations failed to restore the rightful child to the parents. Changelings could also be the result of the mother's sexual indiscretion with an incubus devil that which known, both the mother and child were to be killed. This seems the likely explanation of the condemnation of the mother and child in "The Girl without Hands".

In the Grimm tale "The Elves," the elves took the mother's child and "left in its place a changeling with a big head and staring eyes, which did nothing but eat and drink" (37). She was told by her neighbors to put the baby's head in the hearth, make a fire, and boil water in two egg shells all of which would make the baby laugh, and when he laughed he would die. She did as instructed, the changeling laughed and in came the elves with her rightful child and carried away the changeling. The plot depends upon the disability of the newborn baby; a baby who Pierangelo and Giuliani would describe as being born with hydrocephalus. The image of the baby is sinister; his difference in appearance is a death sentence.

Unusual children in Grimm's were not always considered the devil's spawn. In "The Donkey," royal parents reluctantly accepted the birth of an anthropomorphic child. Although this is hardly a realistic disability, the acceptance of difference and the position of power of the characters are significant. The Queen's initial grief and shock at the birth of an abnormal child is a disability-associated reaction. The Queen insists that the servants drown her imperfect donkey-eared newborn son as she would "rather have no child at all than a donkey, throw it into the water that the fishes might devour it."(479). Bucking societal structure by accepting his son's difference and disability, the King says, "No, God has sent him to be my son and heir." The difference does not stop the young prince from learning to play the lute and living a fine life until the day he sees himself in a reflection. Fully aware of his difference, he is ashamed and leaves the castle to seek his fortune. Upon meeting the princess of his dreams, he wins her father the King's favor and is awarded the princess. Magically, he is transformed into a "handsome royal youth" right before the consummation of his marriage.

The physical difference of the donkey prince is central to the plot of the tale. His role is that of a victim; he has been victimized by an act of nature. His transformation is a form of overcoming and triumph; it is only when his difference disappears that he is accepted as a prince rather than just a "little ass." It is only as a normate that he can consummate the marriage. In order to have full access to life, he must be complete, perfect as nothing less is acceptable.

The work of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (57), a renowned author in the field of disability construct, cited the literary narrative as a primary constructor of exclusionary discourse. As "The Donkey" illustrates, there is a strong correlation between physical appearance and righteousness in the Grimm works.

The "attractiveness stereotype" in narrative functions to persuade the reader that an attractive person is more virtuous and more deserving of a fulfilled life. In Grimm, a difference in stature, appearance, or temperament became the literary representation of "God's power over nature and His use of it for didactic ends." (Garland-Thomson, 57) This premise can be best illustrated in Grimm's folktale entitled "Eve's Various Children."

Eve was giving birth to the children who would populate the earth. She had ugly as well as beautiful children. The ugly, less acceptable children were unkempt and hidden behind the stove so that God would not see them. The beautiful children were dressed for God's blessing. God made the beautiful children kings, queens, noblemen, and rulers of the earth. Eve, seeing God's work, brought out the ugly children for a blessing. God made the ugly children, the less than perfect children, the fisherman, the scullions, the potters, the tailors, the errand boys, and the servants of the world. God explained, "It is right and necessary that the entire world be supplied from thy children. If they were all princes and lords, who would grow corn, thresh it, grind and bake it? Who would be the blacksmith, weavers, carpenters, masons, laborer, tailors, and seamstress? Each has his own place, so that one shall support the other, and all shall be fed like the limbs of one body." Eve replied, "Have thy divine will with my children" 309.

In the Grimm tales disfigurement ultimately resulted in a destructive flaw; a flaw that commonly, but not exclusively, exonerated those who were violent towards this extraordinary character by omission of consequence. Grimm tales add not only violence but exploitation to the perception of a destructive flaw. For example, in the "Three Spinners," the young, beautiful maiden has the good fortune to have three women willing to do her work so that she might better her position in life. Each woman has a specific physical or orthopedic disfigurement that results from a lifetime of spinning. One has an extended lip, the other an enlarged foot, and the third an extended thumb. Grateful to be accepted as an equal by the maiden, the spinners only asked that when the young maiden becomes a princess she would not forget their kindness. Because of her supposed skill at spinning, the bride is betrothed to the prince and honors her promise to the spinners. The three spinners are invited to the wedding as the bride's cousins. The prince, seeing these disfigured "relatives" of the young bride was so repulsed that he declared a moratorium on his bride's future spinning in case she too would be disfigured by the task.

The physical difference of the spinners, the destructive flaw, is the sole justification for their exploitation. In return for many days of hard labor they ask only that the maiden "not be ashamed of us." The maiden's role is that of an exploiter, and the three spinners are her victims. They are marginalized at the wedding feast and questioned by the groom as to the cause of their "dreadful" ugliness. A critical look at the outcome of the plot determines that three very hard working, generous, and humble women with physical/orthopedic impairments received nothing but dinner and insults for their industry while a deceitful but beautiful maiden is given a life of royal leisure. The plot uses both the exoneration of the destructive flaw and the entitlement of the "attractiveness stereotype" to reward the maiden solely on her physical appearance and to exploit the spinners because of their disability.

In the tale of the "Three Spinners" the spinners' physical difference is a badge of honor. This is not so in the tale of "St. Joseph in the Forest" where the wicked, selfish sister is given two noses by St. Joseph as a punishment nor in "The Little Folks' Presents", where the goldsmith is described as a brave man "like all hunchbacks" until he allows greed to overcome his goodness. As a consequence of his greed he is punished by having a second hump grow on the front of his breast. In these tales, a physical difference/impairment is a punishment. The role of disability occasions a sinister act.

Turning the focus from physical to mental disability in Grimm, emotional and behavioral differences could be dealt with harshly. For example, in the tale of the "Willful Child," the oppositional, defiant young girl who will not obey her mother becomes ill and dies. Her death is a presented as a relief rather than a tragedy. In "Iron John" the hero is found in a bog and because of his wild nature and antisocial appearance he is caged like a beast. In "Master Pfriem" his ADHD and Asperger-like characteristics (Pierangelo and Guliani 249) created social and financial problems. The hero is described as person who "saw everything, criticized everything, knew everything best, and was always right.

When he went to work he moved his arms about as if he was rowing … he himself did not turn out much work with his hands, for he never sat still for a quarter of an hour." (Grimm 393) Although he is not physically harmed by his temperament, Master Pfriem is described as isolated, unmarried, and lacking in respect for the divine order of Heaven. As in "Master Pfriem," the tale of "Lean Lisa" describes a hard-working woman with the attention and behavior characteristics of attention deficit coupled with hyperactivity. Her perpetual activity and incessant chatter is presented as justification for her husband's decision to partially suffocate her with a pillow. In "Frederick and Catherine," Catherine's constant shifting of attention affects her ability to make rational decisions and leads to her exploitation, the eventual loss of her home, her fortune, and her husband. These tales again perpetuate an image that individuals with a difference have a destructive flaw that destines them to be harshly treated either directly by other people or indirectly by hardship and isolation.

The use of the "dramatis personae" with a limited intellectual ability conforming to a description of learning disability (Pierangelo and Giuliani 8) occurred in ten tales.

The language of the tales of the triumphant protagonist of limited intelligence is rich with cultural descriptions and provides and insight into the mindset of the times. As Jack Zipes comments in the Introduction to *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, "Though the Grimms imbued the tales with a heavy dose of Christian morality, the Protestant work ethic, and patriarchalism, they also wanted the tales to depict social injustices and possibilities for self determination" (Introduction xxxv). Disability can be defined as an environmental, social, or educational construct that prevents an individual from successfully meeting personal needs. In all but one of these tales, intellectual challenges have not presented a disability for the "dramatis personae" if economic security and social acceptance are the "abling" factors.

Consider for example the tale of "The Youth Who Could Not Shiver and Shake," within which the younger of two sons was described by his father as a "burden …stupid" as he could not "learn or understand." His brothers refer to him as a "dumbbell" who will never amount to anything. When asked by his father how he intended to earn a living he replied that he wanted to learn how to get the creeps. He is apprenticed to a sexton who maliciously tries to frighten the young man as he rings the church bells at midnight. The apprenticeship ends when the boy throws the sexton down the stairs. The wife of the sexton declared the young man a good for nothing and fired him. The father sides with the sexton and the young man is sent out into the wide world with fifty talers and no blessing. Throughout the tale he encounters challenges and for each one he laments that he cannot feel the creeps. His travels take him to the haunted castle of a king with a beautiful daughter. The challenge is to spend three nights in the castle where many men have gone in but none have ever come out. The reward for this challenge is the castle's great treasure and the hand of the princess. Because he cannot shiver or shake he is successful, saves the castle, and marries the princess. Persistence and good fortune overcomes adversity and the protagonist of diminished intellectual ability triumphs in spite of his limitations.

The tale of Hans in the tale of "The Poor Miller's Boy and the Cat" is another excellent example of disability triumph. Hans, outcast by his father for his stupidity, survives as a drudge to a cat. In spite of the circumstances, he works with industry and pride, serves his time, and returns home to his jeering brothers, as a failure in their eyes. Good fortune follows his industrious nature and the tabby cat, now turned princess, rescues Hans, sweeping him away in a magnificent coach to live happily ever after. The story concludes with a morality lesson on acceptance of the extraordinary: "After this, let no one ever say that anyone who is silly can never become a person of importance" (263).In a manner reflective of the biblical story of the prodigal son, Grimm's tales of the "simpleton" who acts in a charitable and compassionate manner demonstrate the virtues of humility and ethical actions. Franks states that, "Most of the paradoxical Grimm's tales feature a wise fool who acts compassionately because of his simpler vision. The act of compassion, by someone who merits compassion, teaches the audience where true wisdom lies" (213).

Unlike the other Grimm's tales of "simple men," "Wise Folks" addresses the plight of a woman who by today's terms and defining characteristics is an individual with a traumatic brain injury (Pierangelo and Giuliani 371). Trina is described by her husband as the stupidest goose that ever waddled on God's earth. As the tale begins, Trina is sent by her husband to sell the cows. As she leaves, her husband threatens that if she fails in her task she will be severely beaten. Easily outwitted, Trina mismanages the sale. The husband of limited conscience determines to regain the financial loss by finding one person more stupid than his wife. It is only if he recovers the loss that he will spare his wife from a beating.

He returns home with his cows and self-respect intact. Throughout the tale of "Wise Folks," Trina is described as intellectually challenged, victimized, and lacking in the compensatory characteristics needed to overcome adversity. She assumes the shadow role to her husband whose brutal intents and blatant exploitation of the simplicity of others received no consequence in the tale. It seems as though the reader is asked to validate the position of the frustrated husband by applauding his restraint to abuse his intellectually-challenged wife. For Trina, a learning disability resulting from a traumatic brain injury did interfere with social acceptance and the quality of life perhaps "reify(ing) the encodings of those same power relations in the culture at large" (Kolodny 591).

The Children's and Nursery Tales were temporarily banned after World War II in Germany, as they were considered to be a contributor to the mentality of savage brutality that perpetuated the Nazi regime (Zipes 233). In a very similar trend the Supreme Court was recently asked to ban violent video games. In 2010, Justice Antonin Scali argued against a proposed California law that bans violent videogame sales to minors fearing such a law might extend to banning children's book since "Some of the Grimm's Fairy Tales are quite grim. Are they OK? Are you going to ban them too?" (Cifaldi,web).

Beth Franks in "Gutting the Golden Goose," firmly states that the Grimm's tales are "not the source of the negative portrait of disability, nor can they be credited with actively perpetrating stereotypes. They are, if anything, more democratic in their handling of disability than our modern, disability conscious society" (255). Yet analysis of Grimm's tales determined that of the 75 "dramatis personae" with physical or mental differences 19 (25%) were exploiters, 22 (29%) were victims, and less than half of the tales represented characters with disability, 34 (44%), as capable, productive, or fortunate enough to return to their lives unscathed and unrewarded. All women with any kind of disability were victimized, exploited, and/or physically harmed. Blindness, orthopedic impairment, mute, and disfigurement were portrayed as being the direct result of either personal or family aberrant behavior. Women alone were asked to serve penance for a family member's errant ways. Perhaps the most disturbing morality, very similar to the violent video game of today, is the justification and lack of consequence for exploiting, killing or harming those who are different in order to assure good fortune or success.

Wolfgang Mieder in "Grim Variations from Fairy Tales to Modern Anti-Fairy Tales" states that scholars have " long realized that these tales were originally not for children's stories , but rather traditional narratives for adults, couching basic human problems and aspirations in symbolic and poetical language"(90). He presents a far more optimistic and accepting viewpoint of the modified Grimm; a viewpoint where children can " learn from these tales that certain problems, dangers and ordeals can be overcome, that transformation and changes must occur, and that everything will work in the end"(90). Grimm's tales do illustrate that if you treat individuals who are different in size and shape well, with respect, they can become your fortune. Kindness and generosity given to those who are smaller than you such as animals and dwarfs are rewarded. Truly great rulers live happily ever after because they are compassionate and forgiving. Young men who have a learning disability once they learn the hard way not to be victimized or outsmarted can overcome their disabilities and be productive citizens. In a rather ironic twist, tales of individuals with learning disabilities celebrate the triumphs of the once marginalized and mistreated and provide an "optimistic and future oriented world view" (Mieder 90).

The most current translation of *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* Jack Zipes included the standard 210 tales as well as 68 tales excluded from the 1857 edition. Within the preface of the enlarged edition of the tales, Zipes acknowledged, "Educators have not been interested in the motif so much as in the morals and the types of role models in the tales … most of the great pedagogical debates center around the brutality and cruelty in some tales … adapters of the tales have eliminated the harsh scenes … Snow White will not be forced to dance in red-hot shoes and Cinderella's step-sisters will not have their eyes pecked out." (xxxiv)

As a reader of Grimm, we are the voyeurs of both justice and injustice and as such we celebrate Simpleton's triumphs, modesty, ethical posture, and charitable acts (Frank 253), but at the same time we cannot turn away from the reality of the tale that those with difference can be victimized, exploited, and harmed with little remorse (Clark). Wilhelm Grimm was very clear that situations in the tales were of a common and simple nature during the 1800s. Perhaps Maria Tartar is correct in her determination that, the Grimm's tales:

May (still) incarnate the highest hopes and deepest fears of every childhood, or they may preserve the fantasies and phobias of the childhood of mankind.

In the savage practices and violent events (exist) expression of regressive modes of thought or of primitive ways of life … truths so fundamental to life and so universal in their application that they are necessarily alike everywhere. (63)

Although Annette Kolodny, in "Dancing through the Minefields," is primarily concerned with the power structure in literature as it pertains to the feminine in general, her trajectory is poignant to the dilemma of the "dramatis personae" with disability in Grimm. Kolodny stated, "What (is) at stake is not so much literature or criticism as such, but the historical, social, and ethical consequences of (a marginalized group's) participation in, or exclusion from, either enterprise." (499)

Marrow and Ryan stated, "The image of the disabled population appears tarnished from Grimm's work and stands in the way of presenting a more favorable and realistic depiction of the disabled population in today's society." (355) Acknowledging their concern, this commentary takes the position that the exploited wives, daughters, and outcast sons are characters whose fundamental innocence shines out from the tales and as such encourage the reader to overlook disability and seek out fair play and equitable treatment for these characters. The value of Grimm's work is that we, the reader, champion the exploited and the victimized.

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