MRP Final Paper:

Once Upon a Time There Was Disability: Disability in Fairy Tales from the Nineteenth Century to Disney

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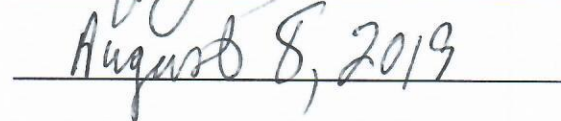
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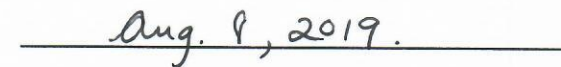**Advisor's Name:** Natalie Neill

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Date Approved: _Aug. 9, 2019._

A Research Paper Proposal submitted to the Graduate Program in Critical Disability Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
Graduate Program in Critical Disability Studies
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Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3

August 8, 2019

Abstract

Disability has been a part of fairy tales from the beginning. The Western world and literature changed greatly in the nineteenth century, including how disability was used in fairy tales. In the twentieth century, Walt Disney started animating stories, some of which were fairy tales. This paper looks at the representations of disability in nineteenth-century fairy tales and the Disney versions of those same fairy tales to understand in what way disability was portrayed in the nineteenth century and within the Disney versions.

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Introduction

Many people know when we hear or read "once upon a time", that we are in for a fairy tale. Similarly, like most people, I feel as if I know these fairy tales very well, since they have been a part of my life since childhood. I also grew up with Disney plays, films and products. The Disney adaptations of literature such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Three Musketeers*, and of course fairy tales were a large part of my childhood. Both fairy tales and Disney films are very dear to me. This paper will first look at my inspiration for this project and then my research purpose and questions. Then I will briefly discuss the paradigms used in this study.

In the literature review I look at the history of fairy tales and the changes within the field of literature in the nineteenth century. Then I will discuss adaptations followed by a look at the history of Disney. In discussing the history of Disney I want to explain some of the inspiration for the Disney adaptations of fairy tales. The history of both nineteenth-century literature and Disney is essential to understanding the representations of disability within their respective narratives.

This study used content analysis to both quantify and qualify the representations of disability. This paper will first discuss the results of disabled characters within the nineteenth-century fairy tales and their Disney adaptations. I will discuss what has changed in terms of the disabled characters from the nineteenth century to 2019. Then I will look at how disability status is conveyed to audiences; that is, whether it is implied or labelled. I will then discuss the function of disability within the narratives, and this will move into a brief discussion of linguistic choices in the nineteenth-century fairy

tales and the Disney adaptations.. Next, I will discuss the manner that romantic relationships and sexuality of disabled characters within both the nineteenth-century fairy tales and the Disney adaptations. Finally, this paper looks at stigma, stereotypes, and supercrips in both the written fairy tales and their Disney versions.

Research Purpose and Questions

I want to start with my inspiration for this project. As a small child, I lost my hearing at eighteen months old, and eventually, with surgical intervention, I became hearing impaired. I regained a good portion of my hearing by the age of four and a half and starting at this point, I was required to have a lot of intensive speech therapy. While this therapy entailed a lot, a part of my rehabilitation was having family members read to me. My parents and grandparents chose to read me many of the folklore and fairy tales from their childhoods, nostalgia for them and fairy tales for me. So at a relatively young age, I was exposed to the literary fairy tales of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from France, Germany, Netherlands, and Great Britain. Simultaneously, I was exposed to Disney films. In the 1980s the invention of VHS players and tapes enabled Disney films to be purchased and played in the privacy of one's home, not to mention all the new films that were coming into the theatres in the 1980s. For many, this may not have caused a problem, but I struggled with the alterations between the fairy tales my family read to me and the ones I saw at school, the theatre or while out of my home. This meant I sometimes got into trouble for informing others about the "original" fairy tales.

As an adult woman with many disabilities, mostly invisible, this issue still holds a great deal of importance for me especially in terms of disability representations. My focus in this study of fairy tales is on disability in nineteenth-century fairy tales and their Disney adaptations. While I know that there are many versions of fairy tales, I chose the nineteenth century because this was a time of significant change politically, artistically, socially, and in terms of the literature produced. I chose the Disney adaptations due to the power and cultural importance Disney holds within Western culture. This is a company with a lot of money, power, and influence.

My primary research question was, what are the representations of disability in nineteenth-century fairy tales and the Disney versions of those same fairy tales? In looking into the representations of disability, I was looking into the exact differences between the nineteenth-century fairy tales and Disney's movie adaptations of those same fairy tales.

My secondary question is, have the representations of disability in fairy tales changed from the nineteenth century, and if so what accounts for the changes? Moreover, what, if anything, do the representations within the different versions of the fairy tales imply about disability and disabled people?

For many people, fairy tales are our first introduction to gendered norms and disability. The narratives inform people of societal expectations. I think it is essential to examine the representations of disability within these fairy tales since they are frequently retold. It is important to question disability and the form it takes in fairy tales. There have been many studies on nineteenth-century fairy tales as well as on Disney films. However,

this scholarship has focused on how either the literature *or* films have constructed norms

related to gender, sexuality, race, and disability. I think it is essential to look across both

to understand the representations of disabilities and fairy tales. By looking at both the

literary fairy tales and the Disney films we are able to understand how disability

representations have changed over time within the two different mediums. This is about

more than how disability was represented in the past, this is about what happened from

the nineteenth-century to 2019 that has helped shape how disability is perceived today.

I have chosen to study nineteenth-century fairy tales along with the Disney film

adaptations because in 2019 Disney is synonymous with fairy tales. Jack Zipes (1995)

claims that when children and adults think of "Cinderella", "Sleeping Beauty", or "The

Little Mermaid" we think of Disney and not Grimm Brothers or Hans Christian Andersen

(p. 21).

I had a couple of assumptions going into this study. Firstly I assumed that the Disney

adaptations would not be entirely faithful to the nineteenth-century fairy tales due to their

putting a modern twist to these stories in order to keep up with their audience. This was

in fact true that Disney in their adaptations choose to put their own twist on the

narratives. Secondly, I thought that I would find many stereotypical and negative

representations of disability in both the nineteenth-century fairy tales and their Disney

adaptations. Again this is true both have negative representations but with the Disney

adaptations are more caricature of disabled characters. I also hoped to find that Disney, in

their more recent films, had attempted for more positive disability representations and

sadly this was not always the case.

Methodology

The research in this study utilized both quantitative and qualitative content analysis to detect trends and compare and contrast representations of disability. This study engaged in interdisciplinary methodology by bringing together historical, feminist, disability studies, film studies and English literature.

Content Analysis

For this study, I determined that content analysis would be the most effective research method. "Content analysis is the systematic study of texts and other cultural products or non-living data forms" (Leavy, 2007, p. 227). The use of content analysis allowed me to be able to identify social norms and representations of disability that are present within society. Content analysis means analyzing a text or texts by comparing, contrasting and categorizing data (Schwandt, 2007, p. 41). This study analyzed data gathered from the nineteenth-century fairy tales and the Disney movies of those same fairy tales. Haller notes that content analysis allows researchers to understand what many Western societies understand as reality (Haller, 2010, p. iv). This means that the content of media representation projects to society what many people within Western society think is real. In particular, the media content is a reflection of the cultural views on disability because media is created by humans with both conscious and unconscious perceptions of people with disabilities (Haller, 2010, p. 43). When consuming a cultural product, whether we are watching or reading it, we are informed about what the culture views as acceptable or unacceptable at the time it was produced. Nineteenth-century literature informs us of

cultural beliefs and perception about gender and disability (among other topics) in the nineteenth century. Similar to nineteenth-century literature, Disney films are a window into twentieth and twenty-first-century values.

For my analysis, I kept notes on all the forms of disabilities and how they are used. Before watching any of the Disney adaptations I ensured that I had first read the nineteenth-century version and made notes. I then watched the Disney adaptations. This allowed the nineteenth-century narrative to be in my mind so that I could evaluate faithfulness or fidelity. While I am not interested with the adaptations being entirely faithful to the source text, I was looking for the main facets of a narrative that makes it recognizable to its source being faithful. When we think about "Beauty and the Beast" there is a beautiful girl, and a "beast" who fall in love eventually, the rest can be changed and we can still recognize the source. When it came to the analysis of the text and the film, I watched each film three times and read each of the fairy tales three times. This was for the sake of consistency and to ensure that not only was I observing the obvious uses of disability and gender but the subtle uses as well.

I wanted some information about when the disability representation occurred. In the nineteenth-century literature, how many disability references occurred within every ten years? When did authors publish their fairy tales? For the Disney adaptations, I wanted to know for every ten years how many disability representations appear in the films?

The following identifies the descriptive data that was taken for both the nineteenth-century fairy tales and for the Disney adaptations:

-Are there any disabled characters? Yes or No
-What is the gender of the disabled character? Male, Female, or Other

-Is the disability implied, made obvious, or stated?
-Is the disabled label placed upon the character or put on by the character?
-If the disabled label put on by the characters is it for self-identification or disability masquerade?
-What is the function of disability in the narrative? Is disability used as form of punishment, trial, obstacle, description, or tool?
-Is the disability resolved by magical cures, death, or does it remain?
-Do the disabled characters have any relationships? Are they romantic or platonic? Does the resolution of their disability alter their relationship with other characters?

For the qualitative analysis I will be thinking about the above questions, but

considering it in terms of the experience — my experiences of observing disability and

what is being conveyed. Quantifiable data is not always enough as there are times in

analysis that one needs to reflect on the experience. In terms of experiences, I looked at

how disability was being portrayed in the nineteenth-century fairy tales and the Disney

adaptations. This is about what is being conferred to the reader or audience through all

the context clues.

Sample

To begin creating my sample list of nineteenth-century fairy tales and their Disney

adaptations I began by compiling a list of all Disney adaptations of fairy tales. Taking

this initial list I then looked into finding any nineteenth-century versions of those adapted

films. In terms of fairy tales, I only included those that came from nineteenth-century

sources and fairy tales collections. This excluded all those without nineteenth-century

versions and all novels such as Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame (1831)* or Lewis

Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865).* All the fairy tales included in this

study came from fairy tale collection books such as Hans Christian Andersen's complete

fairy tales collection. This ensured all stories included were classified as "fairy tales". My sample for fairy tales had a total of twenty-eight nineteenth-century fairy tales versions (see Appendix A for list of fairy tales, their authors and date of publication). The fairy tales date from 1812 to 1897. The books used are *Hans Christian Andersen's Complete Fairy Tales (2014)*, *The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales (2013)*, *English Fairy Tales (1890)*, *The Blue Fairy Book (1889)*, *The Red Fairy Book (1890)*, *The Yellow Fairy Book (1894)*, and *The Pink Fairy Book (1897)*. The fairy tales come from the authors Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (Germany), Hans Christian Andersen (Denmark), Andrew Lang (Scotland), and Joseph Jacobs (Australia).

With the Disney film adaptations, I included both animated and live action films, increasing the sample size for the adaptations. I looked for places to acquire copies of the films; some were in my own movie collection, and the rest could be watched from online sources such as Netflix and Youtube.com. The adaptations ranged in length from full-length feature films to short films. The films date from 1922 to 2019 (see Appendix B for the list of all film adaptations included in this study). The total number of films included in this sample was twenty-nine films.

For inclusion or exclusion in the sample, there was certain criteria. It was important that disability must appear within either the fairy tale or within the adaptation. This led to the exclusion of any fairy tale or adaptation set from the sample that did not have the presence of disability in the nineteenth-century fairy tale or the Disney adaptation. Disability must appear in one of the versions to be included within the sample. Also, all Disney adaptations needed to be made by Walt Disney or by the Disney Corporation. In

1996 Disney acquired the distribution rights for Studio Ghibli films (D'Anastasio, 2017), these films were not created by Disney, but have been considered Disney films. Due to this, I excluded the Studio Ghibli film *Ponyo* (2009), which is an adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. Since *Ponyo* (2009) was created by Studio Ghibli and not Disney, despite its connection, has been excluded from the sample.

Research Paradigms

For this study, I used three related but different paradigms that influenced my research and my analysis. The paradigms are Disability Studies, Feminism, and Feminist Disability Studies. To start with an understanding of disability and fairy tales, there needs to be a grasp of what these terms and paradigms are.

Disability Studies

Disability studies scholars want people to think of disability not as absolute categories but as a descriptive term that is very unstable (Schmiesing, 2014, p. 4). Disability is defined as "any restrictions or inability to perform an activity in a manner or within a range considered to be normal" (Titchkosky, 2013, p. 15). Normal is the socially constructed expectations for people within a particular society (Titchkosky, 2013, p. 20). Lennard Davis (1995) states that "normal people" tend to think of disability as clearly defined physical or mental issues such as being blind, deaf or intellectually deficient (p. 7-8). The issue is that disability, legally, is quite broadly defined, meaning that disability also includes diseases such as cancer or AIDS, health issues such as heart conditions or

respiratory issues, learning disabilities, and mental health issues to name but a few

(Davis, 1995, p. 8). Disability is not merely something one is born with but can be

acquired, under the right conditions (Davis, 1995, p. 8).

Disability has a temporary nature applied to it. Crip-time is about conceptualizing

disability in terms of temporal terms (Kafer, 2013, p. 25). The medical community has

often described disability in terms of time when describing disability as chronic,

intermittent, duration, frequency, and projection of future occurrences (Kafer, 2013, p.

25). There is also the use of terms "acquired" or "congenital," which attribute time to

disability and disease (Kafer, 2013, p. 25). This means that disability is more than an

impairment and physical embodiment. This means that disability is a social construction

and not a biological fact (Wendell, 2010, p. 338). Whereas impairment an a biological

fact is rooted in any loss or abnormality of anatomic, physiological or psychological

functioning (Wendell, 2010, p. 338).

It is important to understand that any disability that appears in either literary texts or

within films can take on many forms. As consumers of cultural products such as literature

or films, we often think of disability representations within a very narrow set of criteria

such as physical disabilities. These representations are often stereotypical and raise issues

over which bodies are disabled or not. In terms of film and literature, the authors or

filmmakers are not always concerned with accurate depictions of people with disabilities

and create either positive or negative representations. Disability scholars often offer an

analysis of "how and why certain definitions are constructed and maintained" (Shildrick,

2012). To be clear disability studies is about showing how disability is not merely bodily

impairment but related to larger issues such as power, citizenship, and social construction

of normal (Hall, 2011, p. 1).

Literature on disability representations focuses on disability as a narrative device.

Mitchell and Snyder (2013) note that disability use in literature leans on representational

power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight (p. 224). The use of disability within

narratives occurs first as a feature of characterizations and secondly as an opportunistic

metaphorical device (Mitchell & Snyder, 2013, p. 222). Loftus noted in her blog that

when disability is used within literature, popular culture and the media that it is used as a

character device and not a reflection on society's feelings about disability (Lofus, 2017).

If this is true, can representations of disabilities be separate from cultural feelings about

disability and people with disabilities? Disability is used as a metaphorical device which

marks a character as distinctive and worthy of a tale (Mitchell & Snyder, 2013, p. 232).

The value of disabled characters exists in being an object of deviance that can be

"repaired" or "overcome" to achieve some normalcy (Mitchell & Snyder, 2013, p. 227).

This raises the question of whether or not the use of disability within fairy tales carries a

message about how disability is understood or perceived within Western Society.

Some of the literature noted how disability within fairy tales was used to relay morals

and lessons. "Narratives not only use physical ability or beauty to accentuate a

character's moral virtue or other positive traits but also employ physical impairments as a

mark that signifies evildoers" (Schmiesing, 2014, p. 1). Much of the literature I read on

disability and fairy tales focused on Grimm's fairy tales. Zascavage (2014) notes that

Grimm's characters who mistreat the heroine by exploitation are punished in what is

presented as justifiable revenge (p. 158). The literature notes how there is a relationship

between morals and power. Close readings of fairy tales, such as "The Little Mermaid",

reveal the way that the bodies of characters are deemed to be "malleable and ambiguous

canvas" for the depiction of power and social morals (Yamato, 2017, p. 296). Fairy tales

tend to conform to social order and hierarchy of the real world by teaching desirable

thoughts and acts through the narratives (Yenika-Agbaw, 2011, p. 92). Barnes and

Mercer (2003) claim that disability has been exploited as a source of "entertainment" and

to stir up the emotions and fears of the non-disabled population (p. 91). By presenting

disability as a punishment for immoral behaviours disability is being used to stir up those

fears and emotions. The threat of disability is used to keep the non-disabled population

from acting outside of social norms or behaving immorally.

The literature focuses on how the disabled bodies are marked as "other". Zascavage

(2014) states that readers of fairy tales witness both justice and injustice in the narratives

with the celebrations of "Simpleton's triumphs, modesty, ethical posture, and charitable

acts" (p. 163). For characters that are "othered" in fairy tales they can be "victimized,

exploited, and harmed with little remorse" within the narrative (Zascavage, 2014, p. 163).

This is discussed in the literature using examples from stories such as "Cinderella",

"Rapunzel" (Zascavage, 2014) and "The Little Mermaid" (Yamato, 2017) to name a few.

Schmiesing (2014) argues that by looking at the entire collection of Grimm's fairy tales

that the sheer number of tales using disability, deformity, and disease suggests that able-

bodiedness is the ideal (p. 18). Able-bodiedness is depicted within fairy tales as an ideal

state that can only be realized through a "magical reality" (Schmiesing, 2014, p. 18).

This means that the presentation of disability within the fairy tales is used to highlight the "otherness" of people with disabilities.

Feminism

Feminism is very similar to disability studies. Feminism is defined as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks, 2000, p. 1). Similar to disability studies, the feminist theory attempts to challenge how bodies and identities are understood. Feminism is about engaging in alternative ways of thinking about research and understanding that there is no one truth or unchanging social reality (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 13). Feminist theory wants to "show how gender is irreducible to biological sex" (Hall, 2011, p. 1). Feminism is not about men being the enemy but naming sexism as the problem (hooks, 2000, p. 1). Since sexism is the problem, the issue is then about empowering and fighting against the societal structures that place women at a disadvantage.

Presumed assumption about normative gender and sexuality determine in advance what qualifies to be considered human and livable (Bradford, 2012, p. 172). By the end of the nineteenth-century fairy tales functioned as a method to "reinforce the patriarchal symbolic order based upon rigid notions of sexuality and gender" (Zipes, 1995, p. 27). In Andrea Dworkin's 1974 book *Woman Hating* she argues that within fairy tales there is a paradigm of "male being-in-the-world, female evil, and female victimization" (p. 46). Haase (2004) claims that the tales of "Little Red Riding Hood", "Cinderella", and "Sleeping Beauty" train women to be rape victims (p. 3). Charles Perrault and Grimm

Brothers transformed "Little Red Riding Hood" from being about a young woman's social initiation into a narrative about a young woman being raped and bearing the responsibility (Haase, 2004, p. 9). The changes in this narrative highlight male projection in fairy tales that reflects their fear of women's sexuality and power (Haase, 2004, p. 9).

Dworkin discussion of fairy tales focused on the stories "Snow White" and "Sleeping Beauty" as examples of the embodiment of passive beauty (p. 42). Female characters in fairy tales often wait while the male characters goes to perform an action (Smith, 2015, p. 427). This behaviour of passivity is embodied in many female characters in fairy tales such as "Rapunzel" or "Sleeping Beauty". Dworkin (1974) claims when a female character is "good" they are either dead or passive while alive (p. 41). A "good" female character is good natured, obedient, domestic, weak, waiting to be rescued by a male character who will offer romance and marriage (Sturtevant, 2012, p. 87).

Fairy tales historically have been used as an acceptable way to re-inscribe traditional gender roles and values (Smith, 2015, p. 428). Rowe (1979) argues that fairy tale romance "glosses" over how heroines are unable to act independently or self-assertively thus they rely on external agents to rescue them (p. 239). These external agents that rescue the passive heroine are fairies, "dwarfs", and princes to name a few. The use of romance often hides the rampant sexist undertones in fairy tales.

It was through the efforts of the second-wave feminists who challenged the gender-stereotypes that enabled the hegemonic masculinity to become open the challenge (Smith, 2015). Feminist writers, such as Angela Carter or Garrison Kellor, created fairy tales versions that deconstructed the happily-ever-after, and raising new perspectives for the

well-known fairy tales narratives. Carter's work is often misunderstood as anti-feminist but it allows the reader to break down dichotomy and stereotypes around gender, sexuality, agency, and the happily-ever-after (Snowden, 2010, p. 166).

The gender paradigms found in fairy tales are also in Disney fairy tale adaptations. Disney films sell the ideology that women can be strong, warriors, powerful, liberal feminists, rich and magical so long that they ultimately conform to social norms of heterosexual marriage (Snowden, 2010, p. 162-163). The female role is for Disney films heterosexual marriage. Many female characters in Disney film ultimately become subordinate to heroic male characters and passive beauties (Sturtevant, 2011, p. 87). Disney heroines adhered to the template set by fairy tales of female victimization and passivity (Bell, 1995, p. 112). In Disney's *Cinderella* (1950), Cinderella is passive accepting the cruelty of her step-mother and step-sisters while waiting for someone to save her. The "traditional" gender roles in fairy tales and Disney films show the patriarchal power with entrenched notions of men's power over women and children (Smith, 2015, p. 427). In *The Little Mermaid* (1989), Ariel has male power and control around her with her father King Triton, Sebastian, Prince Eric, and Grimsby they attempted to control her speech, actions and appearance.

Disney took female fairy tale antagonistic characters and transformed them into "femme fatale" (Bell, 1995, p. 116). Women that are sexual subjects, deadly, and doomed to a bad end (Bell, 1995, p. 116). This transformation constructs the message of the potential dangers and evils of women's sexuality and power (Bell, 1995, p. 116-118). Disney's Ursula from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) was modeled after *Sunset Boulevard's*

"femme fatale" Norma Desmond (Bell, 1995, p. 116). The character tropes females who act are "evil" and the feminine ideal of passive beauty is still strong within Disney fairy tale adaptations. Fairy tales and Disney fairy tales are riddled with depictions of girls and women saddled with notions about gender and sexuality (Bradford, 2012, p. 172). These representations promote reproductive heteronormatively as the "norm" by combining it with symbolic value (Bradford, 2012, p. 173).

Feminist Disability Studies

Feminist Disability Studies combines both disability studies and Feminist theory to aid in filling the gaps each leaves. Garland-Thomson (2013) contends that all too often, feminist theories fail to recognize disability in their list of identities often because feminist scholars are unfamiliar with disability studies perspective (p. 333).

By combining both Feminism and Disability Studies, this will bring the best of both into Feminist Disability theory. Feminist Disability theory uses five fundamental premises of critical theory (Garland-Thompson, 2013, 336-337). The first premise is that representation structures reality (Garland-Thompson, 2013, p. 337), meaning that representations do not exist in a vacuum but potentially impact social reality. Second, "margins define the center" (Garland-Thompson, 2013, p. 337), which means that people on the margins can only move so far, which defines the centre or those with power and influence. Third, power relationships are revealed through gender or disability (Garland-Thompson, 2013, p. 337). Fourth, there are multiple identities, and they are unstable (Garland-Thompson, 2013, p. 337). Identity categories of gender, race, ethnicity, ability,

sexuality, and class intersect (Hall, 2011, p. 15). Intersectionality is the idea that overlapping socially oppressed identities (Siebers, 2013, p. 291) are fluid and continually changing. Disability and gender often intersect as both are marginalized in media, literature, and within western civilization. Solis (2007) identifies that by taking a "queercrip" reading of "Snow What and the Seven Dwarfs" picture books that uncovers the heterosexist and ableist assumptions imbedded within the tales that implied disability and homosexuality stem from personal misfortunes due to their body issues (p. 117). The various retellings of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" marks how multilayered these narratives are with patriarchy, sexism, ableism, and heterosexist biases such as the assumption that women are heterosexual (Solis, 2007, 127-129). Disability, like gender, is everywhere, so I believe that embracing disability and feminism in my analysis enriches my understanding of representations found within both the nineteenth-century fairy tales and Disney's adaptations.

Literature Review

History of Fairy Tales

Fairy tales have an interesting history. Fairy tales is a term that is rather loosely used (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). The term fairy tales seems to imply that the tales are about fairies. By the nineteenth century, many of the fairy tales evolved into unbelievable stories some of which involve fairies most with magical and unearthly power (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). Fairy tales as we know them are a type of folk tale known as

magical tales (Zipes, 1995, p. 22). Folk tales gradually re-categorized as legends, myths, fables, comical anecdotes, and fairy tales (Zipes, 1995, p. 22).

The eighteenth century saw a decline in folk tales as many of the Enlightenment thinkers considered folk literature to be filled with superstition, irrational beliefs and the supernatural (Peppard, 1971, p. 41). This decline in folk literature recovered in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the rise of Romanticism and Romantic literature (Peppard, 1971, p. 43). Romantic writers dominated the literary scene (Peppard, 1971, p. 43). Romanticists loved the unsophisticated, simple, natural, and occasionally corny literature, leading to an appreciation of folklore and fairy tales (Peppard, 1971, p. 43). The rise of Romantic literature enabled Grimm's fairy tales to achieve the popularity they did in the early nineteenth century (Peppard, 1971, p. 43). In early nineteenth century, the Brothers Grimm set out to celebrate German culture through folk tales (Zipes, 1995, p. 23). After the success of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, more authors appeared writing new versions of fairy tales and folklore throughout the nineteenth century.

Folk tales mean tales of the folk or "common people" (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). Historically "common people" were generally illiterate (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). Their stories were often transmitted orally from generation to generation (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). These tales were passed for generations by word of mouth and eventually were recorded by individuals such as Charles Perrault (1628-1703) Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785-1863; 1786-1859), and Andrew Lang (1844-1912) to name a few (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). Through the act of writing fairy tales down, it was a

violation of the communal nature of the folk tale by making literacy the only access to these fairy tales (Zipes, 1995, p. 24). The fairy tales that were originally orally told and remembered, but by writing them down, they now required literacy skills that many people of the lower classes did not have. By writing fairy tales meant that fairy tales were only accessible for the educated members of the upper class of society (Zipes, 1995, p. 24). The written tales became known as fairy tales, but the authors, such as Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, were not the creators of those tales (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). For most folk tales there is no information on how long they have existed (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 12). This has to do with the nature of oral storytelling. The tales were passed from generation to generation without being written down, alterations possibly happening with each new oral telling. It is entirely possible that the tales we now have are very different from the original, but there is no way to know for sure. Hans Christian Andersen is exceptional among writers of fairy tales. Andersen took inspiration from the folklorists that came before him but instead wrote new stories which had the same feel as the ones that came before (Wullschlager, 2001, p. 3). Many of the Hans Christian Andersen stories are self-portraits (Wullschlager, 2001, p. 3). These were the first fairy tales written of which we know the author and dates. Today his fairy tales are considered equal to those that came before and culturally hold equal significance.

Nineteenth-Century Literature and Influences on Literature

The late-eighteenth century saw the rise of Romantic literature in Europe. Nineteenth-century literature shows the rejection of idealized perfected imitations of nature while

exploring the multiplicity of human thoughts and experiences (Bradshaw and Joshua, 2016, p. 2). This led to nineteenth-century literature being highly symbolic. Bradshaw and Joshua (2016) claim that Romantic-era and Victorian-era writers often exploited the use of impairments within narratives for their symbolic potential (p. 10). The symbolic use of impairment and disability appears to be centred around creating conflict and drama (Bradshaw and Joshua, 2016, p. 10). In terms of narratives, disability is often used to envelop characters in "otherness" (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 10). Traditionally, within literature, such as fairy tales, people with disabilities are portrayed in ten ways (Franks, 2001, p. 244): "Briefly, disabled people are characterized as pathetic, sinister, laughable, non-sexual, and incapable of full participation. They are burdens, victims, and their own worst enemies - or conversely, they tend to develop unusual compensatory talents" (Franks, 2001, p. 244-245).

   In nineteenth-century literature, many disabled characters seem to follow these characterizations. Characters with disabilities are represented as fools, criminals, tragic figure and loners. Nineteenth-century literature invited the reader to explore disability and its social meaning (Holmes, 2004, p. 31). These characterizations were influenced, in part by social and political changes. This was due in part to the way disability and impairment were presented in the literature. Each of the ten themes reflects a highly negative and stereotyping image, which implies that disability is an individual problem rather than a social problem (Franks, 2001). This was not unusual as disability within nineteenth-century literature is often framed as an individual issue.

The use of disability in literature during the nineteenth century was influenced by politics, religion, industrialization, and institutionalization. In terms of political influences none are greater than war. During the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century there was a significant amount of war and conquest within Europe. During the nineteenth century there were significant changes socially, politically and culturally and these influences impacted the literature produced during that time.

At the end of the eighteenth century the Western world saw a lot of changes through political conflict such as with the French Revolution. Throughout the nineteenth century the conflicts and political issues started in the eighteenth century continued. Many nations in the nineteenth century saw changes in their political rule. This is most notably marked with Napoleon. Germany was impacted by the Napoleonic Wars and saw French rule come to portions of Germany (Zipes, 1988, p. 6). For authors and folklorists Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm living in Germany, this war and conflict impacted their lives. French rule created a strong desire for many Germans, including the Grimm brothers, for the unification of Germany (Zipes, 1988, p. 6). German patriots at the end of French rule rose up in the War of Liberation, raising the hope for a Germany united under one constitutional rule (Peppard, 1971, p. 124). All of this conflict and war influenced writers and the literature produced at this time. All the war and conflict brought a lot of death, disease, dismemberment, and disability (Stiker, 1997, Zipes, 1988). There were many returning soldiers with acquired impairments. Many of the fairy tales written or adapted in the early part of the nineteenth century reflected that along with the death of one or both parents in the narrative. The relatively high percent of solider stories with authors

such as the Brothers Grimm, was directly related to the Napoleonic Wars and the huge

increase of soldiering as a profession in Europe (Zipes, 1988, p. 54).

    In the nineteenth century, literary texts often had religious connotations. This is due to

that fact that in the nineteenth century the Christian religion was very powerful. Because

of this many viewed gender and disability in light of religious teaching and texts. Good

health and being able-bodied was associated with goodness, virtue, and seen as a gift

from God (Schmiesing, 2014, p. 19). This meant that illness and disability are willed by

God as either a trial or punishment (Schmiesing, 2014, p. 19). In the Western Christian

world, the disabled body was often considered as physical punishment for sin (Clare,

2009, p. 97). Stiker (1997) noted in terms of The Bible disability is a sign from God that

an individual or their family have sinned (p. 27). This turned the disabled body into a

symbolic representation of sin (Stiker, 1997, p. 27). The fault was man who had sinned

and been punished for those sins (Stiker, 1997, p. 27). This placed the blame for one's

being disabled back on the disabled person making it an individual issue. This notion of

disability as a consequence of sin dates back to medieval literature, but by the nineteenth

century, it was still understood as a truth (Scull, 2015, p. 80).

    The other aspect of the religious perspective is the notion of disability and impairment

as a trial. This is the notion that many do not focus on as much, but I think that it is

important. Sections of The Bible show how disability and illness are a trial from God to

test one's faith. "Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert

these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart,

whether or not you would keep his commandments" (Deuteronomy 8:2, New

International Version). These tests and trials would appear in many forms from requests

for sacrifices, infertility, long journeys, blindness, deafness and so on. In the case of

trials, the disablement was temporary and God would cure the person once they passed

their trial. It was God's choice as to who was punished and or tested as well of the forms

these took. The biographies of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, as well as Hans Christian

Andersen, denote the strong Christian influences on their lives and writing (Zipes, 1988;

Reumert, 1971). Due to this, their fairy tales often took a strong moralist and religious

tone (Yenika-Agbaw, 2011; Zipes, 1988). Many of the Grimm Brothers versions of the

fairy tales involved adding religion and disability (Peppard, 1971, p. 58). The brothers

also removed of anything from their fairy tales that they found to be obscene or mildly

erotic (Peppard, 1971, p. 58).

The nineteenth century also brought about a shift in how many European nations

viewed people with disabilities. Bradshaw and Joshua (2016) claimed that disability is a

product of industrialization and had impacted literature in the nineteenth-century (p. 12).

Oliver identifies that the attitude towards people with impairments was culturally related

and was not an accident (Oliver, 1990, p. 28). The process of disablement is linked to

industrialization; the shift in work from the home into factories caused problems for the

disabled (Oliver, 1990, p. 28). This shift in the workplace excluded disabled people from

the workforce creating social problems for disabled people (Oliver, 1990, p. 28). The

pace and structure of work shifting consequently excluded people with disabilities

denying them the right to work.

This division is relatively new in human history and arguably it arose with the rise of industrialization within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Industrialization brought the ideology of individualism and normalcy. With the rise of industrialization in the nineteenth century, the concept of "normal" arose. Davis (2010) notes how "normalcy is constructed to create the 'problem' of the disabled person" (p. 3). This is not a natural condition but the feature of a certain type of society (Davis, 2010, p. 3). The concept of "normal" is used to create a hierarchy within society where those with disabilities are deemed less than those without disabilities. The line between "normal" and "other" is carefully constructed to maintain those divisions (Clare, 2009, p. 72). The rise of capitalism brought about the ideology of individualism and the belief that disability is an individual problem (Bradshaw and Joshua, 2016, p. 12). Davis (1995) notes how the changes in the production of work lead to the concept of mechanical perfection of the human body (p. 87). Interestingly the working conditions and the long hours lead to the disablement of many workers (Davis, 1995, p. 87).

The shift to industrialization meant that many disabled people were poor and needing assistance. By the nineteenth century, the changes in work excluding people with disabilities from the workforce required a mechanism for separating the "deserving poor" from the "undeserving poor" (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 195). Industrialization focused on work and production and those with disabled bodies were often perceived of as incapable of work and thus the deserving poor (Davis, 1995, p. 86-87). Many people with disabilities found themselves being incarcerated in workhouses and asylums (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 199). This was a way of sorting out those unwilling to

work from those "unable" to work (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 199). This meant that there were now large numbers of disabled people being institutionalized. Many parts of the Western World industrialized at different times, however this does not mean that the influences of industrialization in other nations such as Britain did not have an influence. These influences of war, politics, religion, industrialization, and institutionalization impacted authors and folklorists throughout the nineteenth century.

Adaptations

Representations come in many forms: words written and spoken, gestures, pictures, photographs and film images (Currie, 2008, p. 2). Representation is simply anything we do or use can become a description or portrayal of someone or something (Currie, 2008, p. 2). Film is capable of conveying messages by images and relatively few words; it also is a medium with little tolerance for complexity or irony (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 1). Adaptation is defined as to "adapt" is to adjust, alter, or make suitable, which can be accomplished any number of ways (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7). Adaptation is both the processes and the end product (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7) that holds up the source text as the goal (Leitch, 2007, p. 93). Hutcheon (2006) argues that adaptations are defined by three interrelated perspectives; formal entity, process of creation, and process of reception (p. 8). First formal entity or product refers to the transposition of a particular work or works, by changing the medium, genre or frame of the source text (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7). Second the process of creation is the act of interpretation and creation this is known as both appropriation and salvaging (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8). Finally, process of reception

which is the "extended intertextual engagement with the adaptations" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8). Audiences experience adaptations as adaptations though the memories of other works that resonate (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8). Robert Stam (2000) identifies that the notion of fidelity is suggesting that an adaptation should be faithful the essence of the medium of expression (p. 58). It should be faithful to what makes the adaptation both recognizable to its source and nostalgic to audiences. In 2019 adaptations are everywhere. They are on television, movie screens, theatres, novels, comic books, theme parks and even video games (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 2). Many times we do not realize that what we are watching, playing or reading are adaptations.

Each adaptor relates to the source material differently, so each adaptation has made alterations to the source material. The adapter uses many of the same tools as traditional storytellers (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3). The adapter adjusts, alters, or changes the source material to make it suitable (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7). This is often seen in the adaptation of literature to film. When considering adaptations it is important to think about "medium-specificity" which assumes that each medium has things it is "good at" and "bad at" other things (Stam, 2000, p. 58). When it comes to fairy tales and novels has a single material for expression namely the written words on a page (Stam, 2000, p. 59). Stam (2000) states film has five tracks for expression: moving photographic image, phonetic sound, music, background noises, and written materials (p. 59). This is a move from telling with the written word into showing by providing visual representations (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 38). This move has many challenges in transitioning written descriptions, narrations, and represented thoughts into speech, sound and visual images (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 39-40).

When analyzing the literary fairy tales to the Disney film adaptations means taking into account this material difference. The nineteenth-century fairy tales used the written word to describe characters, and their traits such as gender and abilities. Disney films took the written tales and turn them into visually and auditory representations. This meant Disney needed to create visual representations of character traits of gender, abilities, sound, and appearance based upon the written descriptions in the fairy tales. Academically there is significant criticism of adaptations. Many critics claim popular adaptations are secondary, derivative, or "culturally inferior" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 2). The relationship to the "source" or prior text material is overt and often openly admitted (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3). The literature tends to hold superiority over any adaption of it due to its seniority as an art form (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3). When many adaptations are analyzed they are critiqued in terms of fidelity or how faithful a text is to its source material (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7). When looking at the adaptations of fairy tales fidelity is not vital due to how short many of these stories are. When it comes to fairy tale adaptations, the most interesting ones interpret the source text freely with a modern twist. Interesting interpretations of fairy tales allows new audiences to engage with an old tale approached in a new way. The length of the source material in the case of fairy tales requires embellishment to make a watchable film. Hutcheon (2006) notes, and I agree, that there is something very appealing about adaptations as adaptations (p. 4). "Adaptation as an adaptation" means understanding and acknowledging that while adaptations are autonomous work but is haunted by the source text (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 6). The appeal of adaptation comes from nostalgia, a recognizable work with a creative interpretation making it appear new. The

adaptation of the fairy tale "Little Briar Rose" by Disney *Maleficent* (2014) took creative

license in changing the perspective of the narrative to Maleficent while maintaining

identifiable reference to the tale.

Disney and Fairy Tales

Many of us growing up knew and probably watched the Wonderful World of Disney.

I am not going to go into detail about Walt Disney, however I do want to provide some

context for the Disney Corporation and the use of fairy tales and disability within Disney

films. Walter Elias Disney was born in December 5, 1901 in Chicago (Bryman, 1995, p.

3). In 1922 Walt Disney produced Laugh-O-Gram animated cartoons while working for

the Film Ad Company (Lee & Madej, 2012, p. 19). Disney was influenced by the work of

Paul Terry, a New York animator who had released a set of animations based on Aesop's

Fables (Lee & Madej, 2012, p. 19). Inspired by this Walt Disney produced the Laugh-O-

Gram animated cartoons based upon fairy tales but with a modern twist (Lee & Madej,

2012, p. 19). By adding this modern twist to fairy tales, Disney created the basis for all

future Disney fairy tale adaptations.

Starting in 1929, Disney experimented with music, sounds, and animation to produce

the *Silly Symphonies* short films (Wasko, 1999, p. 11). This series produced more fairy

tales with modern spins such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *The Three Little Pigs*.

Throughout all of this Disney was mainly concerned with "entertaining people, in

bringing pleasure, particularly laughter, to others" (Wasko, 1999, p. 13). His concern was

with audience enjoyment while putting modern twists to the stories.   With the success of

Silly Symphonies, Walt Disney decided to embark on the ambitious project of a full-length feature film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was released in theatres in 1937 (Wasko, 1999, p. 14). Walt Disney reworked the Brothers Grimm fairy tales *Little Snow White* and wholly altered it to suit his tastes and beliefs (Zipes, 1995, p. 36). Before the release *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was known as "Disney's Folly", but upon the release of the film it was a critical and financial success, even winning an Academy Award in 1939 (Wasko, 1999, p. 14). During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many Americans sought out things that gave them hope, escape, and feeling solidarity during their fight for survival (Zipes, 1995, p. 35). For many people, they found this in Disney films like *Silly Symphonies* and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Zipes, 1995, p. 35). The 1930s for most Americans was a personally and financially tough time leaving many feeling they needed the escape which Disney films provided.

In the 1930s, Walt and Roy Disney went to Europe with their wives. During this two-month trip, Walt collected three hundred and thirty-five books (Walt Disney Productions, 2016). These books became the Disney resource library housing many wonderful pieces of literature including a large collection of art books and fairy tales (Walt Disney Productions, 2016). This has provided the Disney Company the resources for many potential film adaptations.

Following the success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Disney produced more film adaptations such as *Mickey and the Beanstalk* (1947), *Cinderella* (1950), and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) with many more films in the works. Walt Disney identified with fairy tales because he felt they reflected his struggles in his life from his poor upbringing,

being spurned by love, and being exploited (Zipes, 1995, p. 31). Walt Disney and his

company used and still use classic folk and fairy tales as the source material for their

films (Wasko, 1999, p. 113). Despite the dark and violent themes found in many

nineteenth-century fairy tales, the tales are considered to be safe, moral, and entirely

suitable for the naive and innocent (Schickel, 1997, p. 207). This meant that they were

perfect for Disney to reformat and use in his animation. The stories and characters would

go through a process of Disneyfication, which often involved sanitization and

Americanization in order to make them a Disney fairy tale (Wasko, 1999, p. 113).

Walt Disney continued to be involved in the production of Disney films until this

death on December 15, 1966 (Wasko, 1999, p. 24). After Walt Disney's death, his

brother Roy took control of the company ensuring continued financial success (Schickel,

1997, p. 16). However, the death of its founder, Walt Disney, created a void in both the

Disney Company and in the hearts of the public (Schickel, 1997, p. 16). Luckily for the

company before Walt's death, he had set a ten-year plan allowing the company to

continue on (Schickel, 1997, p. 17). Post Walt Disney the company went on to produce

fifteen more fairy tale adaptations. To date, there are now twenty-nine fairy tale film

adaptations. Many of the Disney adaptations of fairy tales are better known than the

"original" or literary version (Zipes, 1995, p. 21). The way Disney as a company

constructs their fairy tales has cast a spell over many in North America so that when we

think of fairy tales, we think of the Disney version.

Over the history of the Disney company there have been many literary adaptations

such as *Pinocchio* (1940), *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), *Robin Hood* (1973), and *The*

Hunchback of Notre Dame (1996), to list a few. Considering many of the literary

adaptations Disney has produced over the years there has been some controversy in terms

of gender, sexuality, race and cultural appropriation. The most notable controversy has

been with the stereotyping of Arabs in the film *Aladdin* (1992) (Norden, 2014, p. 171).

In addition to the Disney adaptations of fairy tales. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996)

raised a lot of controversy over disability representations. The film alters Hugo's story

into a Beauty and the Beast type of narrative (Norden, 2014, p. 170). Film Critics and

media watchdog groups were quick to pick up on how *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

*(*1996) trivialized disability issues and portrayed Quasimodo in a stereotypical manner

(Norden, 2014, p.168). The representation of Quasimodo as childlike and unable to

maintain mature relationships contributed to the infantilization many disabled people

experience (Norden, 2014, p. 168-171). Disney vigorously rejected proposals to

collaborate with disability experts for the film (Norden, 2014, p. 171), which was

problematic considering the film. Disney films and their representations for minority

groups such as people with disabilities have the potential be harmful, divisive and

reinforce negative stereotypes, such as with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame (*1996)

(Norden, 2014, p. 173). Considering the backlash from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

*(*1996) Disney was reluctant to revisit disability representation at least in the case of main

characters, until their 2013 film *Frozen* (Resene, 2017, p. 2).   Disney has a history in

terms of fairy tales and disability that has not been explored especially in terms Disney's

representations compared to the source text.

Results

Before discussing the results of this study, I want to be clear that these results do not reflect the role of disability in all nineteenth-century fairy tales or all Disney films. These results reflect the role of disability in the nineteenth-century fairy tales that were adapted by Disney. These results rely upon interpretation, meaning that what I perceived as a disability by my definition of disability may not be perceived the same way by others. The definition of disability is broader than many people traditionally think. The instability of the term "disability" was problematic at times in figuring out if I identified a character as being implied or labelled as disabled.

In my results, I do not discuss visual or cinematic elements in the films. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, with the methodology being content analysis it is not concerned with this type of analysis. Secondly, when comparing two different mediums such as literature and film, it is a challenge for comparison sake. Literature is written; thus there is no visual representation; this would mean I would discuss the visual representation in the Disney films while ignoring any potential comparison potential with the literature. Simply this just was something I did not want to do.

There Once were….Disabled Characters.

When it comes to fairy tales we are all aware of many of our favourite characters. In any story we are immediately brought in by a character that is worthy of a story or narrative. When it comes to nineteenth-century fairy tales my favourite characters have been "The Little Mermaid", the tin soldier in "The Steadfast Tin Soldier" and the

Brothers Grimm's "Cinderella". As a child these fairy tales seemed to connect with me.

As for the Disney adaptations my favourites were the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast* and

Flounder in *The Little Mermaid*. As a disabled adult I realize now that this could be due

to multiple reasons. I will first begin with the nineteenth-century data and then discuss

the Disney adaptations. In terms of the demographical data for the characters with

disabilities I have results separated by nineteenth-century fairy tales and Disney

adaptations.

I started by looking at the nineteenth-century distribution of disabled characters.

While reading the nineteenth-century fairy tales in my sample I noticed that there were

many disabled characters. The following represents the finding for nineteenth-century

fairy tales data taken in this study. From the sample of twenty-eight nineteenth-century

fairy tales, there were sixty-five occurrences of characters labelled or implied as disabled.

Figure 1: Line Graph showing Characters with Disabilities in Nineteenth-Century Fairy Tales by Decades
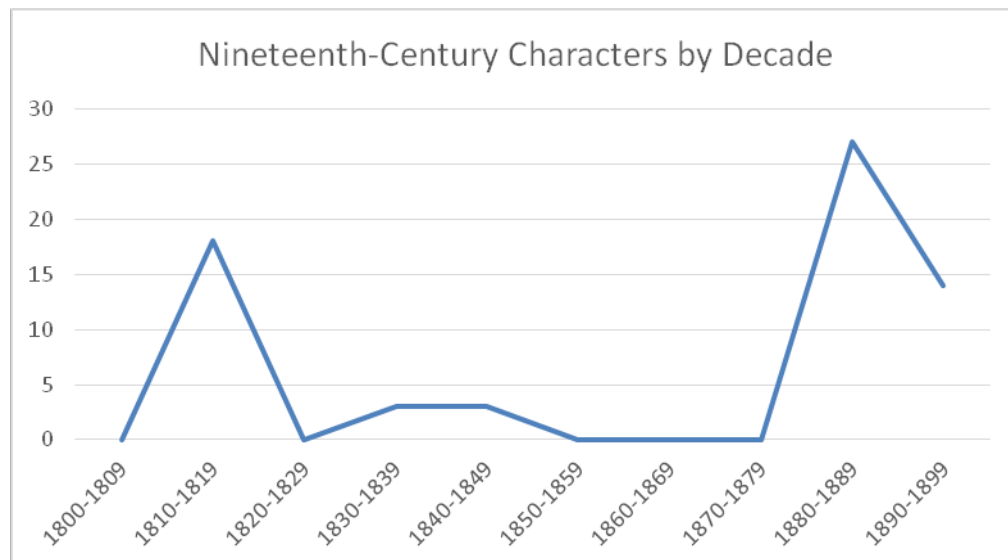
Figure 1 highlights the frequency of disabled characters from 1800-1899. There

are two distinct peaks one in the 1810s and the other in 1880-1899. Considering the

frequency of disability within nineteenth-century fairy tales, next I looked at the type or

disability condition the characters had in the fairy tales. Of all the disabled characters in

the nineteenth-century fairy tales 78.46 percent are male and only 21.54 percent are

female. The preponderance of male disabled characters in nineteenth-century fairy tales

marks how undesirable or unacceptable it was for women to be disabled.

Table 1: *Disability Conditions applied to Nineteenth-Century Fairy Tale Characters*

Disability	Female	Male	Total
Sensory	2	2	4
Physical	7	43	50
Mental Health	1	2	3
Communicative or Speech	0	0	0
Emotional	0	0	0
Cognitive	0	0	0
Invisible	0	0	0
Health issues /Disease	2	0	2
Multiple	2	4	6
Total	14	51	65

As table 1 highlights for the nineteenth-century fairy tales in this sample the of

characters have physical disabilities. There are fifty characters with physical disabilities

or 76.92 percent. Of all the characters with physical disabilities the majority are male

characters forty-three or 66.15 percent. Interestingly in term of sensory disabilities there

are equal male and female characters. In the sample there were no characters with

communicative or speech impairments, emotional disabilities, cognitive impairment or

invisible disabilities such as learning disabilities.

With the knowledge of the form and types of disabilities that appeared within nineteenth-century fairy tales it was important to know what character roles disabled characters held. This is important in considering the type of roles disabled male or females have within nineteenth-century fairy tales.

Table 2: *Nineteenth-Century Distribution of Disabled Characters by Character Roles*

Character Role	Female Disabled Characters	Male Disabled Characters	Total Disabled Characters
antagonist/ villains	4	24	28
protagonist/ heroes	1	6	7
false hero	2	1	3
helper	1	15	16
person sought for	2	3	5
magical agent	2	0	2
supporting or minor	2	2	4
Total	14	51	65

Table 2 shows the majority of the disabled characters in the nineteenth-century fairy tales fall within the roles of antagonist/villain**.** I use the term antagonist to refer to characters that are adverse or hostile towards the hero or heroine of the tales whereas villains are often those that purposely do evil. It is important here to understand that both character roles oppose the protagonist but are different. Most of the antagonist/villain characters were male with twenty-four characters to four female characters. The second largest role for disabled characters falling within the role of helper. These characters seek to aid or help the main character. Table 2 shows how there are sixteen disabled helpers in nineteenth-century fairy tales fifteen of which are male and one female character. This creates the image that there are many disabled people that either are opposed to or helpers of heroes / protagonists.

The following represents the finding for Disney fairy tales adaptations data taken in this study. From the sample of twenty-nine Disney films, there were ninety-four occurrences of characters labelled or implied as disabled. The Disney adaptations occurrence of disabled character from 1920-2019 reveal a different frequency of disabled characters.

Figure 2: *Line Graph showing Characters with Disabilities in Disney Adaptations by Decades*
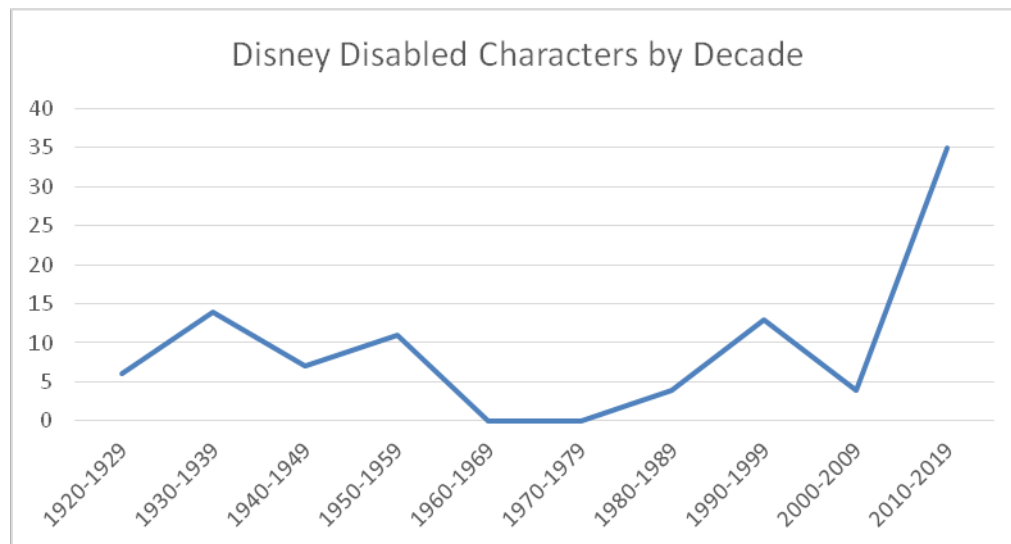
Figure 2 highlights the frequency of disabled characters in the Disney adaptations showing there are three smaller peaks and one large peak. The three smaller peak shows moderate appearance of disabled characters in the 1930s, 1950s, and the 1990s. The larger spike in the 2010s reveals a significant increase in disabled fairy tale characters in the adaptations. In the 2010s there are thirty-five characters with disabilities and this can be compared to the 2000s with nine characters or the 1990s with thirteen characters.

There are a greater number of characters with disabilities within Disney adaptations of fairy tales. From the results there are ninety-four disabled characters in

these adaptations. Of this sixty-eight are male characters or 72.34 percent, with only

twenty-six female characters or 27.66 percent.

Table 3: *Disability Conditions applied to Disney Characters*

Disability	Female	Male	Total
Sensory	3	1	4
Physical	4	24	28
Mental Health	5	20	25
Communicative or Speech	1	1	2
Emotional	1	0	1
Cognitive	0	14	14
Invisible	3	0	3
Health issues/Disease	8	2	10
Multiple	1	6	7
Total	26	68	94

Table 3 highlights that most characters with disabilities in the Disney adaptations

have physical disabilities. From the Disney adaptations there were twenty-eight

characters with physical disabilities and the majority of these characters are male with

twenty-four and there only being four female characters with physical disabilities. Within

the Disney adaptations, there are many characters with mental health issues. I found

twenty-five characters with some type of mental health issue and the majority of these

being male characters.

The other notable disabilities within the Disney adaptations are cognitive

disabilities, health issues/diseases, and characters with multiple disabilities.

With the knowledge of the various types of disability found within the Disney fairy tales

it was important to look at the character roles held by disabled characters.

Table 4: *Disney Fairy Tale Adaptations Distribution of Disabled Characters by Character Roles*

Character Role	Female Disabled Characters	Males Disabled Characters	Total Disabled Characters
antagonist/villains	7	17	24
protagonist/heroes	8	6	14
false hero	2	2	4
helper	0	22	22
person sought for	1	0	1
magical agent	2	2	4
supporting or minor	6	19	25
Total	26	68	94

As table 4 shows the majority of disabled characters within the Disney adaptations fall within the categories of supporting or minor characters with there being twenty-five, the majority of these characters being male with nineteen characters. The second character role with the most disabled characters is antagonist/villains with twenty-four characters and seventeen of which are male characters with only seven female characters. The category of helpers has twenty-two, all of which are all male characters for the Disney adaptations. There are no female disabled helpers. Interestingly there are more disabled female protagonist/heroes than males within the Disney adaptations.

When comparing the twenty-eight nineteenth-century fairy tales to the twenty-nine Disney adaptations there is a significant increase of disabled characters. In the nineteenth-century there were sixty-five disabled characters but in the Disney adaptations there are now ninety-four. This does not necessarily denote that these representations are stereotypical, negative, or positive. All this is means is that there is a significant increase

in disabled characters within the Disney adaptations than in the nineteenth-century fairy

tales.

Looking at the data there are some interesting findings in terms of disabled characters

from the nineteenth-century fairy tale versions and their Disney adaptations. Over the

entire nineteenth century there are two distinct periods with increased disabled fairy tale

characters. The first is the 1810s and the other is 1880 to the end of the nineteenth

century. The first spike has to do with the translation from one language into another, and

the other has to do with the increased visibility of disabled people. In the 1810s there

were eighteen characters labelled or implied as disabled. The German authors Jacob and

Wilhelm Grimm published their first book of fairy tales in 1812 and their second book in

1815 (Zipes, 1988, p. 6). Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were among the first to be interested

in the cultural and historical aspects of folk tales and not the potential of these tales

becoming children's literature (Hallett & Karasek, 1996, p. 14).

The next spike of characters labelled or implied as disabled was in 1880-1899.

The increase of disabled characters in the 1880s may be related to the publication of

translations. Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889) remarks on the use of the

English translations for many of the non-English fairy tales. Another possible reason

could be due to the rise in visibility of disabled people during the nineteenth-century due

to sideshows, war, and the Industrial Revolution. In the latter part of the nineteenth

century the Industrial Revolution had taken hold in Western civilization. The nineteenth

century also brought about a shift in how many European nations viewed people with

disabilities. Oliver identifies that the attitude towards people with impairments was

culturally related and was not accidental (Oliver, 1990, p. 28). In the nineteenth-century

more disabled characters appeared in fairy tales due to the increased visibility of disabled

people in society this was in part due to industrialization (Bradshaw & Joshua, 2016, p.

12). Literature of the nineteenth-century, such as fairy tales, were reflecting the social and

cultural attitudes of men, women, and disabled people to name a few. This reflection of

social attitudes meant that more disabled characters appeared within nineteenth-century

literature. In terms of nineteenth-century fairy tales, the increasing visibility of disabled

people within the social caused a cultural shift that increased disabled characters in

literature. This is especially true in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Industrialization took hold in various parts of Europe at different times, for example in

Germany Industrialization did not begin until the late 1860s or early 1870s (Harder,

1969, p. 79). This meant that the visibility of disabled characters in literature occurred

over time. The increased visibility of disabled people also had to do with an increase in

soldiering as a profession and the nineteenth-century's use of disability within art and

literature for its symbolic potential.

When it comes to the Disney adaptations it is a different matter altogether. I am

not sure why there is a very marked increase in disabled characters in the 2010s. One

explanation for the potential increase is the increase in film production with Disney

producing seven full-length feature films. While, I am not sure of the company's

rationale, it is a significant increase with thirty-five disabled characters. *Into the Woods*

(2014) attempted some fidelity with its nineteenth-century source texts but even so there

were choices that added disablement outside of the literary source material. The film

attempted some fidelity while connecting the fairy tales "Jack and the Beanstalk", "Rapunzel", "Cinderella", and "Little Red Riding Hood" all of the fairy tales are now connected to a tale about the baker and his wife. *Into the Woods* (2014) created three new disabled characters Jack from "Jack and the Beanstalk" now has an intellectual disability and the witch from "Rapunzel" has lost her ability to do magic.

When looking at the types of disability in the nineteenth-century fairy tales the majority are male characters with physical disabilities. Of these male characters with a disability many of them have the character role of antagonist/villain or helper. However looking at the data of the Disney adaptations there are many characters, mostly male again, with physical, mental health, and cognitive disabilities. The majority of disabled characters are in the role of supporting or minor characters. Similar to the nineteenth-century texts there is a large amount of disabled characters in the role of antagonist/villain or helper. Disney had disabled characters in the traditional roles of antagonist/villain or helper, but also added disabled characters into supporting or minor character roles. In nineteenth-century fairy tales there are a few female disabled characters, but Disney added more disabled characters into prominent roles such as protagonist/ heroes such as Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and Elsa from *Frozen (2013)*. This shows that potentially there has been some progress in this regard.

Implied or Labelled Disability

It has been established that there are disabled characters within nineteenth-century fairy tales and the Disney adaptations. The issue is then how do we, the reader or the

audience, know that the character is disabled? It is important to understand how this information is conveyed.

Figure 3: *Bar Graph of Nineteenth-Century Implied of Labelled Disability*
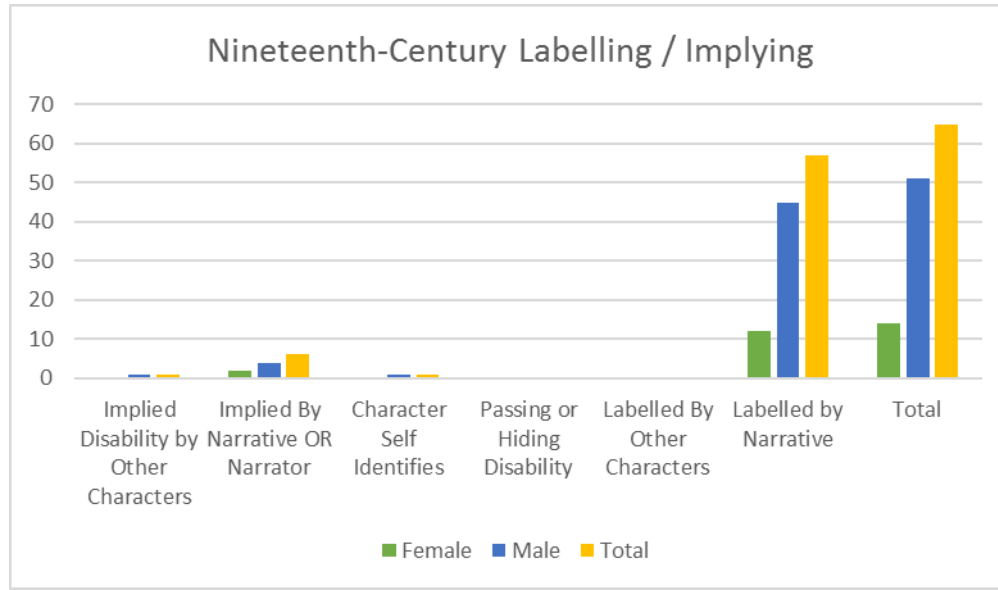
As figure 3 shows most disabilities within the nineteenth-century fairy tales were either implied or labeled by the narrative or narrator of the story. Within the nineteenth-century texts 89.23 percent of the characters were labelled by the narrative. A narrative labels a character as disabled when narrative texts describes or clearly places a disability label upon a character. Second to this is 10.77 percent of disabled characters who were implied to be disabled by the narrative. There was only one male character that was implied to be disabled by other characters within the fairy tale, which was "The Ugly Duckling". Other characters repeatedly inform the duckling throughout the tale that he is "ugly", "strange" and "crazy" (Andersen, 2014, p. 166-168) giving the reader the strong feeling that he is disabled and not like the other ducklings. There is also one male character that self identifies himself having a disability in "The Frog Prince". At the end

of the tale we read of Henry telling his master how he had put iron bands around his heart

to stop it from breaking (Grimm & Grimm, 2013, p. 5). Henry's deep pain and emotional

state required intervention which he identified to his master. It is quite interesting how

Henry and the Duckling are both isolated and alone in the narratives. There are no

characters in the nineteenth-century fairy tales that are explicitly labeled by other

characters or attempt to hide their disability.

Figure 4: *Bar Graph of Nineteenth-Century Implied of Labelled Disability*
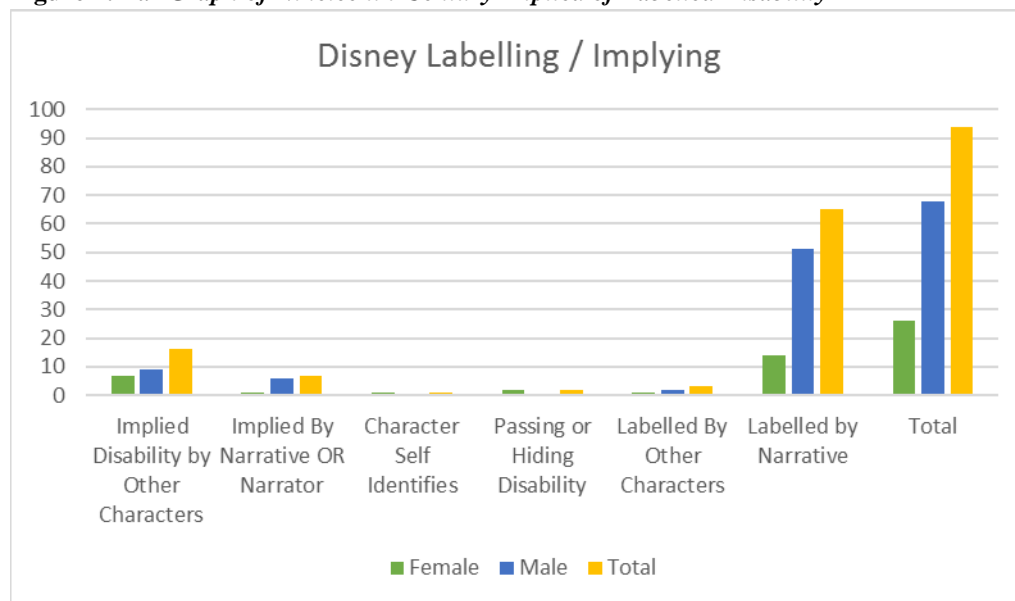
When looking at figure 4 it is clear that there is a change from the nineteenth-century

fairy tales. The majority of disabled characters are labeled by the narrative: 69.79 percent

of the characters, with male characters making up 53.13 percent. This is significantly

reduced from the nineteenth-century fairy tales. This is where the narrative describes or

labels a characters as disabled which is seen in most films such as *Snow White and the*

Seven Dwarfs with the "dwarfs" or little people. In the 1933 *Giantland* the narrative

labels the antagonist characters "giant". This highlights how these characters are being described as little or giant.

There are seven characters that have disability status implied by the narrative or the narrator, six of these characters are male and 1 female character. The implied disability with these characters appear in films such as *Mickey and the Beanstalk* (1947), *Redux Riding Hood* (1997), and *Frozen* (2013) to name a few. In *Frozen (2013)* it is implied that Princess Anna has her mind and heart injured by Elsa's magic, with the notion of Anna being outside of the normative flow by having her mind altered by the trolls and eventually her heart freezing due to the ice in it. In *Mickey and the Beanstalk* Mickey, Goofy, and Donald are called a "bunch of nuts" by the narrator Ludwig von Drake. In *Redux Riding Hood* the wolf is shown to be suffering from depression over his failure to catch Little Red and becomes obsessed with going back in time to capture and eat Little Red Riding Hood but sadly ends up ruining his own life.

There are only three characters that are labeled by other film characters, one female and two male. Incidentally the two male characters are the same character Maurice from *Beauty and the Beast* in the 1991 and the 2017 version. In both these films Maurice is directly labeled by all the townsfolk, including Gaston, as "crazy old Maurice" and a "loon". I do not think of this character as being mad but he is directly labeled to be such in both films. In *The Little Mermaid* (1989) after Ariel gave up her voice for legs she met Prince Eric who clearly announced that Ariel cannot speak. These are not implied but clearly stated for the audience to know these characters are "othered".

There is only one character that self identifies as being disabled in the Disney adaptations and that is Mama Odie from *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). In the film Mama Odie introduces herself as a "One-hundred and ninety-seven-year-old blind lady" directly informing the characters and the audiences that she is blind.

There are two female characters that attempt to pass or hide their disabilities. With *Tangled* (2010) and *Frozen* (2013) Disney brought audiences the first characters that hide their disabilities in an attempt to pass as "normal". Both the Rapunzel and Elsa characters are not labelled as having a disability overtly, but eventually their disabilities are revealed. The attempt to pass is how we meet the characters. Rapunzel and Elsa's disabilities are implied and obvious to the audience but in their narrative worlds, they attempt to pass. People with invisible disabilities feel compelled to pass as non-disabled out of fear or shame of the consequences (Rhodes et al., 2008, p. 387). With these two female characters this is what we have. Eventually both "come out" with their "otherness" but both have attempted to hide or conceal their disabilities.

In the Disney adaptations there are sixteen characters with a disability that is implied by other characters. This equates to 17.02 percent of the disabled characters within the Disney films with there being nine male and seven female characters with a disability status being implied. This is seen in characters such as Belle being called "dazed and distracted" and that she is "odd" like her father; the implied notion here is she is mad. In *Duck Tales the Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp* (1990) it is repeatedly implied that Merlock is mad; the genie even refers to Merlocks old house as "Casa de Cuckoo". The huntsman from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarf* tells Snow White that the Queen is

"mad" and obsessed and will stop at nothing to kill her. This conveys the notion to Snow

White and the audiences that the Queen is mentally unstable. The implication being that

these characters are mentally unwell. From my perspective, I cannot see that they truly

are but they are implied to be.

The Function and Use of Disability

After looking into the characters and their distribution within the narrative this moved

the discussion into: what function does disability have in the nineteenth-century fairy

tales and the Disney adaptations? The function or reason for utilizing disability is

important in understanding what is being implied about disability. When looking at the

way the narrative uses disability I followed Beth Franks' (2001) table on the "Function of

Disability" within Grimm fairy tales which had four categories of punishment, trial,

description and reversal (p. 252). For this study I removed "reversal" and added in

"masquerade".

As figure 5 shows in the nineteenth-century tales, disablement was often used for

description. In nineteenth-century fairy tales, disability is used as a description for 83.08

percent of disabled characters. The use of disability as a description refers to disability

being a characteristic that describes a character. Disability as a trial was used 13.73

percent of disabled male characters. Disability as a trial is way of testing the hero or

heroine's strength, faithfulness, and integrity. Commonly disability is used with male

characters for trial or description. Disability is utilized as a description for male

characters 84.31 percent while female characters are described to be disabled 78.57

percent. In terms of descriptions in nineteenth-century fairy tales, the terms often used to

describe characters are "dwarf", "giant", or "dumb". Many of these terms are politically

and socially incorrect today. This gives the reader a notion about the character in

question.

Figure 5: *Bar Graph of the Function of Disability within Nineteenth-Century Fairy tales.*
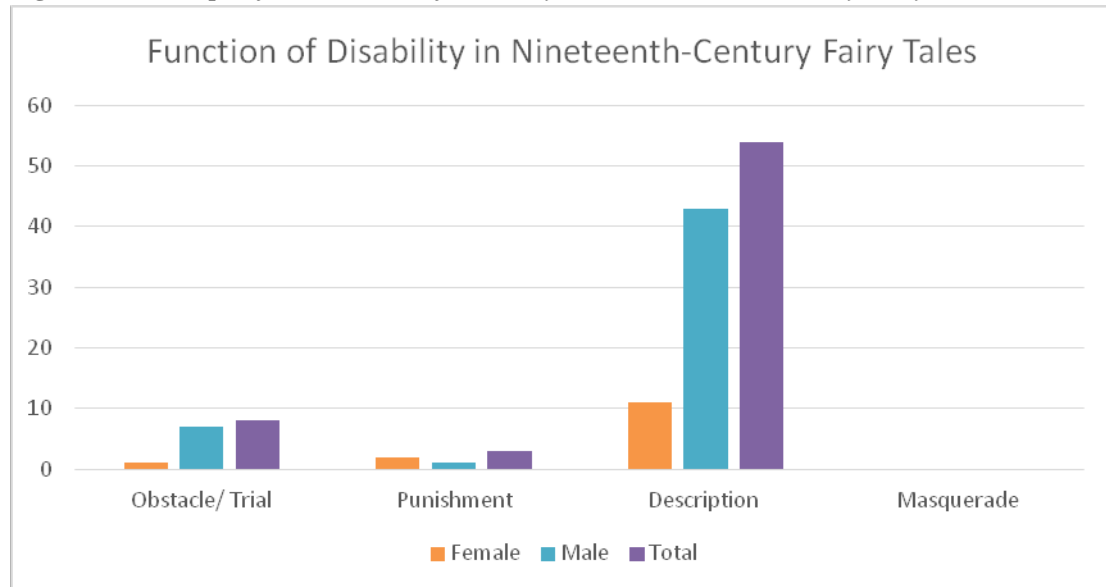
Interestingly more female than male characters have had a disability used for

punishment. However, punishment has a minimal amount of functional use of disability

with 4.62 percent. The use of disability as punishment was still used more often with

female characters than male. The issue of disability as punishment in the nineteenth-

century was linked with religious notions of disability being "god's punishment" for sin.

This implies that characters' disabilites are placed upon them and they are being justly

punished for their sins in the narrative against the good and virtuous protagonist. This is

seen in the fairy tales such as "Cinderella" and "Rapunzel". In "Cinderella" the step-

sisters eyes are plucked out by birds when Cinderella marries her prince (Grimm &

Grimm, 2013, p. 85). In "Rapunzel" the prince is blinded by thorns for seducing the

innocent Rapunzel into premariatal sex (Grimm & Grimm, 2013, p. 45-46).

Figure 6: Bar Graph of the Function of Disability within Disney Fairy tale adaptations.
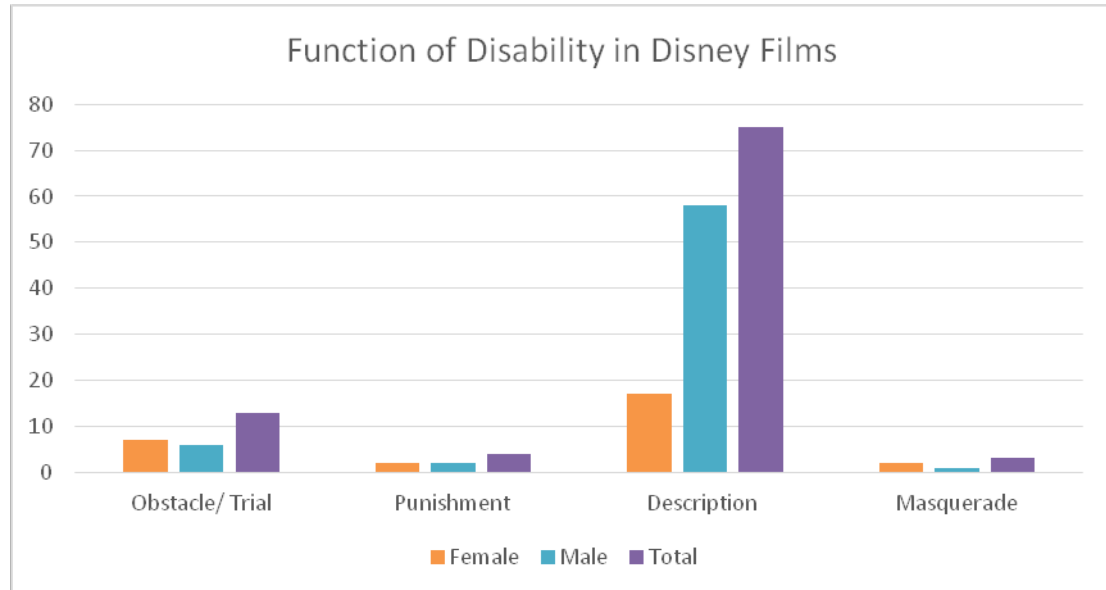
Figure 6 shows how disability functions in Disney adaptations, in a manner

similar to the nineteenth-century tales in which the majority of disability functioned as

description. For all disabled male characters in the Disney films 86.57 percent of the

disablement is for descriptive purposes. While for all disabled female characters in the

Disney adaptations, only 62.96 percent of disability is for descriptive purposes. This is a

decrease from the nineteenth-century tales by 15.61 percent. Now in terms of the

descriptive nature in the Disney films this often runs alongside with comedy. Often when

Disney uses disability to function as a character description they tend to make the

character extremely comedic. This is seen in characters such as Dopey, Gus, Olaf, Willie,

and the list goes on. Many of the descriptions that fall within the comedic area tend to

have characters with cognitive disabilities. The characters also tend to have volatile

personalities such as the King in *Cinderella* (1950), King Trident in *The Little Mermaid* (1989), and Maleficent in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959).

There is a fine line in films between describing a character as having a disability or making an absurd caricature that is stereotypical and stigmatizing. This is a line in describing characters that Disney often crosses. The function of disability as a trial has increased since the nineteenth-century versions. In the nineteenth-century texts the majority of times disability functioned as a trial having to do with male characters. In the Disney adaptations there are now more female characters experiencing disability as a trial (7.45 percent). Compare this to the nineteenth-century tales, in which 1.54 percent of all disabled characters experience it as a trial. Often the story of disability as a trial resolves the issue of disability with narrative tools such as magical cures or overcoming one's disability. The nineteenth-century fairy tales often used magical cures. In "Rapunzel" she healed the prince's blinded eyes with her tears of forgiveness (Grimm & Grimm, 2013, p. 46). In "Beauty and the Beast" love heals the Beast's deformity and Beauty marries her prince (Lang, 1889, p. 117-118).

With the Disney films there appears to be more uses of magical cures in movies like *Tangled, Beauty and the Beast, Frozen, The Little Mermaid, Into the Woods,* and *Maleficent.* Some of these films have magical cures multiple times, as in *Tangled* where there is the magical cure for the illness killing the queen and the cure for Rapunzel's magical hair. In both versions of *Beauty and the Beast* the magical cure for the Beast's deformity is love. Mitchell and Snyder (2013) note that the use of disability in a narrative marks a character as distinctive and worthy of an exception (p. 232). Magical cures are a

representation of disability based on the notion of "fixing" or making the abnormal person "normal". The concept of "fixing" implies that there is one unified concept of disability which is that it is something to be "fixed" (Titchkosky, 2013, p. 29). We are taught that things that need "fixing" are broken and that this is not acceptable (Titchkosky, 2013, p. 29). Disability signifies that those with disabilities are broken people (Titchkosky, 2013, p. 29), making those who are "broken" into a tragic figures. The resolution of disability by magical cure implies that being disabled is not good enough.

Disney has added the use of disability as a masquerade. The use of disability as a masquerade was not done in any of the nineteenth-century fairy tales. This was something really only noticed in two films, Disney's films *Aladdin* (1992) and *Beauty and Beast* (1991), where non-disabled characters used disability as a tool. This is seen in the characters of Jasmine, Jafar, and the Enchantress. This is known as disability masquerade where a non-disabled character pretends to be disabled (Berube, 2016, p. 2). This use of disability centres around the use of disability as a tool to be used to do or escape something. This is about deceit or tricking other characters to achieve a certain goal or end result. This function of disability is problematic, because it brings the notion that disabled people may not be disabled. Finally, Disney uses disability in the role of punishment. In the nineteenth-century tales there were three occurrences of disability as punishment two of which were female characters. With the Disney adaptations there are now four occurrences: two female characters and two male characters. For Disney this function of disability was revived in the 2010s with the films *Into The Woods* (2014) and

Maleficent (2014). In both films disability is used as a form of punishment upon an antagonist/villain in the films. This is more problematic than many audiences may think. The role of disability as punishment implies that disablement is linked with malicious characters and that becoming disabled is an appropriate penalty for bad behaviors.

Word Choices

Language generates meaning (Bandlamudi, 2014, p. 563). It is through language we are able to view and produce meaning to shape our social reality (Richardson, 2001, p. 36). The words used within the nineteenth-century fairy tales to describe disability are not the types of words that are linguistically acceptable today. In my reading of the fairy tales I came across many words that are now offensive. But this was not the case in the nineteenth century; this was the way that they worded their world. In the nineteenth century it was acceptable to use words such as "dumb" to refer to those that are mute, or "dwarf" to refer to little people. Today that language is no longer deemed acceptable. While watching the Disney films there is still a lot of offensive language being used. From 1922-1966 pre-Walt Disney's death words such as "dwarf", "deranged", and "nuts" were used within some of the fairy tales adaptations. Post Walt Disney (1967-2019) there are still many offensive words appearing in the films such as "crackpot", "loon", "half-wit", and "crazy" to name a few. The films that are the worst offenders are *Beauty and the Beast*, both the 1991 and 2017 versions. In both versions of Disney *Beauty and the Beast* Maurice is constantly being called things like "loon" or "crackpot" to highlight that the villagers see him as having a mental health issue. In the 2017 *Beauty and the Beast*

Gaston threatened Maurice with being sent to the "madhouse". Politically correct language for disabled people has changed since the 1990s so their choice to continue to use offensive and derogatory language is an interesting choice and not one I agree with.

These words were also used sometimes symbolically in the fairy tale to imply other social meanings. In Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" when her human prince was marrying another she was described as being "deaf to the wedding march and blind to the holy ritual" (Andersen, 2014, p. 53). Disability was used here to symbolically imply how her deep emotional pain was causing her not to pay attention to the wedding. In Andrew Lang's "Aladdin and the Magic Lamp" the narrator states that Aladdin "wandered like a madman" (Lang, 1889, p. 81) looking for his wife, the princess. This was about Aladdin looking for his princess, but the image of the "madman" created a notion in the reader as to how this character appeared. The use of disability for its symbolic potential was used often within nineteenth-century literature, therefore the use of these words does paint a particular picture.

Interestedly it is not just the nineteenth-century authors that use words symbolically. Movies often attempt to use words strategically to "paint a picture". The words in many of the Disney adaptations are also used symbolically. In *The Duck Tales* movie we encounter Merlock who wishes to have Scrooge's house converted into his old home. Genie replies he remembers "Casa de Cuckoo". This symbolically implies that Merlock's house is a "mad house". In *The Princess and the Frog* Mama Odie informs Tiana and Naveen how they were "blind to what (they) need". Just as in the nineteenth-century texts visual impairment is being used to imply symbolically that one is unable to understand

what they need. Understanding the self and the social world around us is understood in the way we narrate (Bandlamudi, 2014, p. 561). Language choices in narration such as the way places, events, and people are described reveal how we view ourselves and others. This is as true now as it was in the nineteenth century. Language choices have implications about how people understand various disabilities. The blind are not just visually impaired but they struggle with understanding events around them. And those with mental health issues are chaotic, and unstable.

Sexuality and Disability

Through watching and reading the fairy tales there are some things that should be noted in terms of gender, disability and sexuality. The nineteenth-century fairy tales disabled characters are often socially isolated or engaged in a doomed to fail search for love. The tin soldier loves the dancer but throughout his adventure does not achieve his being together with his love except in death. The little mermaid sacrifices her life as a mermaid for the chance at a human soul and to be with her prince only to die because he chose another. Holmes (2004) claims that the distinction between abled and disabled bodies in the nineteenth century was produced in terms of clearly defined gender roles of what was believed to be "natural" for each gender (p. 94). It was natural to seek heteronormative love. Both male and female characters were seeking love of one of the opposite gender. A few fairy tales that illustrate this include "Rapunzel", "Little Snow White", "The Little Mermaid" and "Cinderella". Many of the nineteenth-century disabled characters could still seek love.

The nineteenth-century characters that were alone tended to be elderly women with mobility issues often using canes, staffs, and crutches. Or they had physical disabilities such as being lone "dwarfs" or giants. There is nothing implied or noted about their romantic relationships.

In the Disney films there is a shift in how disabled characters are related with others. Firstly many are asexual characters or are portrayed as non-sexual beings. Solis (2007) found that the use of disability with the "dwarf" in the tale served the purpose of infantilizing and emasculating the "dwarfs" so that the reader identifies the Prince as the masculine hero (p. 127-128). There are disabled characters both male and female constructed in a particular way in relation to other characters. By infantilizing the "dwarfs" or little people Disney was able to maintain Snow White as a pure and virtuous female.

Many of the disabled characters are romantically unattached in the Disney films. Garland-Thomson (1997) observed that typically main characters do not have physical disabilities (p. 9) and I would add they are also heterosexual. In Disney films the majority of our heroes are presented as the epitome of able-bodied male heterosexuality (Solis, 2007, p. 128.). I observed this in characters such as Flynn Rider, Prince Charming, Prince Philip and Kristoff. The main male characters are often expected to have the ideal male characteristics as a model for young boys to emulate and mimic (Solis, 2007, p. 128). McRuer (2013) argues that compulsory able-bodiedness is intertwined with compulsory heterosexuality (p. 375). Cultural representations seek to fit narratives within social norms. Davis (1995) notes that disability is a disruption in the "visual, auditory, or

perceptual fields" due to the power of the gaze (p. 129). Due to the disruption disability

causes within the media, disability representations are controlled and shaped by others,

which distorts how Western culture views people with disabilities (p. 129). The

disruption stems from the fear that disability could happen to anyone which frightening to

able-bodied people (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, p. 92). Disability is such that the disruption,

"the rebellion of the visual, must be regulated, rationalized, contained" (Davis 1995, p.

129). The shift makes the claim that male leads and heroes are to be heterosexual and

able-bodied to be desirable. In all the Disney films I could only find two disabled heroes

with love interests: the Beast and the tin soldier. Both are heterosexual but not quite able-

bodied and this really demonstrates how strong a trope it really is. The Beast does have a

magical cure but the tin solider does not. The resolution for the disabled character often

entails a cure or death and in the case of the Beast it was cure. The one exception has

been with the one-legged tin soldier from *Steadfast Tin Soldier* (1999) where Disney

refused to destroy the tin soldier as written in the Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale.

Instead, Disney had tin soldier defeat the villainous Jack-in-the-box to have a happy

ending with his love, the ballerina. The choice to allow the one-legged tin solider to get

his ballerina shows the audience that disability does not necessarily mean having a

loveless life. There is a helper character in *Tangled* (2010) Big Nose who dreams of

finding someone who can love him for his inner beauty. The film ends with Big Nose's

dream being granted by his finding a woman to love him.

      The main female disabled protagonist characters with love interests are Ariel,

Anna, and Rapunzel. All three required a solution to their disability in order for them to

finally be able to find love and receive it in return. It is interesting that their disabilities needed to be magically cured in all cases for them to have their happily ever after. As with the nineteenth-century fairy tales the gender roles are clearly defined and "naturalized". Disney has the gender paradigm that heroine's are "good natured, weak, and obedient" passively waiting for a male character to give them life through romance, marriage and domestic life (Sturtevant, 2012, p. 87). In Disney films such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Cinderella* (1950) have portrayed the home and domestic labour as the place and occupation for women (Zipes, 1995, p. 37). Disabled females are not worthy of love until they are made "normal". For female characters their love interests are male with one exception, *Maleficent* (2014), which shows Maleficent and not Prince Philip giving true loves kiss to Aurora. While this relationship is not a romantic relationship it does allow that true love can be between two women.

Characters with intellectual or cognitive disabilities like the "dwarfs" in *Snow White* are infantilized and portrayed as asexual. In the Disney adaptations there are fourteen such characters. Characters like Gus from *Cinderella*, Willie from *Mickey and the Beanstalk*, and Darnell from *Princess and the Frog* are portrayed as child-like and uninterested in or incapable of mature relationships. In the case of Gus and Darnell, they are taken care of by friends and family. They have relationships with others but stereotypical ones.

Stigma, Stereotypes and Supercrips

While reading and watching the fairy tales I encountered instances of stereotypes, supercrips and stigma. There are many stereotypes about what disability is or looks like. Many times when we think about disability we think of the visual cue we associate with disability. Titchkosky (2009) argues that we perceive disability through our cultural assumptions of what disability is or looks like: "While there is no one correct representation of disability, there are more or less typical representations of embodied differences that *count* as disability in Western cultures" (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 76). We have culturally constructed what disability is and this is absolutely true when looking at literature and media representations of disability. In the nineteenth-century fairy tales in this study often portrayed disability as physical difference such as "giants", little people, or people with missing or additional limbs. With Disney this has not been the case. The representations branched out with many more types of disabilities, many of which are stereotypical. The literature is claiming disability marks characters as "other", mutilated, villains, victims of circumstance or infantilized as presented in both literature and the media. Both the fairy tales and the adaptations utilized disability in this manner. Nineteenth-century fairy tales used disability as narrative prosthesis to lean on for their representational power, disruptive potential, and analytical insight (Mitchell & Snyder, 2010, p. 24). While reading the tales we encounter helpful "dwarfs", problematic "giants", brave one-legged tin soldiers, an evil old witch requiring the use of a crutch and "mute" mermaids to name a few. Their very being disrupts the normative flow of life. This use of disability is seen in both the nineteenth-century fairy tales and their Disney counterparts.

In the Disney films there are more varied stereotypical portrayals of disabled people. There are now characters with cognitive or intellectual disabilities. Schwartz, Lutfiyya, and Hansen (2014) state that characters in Disney fairy tales such as Gus, Dopey, or LeFou are constructed as characters with intellectual disabilities stigmatizing and stereotyping people with intellectual disabilities (p. 191). When looking at the adapted fairy tales there are more characters than just Gus, Dopey, and LeFou. There are also characters such as the Giant Willie, The Giant in the *Brave Little Tailor*, Darnell from *The Princess and the Frog*, Maleficent's henchmen in *Sleeping Beauty*, and Prince Anders from *Aladdin* (2019). These character are all naïve, foolish, and funny in how socially unaware they are. These representations construct an idea of what people with intellectual disabilities are expected to look and act like by the able-bodied population (Schwartz, Lutfiyya, & Hansen, 2014, p. 191). The visual representations in films constructs the image of a character though physical appearance, sound, and mannerism. This visual representation is not just implying something of that character but about people with those characteristics. The representations of people with intellectual disabilities, in Disney movies such Gus in *Cinderella (1950)*, sadly stigmatize and devalue them (Schwartz, Lutfiyya, & Hansen, 2014, p. 191). They are there for comedic relief in the narrative and represent people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities as "fat", "funny", "unintelligent", and "pitiable" characters. This is very harmful to that community. Negative characteristics are often referred to as "stigma" (Schwartz, Lutfiyya, & Hansen, 2014, p. 180). People with disabilities are often stigmatized and thought of negatively (Franks, 2001, p. 250). This is because disability is attributed to

deviance. The disabled mind and body do not meet the cultural rules of what minds and bodies should be and do (Garland-Thomson, 1997, p. 6). Mitchell and Snyder (2013) argue that "narrative prosthesis" is about disability representations in literary discourse functioning as a "stock feature of characterization" and as an "opportunistic metaphorical device" (p. 222). Disability functions as a feature of characterization differentiating characters from others by having them deviate from the "norm" (Mitchell and Snyder, 2013, p. 222).

Franks (2001) claimed that Disney renditions of fairy tales often combined disability and villainy (p. 250). As I discussed earlier there are many disabled characters in the role of antagonist or villains within Disney fairy tale adaptations. There are twenty-four disabled villains in the fairy tale adaptations. Watching the films I noticed a lot of disabled villains and antagonistic characters. Many of these villains had implied mental health issues, adding to the stereotype that "badness is madness". The Disney films I watched had seven characters who had implied or stereotypically displayed "madness"; Queen in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Dr. Facilier, Gaston, Merlock, The Wolf, King Stephan, and Jafar. This is a dangerous trope to perpetuate. Bradley Lewis (2010) identifies that while disability studies identifies stigma and oppression against disabled embodiment as "ableism", the mad community refers to stigma and oppression due to mental difference as "saneism" or "mentalism" (p. 162). It is important to note that there are varied views about oppression and stigma for those with mental health issues. Disney showed their saneist point of view in a few ways.

Firstly, Disney films often used derogatory language such as calling characters with mental health issues "crazy", "loons", "nuts", "crackpot", and "demented" to list a few words. These words carry a lot of stigma and cause harm towards people within the mad community. To frame a character unnecessarily as having a mental health issue or to threaten them with going to the "madhouse" shows a disrespect for people with mental health issues or for the history of madness around the world. Goffman (1963) states that many stigmatized people worry about how "normal people" will identity or receive them (p. 13). This leads to people with mental health issue isolating themselves, attempting to hide and not seeking help if they want it because of how others will view them.

Secondly, Disney links many "villain" characters with mental health. Characters such as the Queen in Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Dr. Facilier, Gaston, Merlock, King Stephan, and Jafar are either labelled or implied to have a mental health issues. Growing up I had the notion that villains were mentally unwell and sadly this is something many still believe. To do unthinkable things one does not need to be "mad", they just have to be "bad". This linking of villains and madness continues the linking of "badness as madness" which is also stigmatizing. There is no other way to view this reorientation of characters with mental health issues than saneist.

Finally, Disney uses stereotypical portrayals of what it means to have a mental health issue. In the 1992 *Aladdin*, Aladdin convinces Jasmine to pretend to be his "crazy sister" who thinks the doctor is a camel and the sultan is a monkey. The Wolf in *Redux Riding Hood* is so depressed and obsessed with eating Little Red Riding Hood that he destroys his happy life. Donald Duck is "driven" mad by extreme hunger in *Mickey and*

the Beanstalk; his eyes change and he eats his plate and silverware before going out and attempting to kill a cow. These are all stereotypical portrayals of madness within the media. These representations present a very negative and stigmatizing portrayal of what it means to be mad.

Now there are times when Disney produces representations that really reflect true mad experiences. *Aladdin* (2019) has a scene where Aladdin is formally meeting the Sultan for the first time and his anxiety in the situation creates an awkward and uncomfortable situation. As someone who struggles with anxiety in similar situations I noticed this right way. This is a real mental health issue where the anxiety takes over and creates a situation that makes everyone uncomfortable. Next is *Maleficent* (2014) when her wings are cut off by Stephan. She gets sad, angry and then takes her grief and anger out on Aurora. Many people who acquire a disability have undergone this process. This is a true reflection of depression and anger when one acquires a disability. I am not sure that these were intentional but I would like to think that they are. We are at a time in 2019 when there has been a lot of social progress concerning people with mental health issues and with that we need more true representations.

When watching or reading fairy tales many people know of the "overcoming disability" narrative. Characters that "overcome" or "beat the odds" despite their disabilities, are supercrips. Supercrip stories do not focus on the conditions that make it difficult for people with disabilities within society (Clare, 2009, 2-3). Supercrip narratives focus on the inspirational stories of overcoming disability and not the ableism that oppresses disabled people in society (Clare, 2009, p. 3). Schmiesing (2014) states

that disability in heroic characters is often framed as being triumphant despite social

barriers and stigma (p. 1-2). The protagonist of the Grimms' "The Valiant Little Tailor"

is a "little tailor" who overcomes great obstacles with his cleverness, killing giants. The

narrative does not focus on his stature or what makes him "little" but we read of his

heroic journey to become more than just a little tailor. The idea of overcoming disability

was not a nineteenth-century notion but one of more recent scholarship. The Romantics

were interested in the drama and the triumphs.

To be honest in many of the tales that have been adapted there are few instances

of this, but with Disney there are more. Disney uses the supercrip narrative within their

tale *The Steadfast Tin Soldier (1999)* where the one-legged tin solider overcomes great

obstacles to get home and be reunited with his love, the ballerina. This is a change from

the Hans Christian Andersen version where the tin soldier melts with his love in the

stove. Rapunzel's prince in *Into the Woods (2014)*, despite being blind, finds Rapunzel in

the woods. Rapunzel in *Tangled* (2010) uses her wits and magical hair showing how the

use of one's difference can be a strength in overcoming many barriers. Many of these

narratives neglect the reality that people with disabilities often feel shame, fear, and

stigmatized about their disabilities. In Disney's *Frozen* (2013), the character Elsa

provided a complex disabled character who experiences isolation, rejection, fear, love,

and acceptance of her identity. This character does not just gloss over the barriers due to

her disability. Instead, Elsa runs from, learns about, and faces them. There is an interest

in having main characters, such as Elsa, live happily ever after, but with these happy

endings comes certain dangers. With happy endings to these tales depicts notions of what

it means to be disabled. The good disabled person is one that lives their life to meet the expectations of non-disabled people by being brave, cheerful and grateful when helped (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, p. 6). The bad disabled people do not. For much of *Frozen* (2013), Elsa was perceived to be "bad" by other characters and some audiences. This perception of Elsa has much to do with her no longer pretending to be brave and cheerful and stepping out to find herself and her place in the world.

Conclusion

In the nineteenth-century fairy tales disability seems to fall within the categories of physical, sensory, health issues, and communicative. Multiple disabilities were possible by the combination of any of the categories such as with the little mermaid whose character combined physical and communicative disabilities. While the Disney adaptation may have some of the same categories as the nineteenth-century tales they added the categories of emotional, cognitive, and invisible disabilities; characters with multiple disabilities could be a combination of any of these, such as physical and cognitive difference as combined in characters such as the Giant Willie.

In the nineteenth-century tales a majority of disabled characters had the role of antagonist/villain and helper. These characters had the role of either being opposed to or helper of the protagonist/hero of the tale. This relates to the general social hierarchy within the nineteenth century where disabled people were not considered to be the social equal of able bodied people. These nineteenth-century representations by today's standards may not be "positive" but they are also not "negative" either. Franks' (2001)

claims that the "original" fairy tales are more democratic in their handling of disability representations than modern versions (Franks, 2001, p. 255). I agree that there is a different handling of disability in the nineteenth-century fairy tales that is missing within the Disney films. Disney has a tendency to oversimplify complex characters and traits which tends to creates negative and stereotypical representations.

With the Disney adaptations there are still many characters in the role of antagonist/villain and helper, and there are still many disabled characters in minor or supporting roles. The supporting or minor characters, while visible in the films, are not the primary focus of the narrative, meaning that many disabled characters are considered background or comedic relief.

Starting in 2010 there are now more disabled characters in the role of protagonist/hero with Rapunzel, Elsa, Anna, Maleficent, Belle, Beast, and Aladdin as notable examples. So there are more characters with disabilities in prominent roles. Some of these characters many not have been intended to be disabled but they are disabled none the less. The characters *Anna* in Frozen (2013) and *Aladdin* in Aladdin (2019) were not constructed purposely to be disabled but disablement is still a part of their characterization. Gender and relationships are still an issue with the push for heteronormative relationships with well-established gender roles. Female characters in Disney films can be strong, independent, and intelligent such as Rapunzel in *Tangled* (2010), but their "otherness" is resolved and by the resolution they become acceptable for heterosexual relationship. Many disabled characters have magical cures to fix their "otherness". Or the characters are left alone and isolated with a few exceptions.

A major issue from the 1930s to 2017 is the use of mental health in a stereotypical or derogatory manner. This is the most frustrating result. I was hoping that as I watched more current adaptations that there would be less of this but there was not. In *Maleficent* (2014), King Stephan's descent into "madness" is very stereotypical, and it implies that those that do "bad" things will become mentally unwell. Or in *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), Maurice is perceived to be "crazy" while again the villain Gaston is obsessed and self-absorbed to the point of causing harm to himself and other characters. This is very much about saneism or the stigma and oppression due to mental health difference. The stigma around mental health is still being perpetuated within Disney fairy tales films. This is an issue that urgently needs to be addressed.

Disney uses many stereotypical representations for certain disabilities such as mental health issues and cognitive disabilities. There are also positive representations in the form of disabled heroines such as Elsa and Rapunzel. The use of overcoming narratives and magical cures is a problem. With the creation of Elsa, a disabled princess turned Queen; her parents mishandled her disability by imposing passing as a solution (Resene, 2017). Even with all of this, Elsa eventually learns self-acceptance by "letting go" of normative expectations placed upon her by society, her parents, and herself. The audience gets an image of a disabled female that many disabled people, especially females, could relate to (Resene, 2017). Passing and stigma around disability identities is not new. Now Elsa is at various points socially and physically isolated from others but she learns to love and accept herself which is important. Shame and self-hate are real issues that are often observed in film and literature involving disabled characters.

There has definitely been change, but not all of it has been good. There are still a lot of problematic representations especially from the 1990s until 2017. I say that because *Aladdin* (2019) has removed most of the very offensive representations from the 1992 film. An example is the disability masquerade where disability was used as a tool. The removal of this and the creation of Elsa give me hope that Disney will learn and start creating more positive portrayals of disabled characters.

Barnes and Mercer (2003) claim that disability has been exploited as a source of "entertainment" and to stir up the emotions and fears of the non-disabled population (p. 91). Historically, this is true even in terms of modern literature and films. The "othering" of characters attracts audiences to discover what will happen and how things will be resolved. In *Frozen* (2013), Elsa being disabled engages the audience into finding out how the narrative will resolve her disability the film elected to allow Elsa to still have her disability but she learned to control and use it for the benefit of her citizens. The issue is not about banning or censoring negative representations but discussing and explaining symbolic messages that are being conveyed (Margolis & Shapiro, 1987, p. 21). These negative representations need to be addressed and discussed so that more positive and less stigmatizing ones can be created in the future. The first step is awareness of the representations and their history. This was what I feel this study shows, that there are disabled representations that need to be addressed but that they are not all new. Many characters with physical disabilities, for example giants and little people, have existed in fairy tales since before the nineteenth-century versions. The new additions that Disney has added are not all positive nor do they represent today's more enlightened cultural

viewpoint. However, today there *is* more emphasis placed on non-stigmatizing disability representations. Disney must understand that they need experts on how to correctly represent minority groups, such as people with disabilities, appropriately. No one want to have their body, culture, or identity misrepresented. These representations will have an impact far beyond childhood, so knowing and discussing these representations is key to reimaging our society as one that accepts all people and identities regardless of race, shape, gender, sexuality, ethnicity or ability.

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Appendix

Appendix A

19th Century Fairy Tale Version	Author	Publication Date
Cinderella	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
Little Snow White	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
Rapunzel	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
Hansel and Grethel	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
Little Briar Rose	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
Frog Prince	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
Little Red Cap	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
The Brave Little Tailor	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1812
The Singing, Springing Lark	Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm	1815
Little Mermaid	Hans Christian Andersen	1837
Steadfast Tin Soldier	Hans Christian Andersen	1838
Ugly Duckling	Hans Christian Andersen	1843
The Snow Queen	Hans Christian Andersen	1844
Beauty and the Beast	Andrew Lang	1889
Aladdin and the Magic Lamp	Andrew Lang	1889
Little Red Riding-Hood	Andrew Lang	1889
The Sleeping Beauty in the Woods	Andrew Lang	1889
Cinderella or The Little Glass Sipper	Andrew Lang	1889
Hansel and Grettel	Andrew Lang	1889
The Brave Little Tailor	Andrew Lang	1889
Jack The Giant Killer	Andrew Lang	1889
Jack and the Beanstalk	Andrew Lang	1890
Snowdrop	Andrew Lang	1890
Rapunzel	Andrew Lang	1890
Jack and the Beanstalk	Joseph Jacobs	1890
Jack the Giant Killer	Joseph Jacobs	1890
The Steadfast Tin-Soldier	Andrew Lang	1894
The Snow Queen	Andrew Lang	1897

Appendix B

Disney Film Titles	Released Year
Little Red Ridding Hood	1922
Cinderella	1922
Jack and the Beanstalk	1922
Jack the Giant Killer	1922
Babes in the Woods	1932
Giantland	1933
The Big Bad Wolf	1934
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	1937
Brave Little Tailor	1938
The Ugly Duckling	1939
Mickey and the Beanstalk	1947
Fun and Fancy Free- Segment "Jack and the Beanstalk"	1947
Cinderella	1950
Sleeping Beauty	1959
The Little Mermaid	1989
Duck Tales the Movie: Treasure of the Lost Lamp	1990
Beauty and the Beast	1991
Aladdin	1992
Redux Riding Hood	1997
Fantasia 2000 – Segment "The Steadfast Tin Soldier"	1999
Mickey Mouse Works – Segment "Hansel and Gretel"	1999
The Princess and the Frog	2009
Tangled	2010
Frozen	2013
Into the Woods	2014
Maleficent	2014
Cinderella	2015
Beauty and the Beast	2017
Aladdin	2019

Appendix C

Nineteenth-Century Fairy Tales Disability Occurrences

Date	Disability Occurrences
1800-1809	0
1810-1819	18
1820-1829	0
1830-1839	3
1840-1849	3
1850-1859	0
1860-1869	0
1870-1879	0
1880-1889	27
1890-1899	14
Total Occurrences	65

Disney Adaptation Disability Occurrences

Date	Disability Occurrences
1920-1929	6
1930-1939	14
1940-1949	7
1950-1959	11
1960-1969	0
1970-1979	0
1980-1989	4
1990-1999	13
2000-2009	4
2010-2019	35
Total Occurrence	94

Appendix D

Nineteenth-Century Labeling / Implying Disability

Labeling / Implying Disability	Female	Male	Total
Implied Disability by Other Characters	0	1	1
Implied By Narrative OR Narrator	2	4	6
Character Self Identifies	0	1	1
Passing or Hiding Disability	0	0	0
Labelled By Other Characters	0	0	0
Labelled by Narrative	12	45	57
Total	14	51	65

Disney Labeling / Implying Disability

Labeling / Implying Disability	Female	Male	Total
Implied Disability by Other Characters	7	9	16
Implied By Narrative OR Narrator	1	6	7
Character Self Identifies	1	0	1
Passing or Hiding Disability	2	0	2
Labelled By Other Characters	1	2	3
Labelled by Narrative	14	51	65
Total	26	68	94

Appendix E

Nineteenth-Century Function of Disability

Function of Disability	Female	Male	Total
Obstacle/ Trial	1	7	8
Punishment	2	1	3
Description	11	43	54
Masquerade	0	0	0
Total	14	51	65

Disney Function of Disability

Function of Disability	Female	Male	Total
Obstacle/ Trial	7	6	13
Punishment	2	2	4
Description	16	58	75
Masquerade	2	1	3
Total	27	67	94