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## The Routledge Companion to Disability and Media

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### Disability Imaginaries in the News



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# 1

## DISABILITY IMAGINARIES IN THE NEWS

*Tanya Titchkosky*

### Introduction

“Imagine disability; now imagine life with such a problem.” This trope, one that invites people to imagine disability as a problem, is an ordinary part of contemporary life. Making use of news articles and headlines that reproduce this trope, this chapter explores what it means to imagine disability in this way. Tracing how this disability imaginary is at work organizing how readers can expect disability and non-disability to fit together as newsworthy, the following pages will also explicate how “imagination” is best understood as a social phenomenon. While never totally alienated from the possibility of fantasy, imagination here refers to the interpretive character of perception as an “enworlded” phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout, I will regard “imagination” as a complicated interpretive social action, potentially creative, but done always in relation to existing cultural conceptions and images; the products of imagination can be conceived as “imaginaries,” a kind of solidification of sense.<sup>2</sup> I will show how “disability imaginaries” are enworlded as alienation incarnate—full of unexamined and unbendable assumptions regarding disability that nonetheless serve to support flights of fancy regarding normalcy. Treating imagination as that social activity that operates between engagement and alienation, between creativity and constraint, I aim to reveal what the invitation to *imagine disability* both “marks and mirrors.”<sup>3</sup> By considering the grounds organizing the ordinary restrictive orders of perception, there arises the possibility of perceiving our lives with disability in new ways, perhaps breaking out of one way of finding disability newsworthy while breaking into others. Media representations of disability offers media producers and consumers an opportunity to reflect on the normative assumptions that ground these representations as well as a chance to perceive, know and do disability differently from how “society made us and believe us to be.”<sup>4</sup>

After revealing the contours of a disability imaginary common to Western news media, I end by exploring how to live with this imaginary in more vital ways. I do not, however, propose that a more realistic or normal imagery for disability be developed. As Eve Haque has shown, the “real” of media and its documented historical agents are full of imagined characters in need of explication.<sup>5</sup> Exploring the limits of an alienated and, even, pathological imaginary is a way to open up the cultural assumptions behind this disability representation. Indeed, by exposing the social imaginaries at play in media accounts of disability, this chapter aims to encourage media producers to want to gain access to those social imaginaries informing even their most “realistic” accounts of disability so that they might produce more vibrant, expansive and complex

representations of disability. To do so, however, requires that we first proceed with the assumption of *life* in disability and one way to do that is to regard media depictions of disability as a representational space that invites cultural critique. This chapter aims to reveal the products of imagination in new ways—representing a hybrid comingling of disability and non-disability reflective of the hope of an unexpected rupture of the ordinary in the social activity of media production and consumption.<sup>6</sup>

### Imagine Disability; Now Imagine Life with This Problem

Contemporary Western news media, invites readers, and not merely from time to time, to imagine disability. We read invitations such as *imagine being deaf, blind, a wheelchair user; imagine feeling anxious, depressed or confused; imagine losing an arm, your memory or the ability to speak*. This initial invitation serves to move the reader into another imaginative moment but one that can only read disability as the problem of normative disruption. Imagine disability while also imagining *raising a child, going on a trip, going to work, preparing dinner or getting out of bed*.

Versions of this invitation are extraordinary enough to be narrated and to regularly appear within Western news media:

Can you imagine changing a nappy with your TEETH? Disabled mother who can't use her arms or legs reveals how she copes with two young children.<sup>7</sup>

Imagine getting through the day with no arms. That's my life thanks to thalidomide.<sup>8</sup>

Can you imagine waking up every morning and doing what she did without being able to feel or move anything below your neck?<sup>9</sup>

Changing a diaper, washing dishes, getting through the day, are not the ordinary stuff of the news. Yet, such ordinary activities have suddenly and even dramatically become extraordinary and newsworthy. The reader, framed as non-disabled, is supposed to encounter disability as a problem that disrupts the flow of ordinary life and to find this interesting (even though it is easy and common to imagine that disability means only difficulty doing things). After all, these suppositions come into play and are at *work* in framing the request to “imagine disability as a problem, now imagine life as such.” Through this trope, readers are invited into a restricted imaginary—free to read disability, but only as a problem, a somewhat titillating disruption to the normal way of doing things. Ironically, restricted imaginaries have to restrict their own grounds of possibility (imagination) in order to operate. One way this is done is by imposing the fanciful belief in the singular view. But this is risky, for to imagine the singular meaning as all-encompassing risks the opposite, that we imagine disability as more and other than we make it and believe it to be.

Not only ordinary tasks such as washing dishes or changing diapers but also extraordinary ones, can be used to express a restricted imaginary. Readers are invited, for example, to imagine disability in the face of extraordinary feats, such as racing a car, running a marathon, skydiving, learning calculus, surviving in an inhospitable environment. Consider these examples:

Imagine your life if you had a disability. How many things might you have to give up on? Walking? Sports?

Now imagine you were a professional race car driver who suffered traumatic brain injuries. Medical professionals tell you, you will never recover, let alone drive again.

Rick Bye must not have received the memo.<sup>10</sup>

Calculus is never a picnic, but imagine if you couldn't see the numbers on the board.<sup>11</sup>

Even for the fully able-bodied, the world can be a cruel and challenging place to navigate. In northwest Michigan, we know all too well about low wages, unemployment, under-employment and the zigzagging path to providing enough for yourself or your family. Imagine if, through no choice of your own, you were dealt an even harder card to play. For people with developmental disabilities in this region—and every other, for that matter—often times the impediment to independence and happiness is a lack of opportunity.<sup>12</sup>

Racing cars and doing calculus, like surviving in a cruel and challenging world, are extraordinary feats. Add disability and the extraordinary is made spectacular, moving unique skills from the register of the exceptional to that of the almost magical. Still, this transformation also includes framing the presumed reader as a non-disabled person who regards disability as a problem that disrupts the accomplishment of extraordinary feats. While it may be difficult to imagine driving a race car or learning calculus, it remains easy to imagine that to do these things while disabled would be difficult, if not impossible.

Spectacular or ordinary, this trope posits disability as a condition that represents a lack of function; given this, things are difficult to do and given this, things will have to be done differently. This leads to what is perhaps the most perplexing matter of all—it hardly seems to be an imaginative act to call disability to mind as “difficulty doing things.”

This disability imaginary is so ubiquitous that it seems to put the activity of imagination out of play. Indeed so ubiquitous is this imaginary, that it seems realistic and true. Nation states as well as the World Health Organization, for example, structure their surveys of disability with exactly the same conception:

Do you or someone in your household have a physical condition or health condition ... that reduces the amount or the kind of activity that this person can do?<sup>13</sup>

Activities are limited because of a long-term condition or health-related problem.<sup>14</sup>

A disability is an impairment that has a long-term, limiting effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.<sup>15</sup>

Any restriction or inability to perform an activity in the matter or within the range considered normal for a human being.<sup>16</sup>

Despite claims to using an updated and more social conception of disability—the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health—the *World Report on Disability* also makes use of the imaginary of difficulty doing things that results from a lack of function:

According to the *World Health Survey* around 785 million (15.6 percent) persons 15 years and older live with a disability, while the *Global Burden of Disease* estimates a figure of around 975 million (19.4 percent) persons. Of these, the *World Health Survey* estimates that 110 million people (2.2 percent) have very significant difficulties in functioning.<sup>17</sup>

Given the ubiquity of this restrictive disability imaginary, along with the simultaneous naturalization of the notion that it is found in individuals who are understood to possess an inability to function in a way considered normal for a human being, how are we to make sense of this news

media call to *imagine* disability? Perhaps, we can allow the lack of imagination involved in all this to disturb us a little while breaking into how disability figures in the social imaginary.

### Disability and the Social Imaginary

The cultural structuring of disability between the extraordinary and the ordinary has historically been given a detailed analysis by disability studies scholars.<sup>18</sup> They have revealed a variety of dichotomies through which contemporary society gives shape to disability. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, for example, suggests that representations of disability can be understood through a four-part symbolic rhetoric making disability typically appear as the signifier of the wondrous, the sentimental, the exotic or the realistic.<sup>19</sup> Other theorists, such as Ato Quayson,<sup>20</sup> have suggested that disability is used to express nine categories of Othering, all the while producing what Michael Berube refers to as the “exceptional.”<sup>21</sup> Disability as an exceptional category of persons has, as Beth Haller et al. show, typically served to represent medical power, heroic spirit, charity acts or human rights within the news media.<sup>22</sup>

Whether it is two, four, nine or more categories, these scholars remind us that within mainstream media, disability is encapsulated as a sign of something readily obvious insofar as it can be easily noticed and deployed to express a rather restricted set of meanings. The sheer expanse of human variation is made to take shape in a few limited forms readily called upon by the news media through the trope: “Imagine disability, now imagine life with this problem.” Regulating sameness and difference, this trope makes both appear more simple than they are. Sameness, then, is what the community has come to expect; while difference, wrapped in the shape of disability, is the unexpected—nonetheless caught within the singular meaning of the problem of lack of function and the need to do things differently.

David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder tell us that the “ubiquitous presence of conventional disability narrative patterns tends to short-circuit public awareness about the social circumstances in which disability becomes enmeshed.”<sup>23</sup> Like a stock character, disability appears in the news, capable of making the ordinary wondrous or the wondrous exotic, but the circumstances in which disability is enmeshed, namely, as an invitation to readers by the news media to *imagine*, typically remains beneath notice. Insofar as repetitive patterns of recognition short-circuit awareness, what might these patterns have done to imagination itself? Recall that the representation of disability as lack of function is deployed by nation states to produce rates of disability in their populations followed by programmatic regimes and other daily practices that also carry the same meaning, namely, that disability is lack of function resulting in difficulty. This version of disability relies on an alienated form of imagination since only difficulty and not the fullness of life is admitted into disability. As Rod Michalko reminds us, it is often the case that the only included version of disability is a conventional one and this conventional way of patterning the recognition of disability short-circuits any need not only for awareness but, more critically, for imagination.<sup>24</sup> Instead, we encounter disability as a restricted set imaginary.

Monitoring misconceptions of disability and their subsequent misrepresentations perpetuated by the news media is not, however, the only possible response.<sup>25</sup> If “documenting damage” or “consciousness raising” are not alone sufficient to enact change,<sup>26</sup> perhaps another option is to discern how this repetitive cultural practice of requesting people to “imagine disability, and now imagine life with such a problem” teaches us something about the “human imaginary” itself. The news media represents a cultural production tied to a normative order produced by the contemporary neoliberal capitalist societal structures. This means that the news media is a site for engaging the human imaginary and its use of disability, a site that might invite us to theorize imagination. To this end, let us turn back to the media’s request to *imagine disability*.

## Human Imaginary

There are many theorists who draw out the social character of imagination and the production of human imaginaries.<sup>27</sup> One explicit in his sociological sense of imagination, is Charles Taylor who says of the “modern social imaginary”:

I am thinking rather of the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.<sup>28</sup>

Taylor is suggesting that there is a kind of social function at the heart of the imaginative productive process—the play of social imaginaries reflects a version of existence where people, things, events are made to fit together; where things are thought to go on in integrated ways; ways that meet social expectations. Earlier, I suggested that the invitation to imagine disability requires a non-imaginative, that is, a rigidly structured and taken-for-granted way of bringing disability to mind. This is a bio-pathological version of disability—lack of function that leads to difficulty doing things considered normal for a human being—the bio-pathological remains not only unimaginative but also strictly and repetitively ordinary. Still, this might reflect what Taylor means by *modern social imaginary* since it reduces the life of disability to a question of function and cuts off any other possibilities while ordering how it is we think we fit together.

*Imagine disability* materially inaugurates the reader’s expectation for an image of lack of function and functioning differently but, differently from what? Different from an imagined normalcy. Disability is made different from the norms and expectations that frame life as unconnected to difficulty pictured as normal life. *Imagine disability* can be read as actually an invitation to imagine normal life—its existence is imagined in contradistinction to a difficult life insofar as difficulty is continually symbolized by disability and vice versa.

What requires a much more fanciful form of imagination is how disability and non-disability “fit together” in a social existence imagined as basically without disability. We are invited to imagine a normative order that is regarded as not difficult. Disability, in this sense, is a quantitative departure from non-difficulty; the more difficulty the more disability.<sup>29</sup> Normalcy is “not difficult”—this is the imagined social existence, the mode by which things are meant to go on and through which people might fit together, and this is also how things are imagined for how they ought to be between people. But, what could be further from the truth! Not everything that is difficult is rooted in disability; not everything that is disability is rooted in difficulty. Still, the normative notion of existence as a smooth and easy relation between people might be the “deep” meaning behind the call to *imagine disability*. Placing all that can be imagined as difficult inside individuals with disabilities is reliant upon a taken-for-granted sense of everyday life as smooth, easy, trouble free, normal as it should be. Moreover, it is challenging to imagine disability as something other than difficulty in functioning and disability all but disappears if difficulty does.

This invites us into the heart of a paradox—*imagine disability*—relies on a notion of disability based in an alienated form of imagination where the reader is asked to separate disability from one’s self, from one’s life, from existence.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, *imagine disability* demands that we fit disability in as, and only as, the tumult of difficulty of doing things differently. *Imagine disability and now imagine life with such a problem* becomes an occasion to show the power of the normative fantasy that, at best, disability is the struggle to get back into the fold of doing things in an expected and smooth fashion. This struggle is conceived as detached from ordinary life lived by ordinary people since it is only individuals with impairments that need to do things in

extraordinary ways and with great difficulty. The ironic non-imaginative notion of *imagine disability* launches the reader pell-mell into the imaginative moment—imagine that existence is not difficult but is instead smooth but if, and only if, one is normal enough to imagine and expect it to be so.

These are the interpretive quandaries that come wrapped up in an invitation to *imagine disability*, quandaries that should make anyone involved in producing media depictions of disability want to uncover them further. Engaging this way of fitting disability and non-disability together is a new call on imagination. As Paul Gilroy puts it, “Our moral and political compass might profitably be reset by acts of imagination.”<sup>31</sup> Imagine disability and non-disability reflecting the meaning of each other, now imagine what this means for the human imaginary with its life of normalcy.

### Disability Imaginaries and Rethinking Normalcy

Through his analysis of disability supports, Dan Goodley suggests that we can treat our practices with disability as “mirrors to” and “markers of” humanity.<sup>32</sup> The folding of disability into a pathological imaginary becomes an invitation to gaze in the mirror and discern where the marks of humanity are made to (dis)appear, and to consider the confines of imagination that operate in a recognizably “human” way. Imagination is a term that can bring to mind the made up, the fanciful, the creative wanderings of individual psyches. However, the notion of imagination as an ephemeral individual creative wellspring needs to be conceived alongside the rather solid inescapable fact that imagination works through the already established words and deeds of culture, including its set imaginaries. Conceiving of imagination as a meeting point between the made and the really made up, as well as between alienation and engagement, permits us to encounter the invitation to imagine as an “enworlded phenomenon,”<sup>33</sup> potentially tied to the disruption of the same or, even, to making something new. This enworlded sense of imagination brings together things, people and events with expectations of the normative order while also pulling things or people or events apart since we can imagine a different social existence. As a particular form of assemblage, the invitation to *imagine disability* both mirrors and marks the intersection of the already made and the really made up in the simultaneity of what is both repetitive and productive in the human imaginary.

Given this, let us now return to the invitation to imagine: “Can you imagine waking up every morning and doing what she did without being able to feel or move anything below your neck?”<sup>34</sup>

The reader is asked to imagine something ordinary—waking up in the morning. But the reader is also invited to put this together with something extraordinary, namely, not being able to do things, to feel or move from the neck down. As we have already uncovered, the reader is invited to imagine waking up *as* lack of function causing difficulty. This serves to bring to mind the image that waking up and getting on with one’s day as disabled is filled with difficulty, which requires imagining that one should wake up to the day without a second thought. The reader is brought to this sense of normalcy by blocking the sense that getting on with one’s day always requires work, even while not disabled. Moreover, *producing* this image of disability required work: it required the work of re-presenting disability as such; to do whatever must be done in order to stay within the confines of this restricted social imaginary.

The taken-for-granted nature of the work of everyday life can be left unnoticed by focusing on the obviousness of work only by those who are depicted as disabled. While the type of work is undoubtedly different between disabled and non-disabled people, readers have been delivered into the normative expectation to understand some people as if they alone embody difficulty since they mark a radically alienated form of existence. This difference, imagined pathologically,

serves to alienate self from other, making difference into strangeness, while producing the sense that doing ordinary things is normally done without effort, without work.

Imagine your life if you had a disability. How many things might you have to give up on? Walking? Sports?

Now imagine you were a professional race car driver who suffered traumatic brain injuries. Medical professionals tell you, you will never recover, let alone drive again.

Rick Bye must not have received the memo.<sup>35</sup>

With the pathological imaginary at play, disability becomes a lack of function where things are not only difficult, but impossible to do. Once disabled, you will need to give things up insofar as this “you” is a non-disabled you who walks and does sports; but not now, now that medical professionals say that you will not recover. “Now imagine ...” something else: imagine what you are not, namely, disabled *and* a professional car racer (however, do so while not imagining that you are someone producing or consuming disability news). The disability imaginary is conceived as a parting of ways with the capacity to do things alongside the smooth ordinary flow of daily life that includes not only a lack of difficulty but also an abundance of possibility—walking, sports, racing cars and a capacity to imagine it all (while dis-attending to reading and/or producing the news). Normalcy conceived of *as* natural is made separate from disability conceived of *as* pathological and this separation is made prevalent and powerful through the underlying assumption that normalcy *is* possibility and *is* separate from disability since disability is imaged as nothing but limiting.<sup>36</sup> Non-disability is normal, natural and full of possibility; whereas disability is pathological, not natural and full of limitation. Struggling back into the fold of normalcy requires the almost superhuman invocation of the human spirit (which need not read the memo).

Even as this imaginary serves to aggrandize normal life it, nonetheless, can remind all people of the interpretive tensions that constitute existence, tensions that are kept alive even as a functional normalcy seems the be-all and the end-all of the modern era. Indeed, this particular “realist” notion of disability begins to seem key to the operation of normal everyday life. Is this tantamount to encountering disability as integral to the smooth workings of normalcy or, at least, as inviting the reader to imagine it as such?

Even for the fully able-bodied, the world can be a cruel and challenging place to navigate. In northwest Michigan, we know all too well about low wages, unemployment, underemployment and the zigzagging path to providing enough for yourself or your family. Imagine if, through no choice of your own, you were dealt an even harder card to play. For people with developmental disabilities in this region—and every other, for that matter—often times the impediment to independence and happiness is a lack of opportunity.<sup>37</sup>

Fully non-disabled, also through no choice of one’s own, pursuing, perhaps even achieving independence and happiness despite a relative lack of opportunity—this is the imagined underside to the “imagine if you had a disability.” Along with being a fanciful version of life, it is fascinating that normal life seems to need disability, needs it to be really far out and alienated, as this helps to make fanciful versions of normal life less noticeable. Fitting disability and non-disability together via the invitation to “imagine” relies on a dividing line between the pathological and the normal and on the assumed normalcy of not thinking about the work needed to produce all that gets configured as normal—ease, resources, doing things. Still, the reader is asked to imagine and this risks the possibility of doing so in ways that fall outside of the confines of the news article’s restricted imaginary. Could not the production of news media benefit from playing a bigger role in bringing to attention the sorts of disability imaginaries it puts into circulation? If



so, this would require focusing on the background order of normalcy against which disability is typically made to show up as unwanted difficulty.

## Conclusion

While disability imaginaries bring to awareness difficulty; they do not typically make us aware of the more fanciful relation to normal existence that lies behind the *imagine disability* invitation; nor do they expect that the reader begin by imagining what this disability imaginary potentiates. Normal existence, the one we are not expected to think about,<sup>38</sup> typically remains unthought when we are asked to imagine disability. And yet, imagination remains. It is, after all, possible to imagine a version of the human that would permit readers to imagine disability as life itself; doing things, even difficult things, but still a life that is more and other than what we know and believe disability to be.<sup>39</sup>

Instead of conceiving of disability as just something that affects the living of life, it is possible to begin to imagine *life* in disability. My analysis would not have been possible without such an image. Imagining waking up and not moving, for example, could be waking up into the immediacy of interdependency, the immediacy of human relations and thus awaken an image of imagination that can acknowledge that disabled life is fully occupied by other people from the moment consciousness dawns. As such, disability is far more provocative than lack of function. This means too that disability experience might be exactly where it is possible to begin to activate an imagination that is not wholly generated by a pathological imaginary.

That we can imagine life in disability, means that imagination is not simply a capacity to conjure images from nothing that currently exists into something that does; nor is it merely calling to mind images of what is no longer in front of us. Instead, imagination is a form of intimacy with the materiality of life since everything that appears does so in relation to existing meanings that can be worked with—lived—in unexpected ways. Just as Gerard Goggin has shown that there is no clear account of mobile web accessibility;<sup>40</sup> there is no clear account of whether media producers are accessing their own conceptions of disability or not. There has been some research showing the manner in which disability is represented, but little work that demonstrates that media producers have taken an interpretive *reflexive turn* when it comes to disability.<sup>41</sup> Until the act of interpretation as an inescapable aspect of media production is taken into account, that is, until media analysis moves behind its realistic and/or truthful accounts of disability in order to unpack the social imaginaries that have made these accounts possible, the complex political and social phenomenon that disability *is* will remain under-represented and, perhaps, hidden in our reactions. Disability must be more than an inability to do things in a way considered normal by human beings.

That imagination is an activity reflective of the constraints of convention and can yet enact a rupture of convention, means that imagination can be read as a relation to the world and destined for it. As pathological and alienating as disability imaginaries are, they can still be occasions where people might invite engagement with embodiment that potentiate courses of action in the world, that might do something other than reproduce more of the same. *Imagine disability ...* could be a mutually co-constitutive form of engagement between disability and non-disability.

In this, there is but a small hope.

Yet, it is one that we could aim to imagine.

## Notes

- 1 That imagination is enworlded is a basic assumption of critical work informed by phenomenology. See endnote 27 as well as 33 for resources to support this approach.
- 2 Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institutions of Society* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1987). See also, Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (New York: Citadel Press, 1966).

- 3 Dan Goodley, "Theorising Disability and the Human," in *Critical Readings in Interdisciplinary Disability Studies*, ed. Linda Ware (Switzerland: Springer, forthcoming).
- 4 Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 51.
- 5 Eve Haque, "In the Name of the National Multicultural Family: The Documentation of Honour Killings and the Pedagogy of Pain," *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 36, (Fall, 2016): 79–97.
- 6 Neither denying nor accepting the social model of disability, or any other model, the approach taken here suggests that made by culture, yet never at one with it, "disability" is a prime place to explore both the meaning of culture and any of its constructs. From this approach, any appearance of disability marks an occasion where we might "break into" the cultural commitments that have helped build the meaning of disability—in this case, break into those assumptions that make disability newsworthy.
- 7 Ruth Styles, "Can You Imagine Changing a Nappy with Your TEETH? Disabled Mother Who Can't Use Her Arms or Legs Reveals How She Copes with Two Young Children," *Daily Mail*, March 26, 2013, [www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2299358/Disabled-mother-use-arms-legs-reveals-comes-young-children.html#ixzz3Ysw0DpVO](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2299358/Disabled-mother-use-arms-legs-reveals-comes-young-children.html#ixzz3Ysw0DpVO).
- 8 Susan Wagner-White, "Imagine Getting Through the Day With No Arms. That's My Life Thanks to Thalidomide," *Huffington Post*, February 26, 2015, [www.huffingtonpost.ca/susan-wagnerwhite/thalidomide-right-the-wrong\\_b\\_6754084.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/susan-wagnerwhite/thalidomide-right-the-wrong_b_6754084.html).
- 9 San Grewal and Jackie Hong, "Star Reporter Barbara Turnbull Overcame Debilitating Injury to Carve out a Superlative Career," *Toronto Star*, May 10, 2015, [www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/05/10/star-reporter-barbara-turnbull-overcame-debilitating-injury-to-carve-out-a-superlative-career.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/05/10/star-reporter-barbara-turnbull-overcame-debilitating-injury-to-carve-out-a-superlative-career.html).
- 10 Shane Elliott, "Disabled Drivers Conquer Mosport," *Autofocus*, July 10, 2014, [www.autofocus.ca/news-events/features/disabled-drivers-conquer-mosport](http://www.autofocus.ca/news-events/features/disabled-drivers-conquer-mosport).
- 11 Lisa Esposito, "Young, Blind and Dealing With It," *U.S. News*, November 13, 2015, <http://health.usnews.com/health-news/patient-advice/articles/2015/11/13/young-blind-and-dealing-with-it>.
- 12 Craig Currier, "Ceremony Draws Awareness to Key Issue," *Petoskey News-Review*, October 28, 2015, [www.petoskeynews.com/news/opinion/craig-currier-ceremony-draws-awareness-to-key-issue/article\\_625cc974-0d39-5326-a73f-919560a0ab15.html](http://www.petoskeynews.com/news/opinion/craig-currier-ceremony-draws-awareness-to-key-issue/article_625cc974-0d39-5326-a73f-919560a0ab15.html).
- 13 Statistics Canada, Housing, Family and Social Statistics Division, *A New Approach to Disability Data* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2002), [www.publications.gc.ca/site/eng/238891/publication.html](http://www.publications.gc.ca/site/eng/238891/publication.html). For a fuller discussion of such surveys, see Tanya Titchkosky, "Totally a Problem: Government Survey Texts," *Reading and Writing Disability Differently* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 45–78.
- 14 Statistics Canada, Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, *Canadian Survey on Disability 2012: Concepts and Methods Guide* (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2014), 5, [www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2014001-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2014001-eng.htm).
- 15 Statistics New Zealand, "Definitions," *New Zealand Disability Survey*, June 17, 2014, [www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/health/disabilities/DisabilitySurvey\\_HOTP2013/Definitions.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/health/disabilities/DisabilitySurvey_HOTP2013/Definitions.aspx).
- 16 World Health Assembly (WHO), *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH)* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 1980), 28.
- 17 World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability: Summary* (Geneva: WHO and the World Bank, 2011), 7–8. See any of the definitions of disability used to conduct disability surveys around the globe for this functional conception of disability at <http://disabilitysurvey.checkdesign.de>.
- 18 The literature that engages disability images is extensive and empirical analysis of these images is happening around the globe. For an extensive repository of this work, see Beth Haller, <http://media-disability-bibliography.blogspot.ca>. See also, Katie Ellis and Gerard Goggin, *Disability and the media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Lingling Zhang and Beth Haller, "Consuming Image: How Mass Media Impact the Identity of People With Disabilities," *Communication Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2013): 319–334; Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell, *Digital Disability: The Social Construction of Disability in New Media* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
- 19 Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- 20 Ato Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
- 21 Michael Berube, "Representation," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, ed. Adams Rachel, Benjamin Reiss and David Serlin (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 154.
- 22 Beth Haller, Mihaela Dinca-Panaitescu, Marcia Rioux, Andrew Laing, Jessica Vostermans and Paula Hearn, "The Place of News Media Analysis within Canadian Disability Studies," *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 43–74.
- 23 David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "Narrative," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, ed. Adams Rachel, Benjamin Reiss and David Serlin (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 108.

- 24 Rod Michalko, *The Difference that Disability Makes* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 128.
- 25 Marcia H. Rioux, Paula C. Pinto and Gillian Parekh, *Disability, Rights Monitoring, and Social Change: Building Power out of Evidence* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2015); for an analysis of the phenomenon of monitoring itself as it produces versions of disability see Tanya Titchkosky, "Monitoring Disability: The Question of the 'Human' in 'Human Rights Projects,'" in *Disability, Human Rights, and the Limits of Humanitarianism*, ed. Cathy Schlund-Vials and Michael Gill (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Press, 2014), 119–136. For a recent collection that creatively works with mis-recognition, see Christine Kelly and Michael Orsini, *Mobilizing Metaphor: Art, Culture, and Disability Activism in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).
- 26 For the limits of documentation in the enactment of social change, see Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (2009): 409–427, [http://pages.ucsd.edu/~rfrank/class\\_web/ES-114A/Week%204/TuckHEdR79-3.pdf](http://pages.ucsd.edu/~rfrank/class_web/ES-114A/Week%204/TuckHEdR79-3.pdf).
- 27 The following theorists, who address the concept of imagination as well as raise the question of the human imaginary, have influenced me greatly: Benedict Anderson, Hannah Arendt, Chiara Botticci, Cornelius Castoriadis, Franz Fanon, Paul Gilroy, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Charles Taylor, Sylvia Wynter and Richard Zaner.
- 28 Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 106.
- 29 Georges Canguilhem suggests that "enlightened" formulations of the pathological have followed "the thesis according to which pathological phenomena are identical to corresponding normal phenomena save for the quantitative variations"—that is, too much or too little of what is otherwise regarded as the normal state. *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, [1966] 1991), 35.
- 30 This reflects Karl Marx's delineation of "alienation" in the 1844 Manuscripts.
- 31 Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 53.
- 32 Goodley, "Theorizing Disability." Thanks to Goodley (personal communication, May 19, 2016) for suggesting that perhaps imagination could disrupt the functionalist imaginal politics that typically surrounds disability.
- 33 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge Classics, 1945), xxii; for imaginary as distinct from ideology, opinions or collective consciousness see Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs. "The Fourth Age and the Concept of a 'Social Imaginary': A Theoretical Excursus," *Journal of Aging Studies* 27 (2013): 368–376; see also Chiara Botticci, *Imaginal Politics: Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
- 34 Grewal and Hong, "Star Reporter Barbara Turnbull Overcame."
- 35 Elliott, "Disabled Drivers Conquer Mospport."
- 36 For a further exploration of limit supposedly alienated from possibility, see Tanya Titchkosky, "The Ends of the Body as Pedagogic Possibility," in *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, special issue "Health, Embodiment, and Visual Culture," ed. Sarah Brophy and Janice Hladjk, 34, no. 3–4 (2012): 82–93.
- 37 Currier, "Ceremony Draws Awareness to Key Issue."
- 38 "One of the most 'abnormal' things about being 'normal' is attending to its production." Michalko, *The Difference*, 82.
- 39 Stiker, *A History of Disability*, 51.
- 40 Gerard Goggin, "Disability and Web Mobility," *First Monday* 20, no. 9 (2015): 1–19, <http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/rt/prinTerFriendly/6171/4906>.
- 41 I have discussed this elsewhere as the politics of wonder that requires a restless reflexive return to what we already say and do with disability. For an example, consider the final chapter of Tanya Titchkosky, *The Question of Access* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).