

“ALMOST MERELY” PORTRAYED:
DEPICTIONS OF DEAFNESS AND DISABILITY
IN ADAPTATIONS OF HUGO’S *NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS*
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On April fifteenth in 2019, in the early evening hours, an errant spark set alight one of Paris's most famous architectural and national icons: The Notre Dame Cathedral. As the fire engulfed the upper portions of the eight-hundred-year-old cathedral in smoke and flame, the structural integrity of Notre-Dame began to fail; at about 8 PM the cathedral's single spire collapsed inwards upon itself, sending tongues of glittering sparks into the Parisian night sky. It is said that among those onlookers below, some people gasped, but most were silent. Shortly after the spire fell, the flames spread into the Northern Tower and traveled into the framing, which cradled eight of the ten massive bells housed within the cathedral. Had the bells of Notre-Dame fallen, it is speculated that they would have pulled the two towers down around them, leveling what remained of the cathedral. That being said, the framing held steadfast, and the bells did not fall. As the people of France—and much of the world for that matter—watched on in abject horror, French President Emmanuel Macron lamented publicly with his citizens, saying “Notre-Dame is our history, it's our literature, it's our imagery. It's the place where we live our greatest moments, from wars to pandemics to liberations. This is our history. And it burns” (“A Fire Guttled”). This cry encompassed a deep pain for and a strong national identification with the Notre-Dame Cathedral, and it rang with a sentimentality that has been echoing for nearly two centuries from one of the most recognizable works of French literature, the Victor Hugo novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*, or as it is more commonly referred to in modernity—*The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*.

Just as Notre-Dame is emblematic of Parisian prosperity, national pride, and resilience today, the cathedral held a similar spot of fondness and pride in the heart of French novelist Victor Hugo nearly two hundred years ago when he wrote his famous novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*. In writing this novel, it was Hugo's intention to illustrate to his readership, and hopefully,

his fellow French citizens, the grandeur and importance of Notre-Dame as a symbol of French and Parisian pride and reverence with long and rambling descriptions of the cathedral's architectural nuances and piecemeal construction. Though the popularity of the novel has been consistent since publication, it is arguable that the novel's popularity came not from its descriptions of medieval and renaissance architecture, but from the man housed within that architecture: the fictional bellringer, Quasimodo. The attraction to Quasimodo was not for his character as a person, though. Instead, the draw to Quasimodo was because of the spectacle of his body. As a deaf man, with an anomalous body, hidden up in the towers of Notre-Dame, Quasimodo offered spectacle, mystery, and even a bit of horror within the novel. He is a person outside of the "norm". As the novel gained subsequent adaptations over the next few centuries, the interest in the story, the depicted plot, as well as the title of the story itself shifted away from the cathedral and onto the character Quasimodo, a character famous for having an anomalous body, most notably an intensely curved spine for which he—as well as the novel—have been nicknamed and renamed "*The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*". Regardless though, in looking at Notre-Dame as a center for French national pride and cultural identification, and looking at Quasimodo as a living symbol of anomaly and otherness, there is an interesting and even unusual dynamic at play in their pairing. This complicated dynamic can be explored by understanding Lennard Davis' work *Constructing Normalcy* wherein he explains that disabled peoples and those with anomalous bodies are not only pushed to the margins of society and othered but that they are seen as "a rebellion of the visual, [and] must be regulated, rationalized, [and] contained" (2175). Understandably then, it is peculiar and even rare that the anomalous, deaf, disabled, and marginalized are situated within the heart of a nation. On the contrary, in writing a novel aimed at defining a nation's very soul, it would follow that such populations should be placed as far

from the center of cultural identity as possible. Yet Hugo's novel places the character Quasimodo, a deaf and disabled man with an anomalous body within the Notre-Dame Cathedral at the same time as he is vying for the cathedral's worth as a relic of French identity. Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris* is not just a celebration of the cathedral, but an exploration of the anomalous, disabled, and deaf body interposed on the heart of a culture. In doing so, Hugo is complicating the marginal, bringing marginalized populations into the nation's construction of identity, and bending popular period tropes in order to question common beliefs and treatments of the deaf and disabled at the time.

That being said, this kind of conversation can only be achieved with intentional care in the exploration of the intersectionality between deafness, the anomalous body, community, and cultural identity. Furthermore, much of this conversation depends then on the presentation and characterization of Quasimodo as he appears in the novel as an embodiment of these traits. It is unfortunate then, that the weight of such characterization has not always been felt by those adapting this popular story. Indeed, in one of the most famous adaptations of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, the Disney animated film: *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, Quasimodo is portrayed in such a way that he, and consequently the story, are nearly unrecognizable next to Hugo's original work save for Quasimodo's signature spinal curvature and his name. Not only was the plot of the story severely edited, but Quasimodo's deafness is erased, his personality domesticated, and his anomalous body pacified into something more friendly and palatable to the same normative gaze that sought to regulate, rationalize, and contain the other.

Alas, the omission, erasure, and domestication of disability and physical anomaly in both real and literary people is nothing new. It is only within the last century that an understanding of how these normative acts affect disabled populations and that the field of "disability studies" has

become a formalized discipline. Since then, disability activists and scholars have worked for equitable and representative literature and adaptations of such literature and challenged works that do not meet those standards. It is my intention in this paper to examine the act of erasing disability and deafness of literary characters on a micro-scale, focusing on a single work of literary fiction. As could probably be assumed, I will be focusing on Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. This novel was selected for both its prose and popularity, as well as the simple fact that the story has garnered many adaptations since its publication in 1831. Thus, in this paper, I will be examining Victor Hugo's novel, as well as two subsequent adaptations with a particular focus on deafness and themes of community and communication. The first of these adaptations will be the previously mentioned Disney film animation, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, in which Quasimodo's deafness was intentionally erased and his anomalous body domesticated. The second adaptations will be the 5th Avenue Theater's 2018 musical-theater production (Also titled *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*) which intentionally approached Quasimodo's deafness, disabilities, and anomalous body with the novel's work in mind, as well as a hyper-awareness towards modern discourses surrounding disabled and deaf representation in media. Of course, the concession must be made that it is the nature of adaptive works to "pick and choose" parts of the original source material that rhetorically, visually, and functionally fit the end goals of the adaptation. Even so, the act of normalizing disabled characters in adapted works not only hinders the work of the source material but is also an act of normative society deciding which disabilities, if any, are palatable and which are not. In examining representations of deafness, disability, and the anomalous body across multiple adaptations of the same story, it highlights the integral nature of equitable and representative adaptations of deaf and disabled characters from the original source into adapted works – which though obvious to some, is in many cases still a

lofty expectation. The selective erasure and omission of the disability and deafness of literary characters is important to be aware of because it is through small acts of omission and erasure that ableism finds footing, that the important strides made in deaf and disabled representation are diminished, and the work of breaking down those societal strictures of normalcy are hindered from progress.

Before beginning with an examination of Hugo's original work, I would like to further explain my intentions in focusing on *Notre-Dame de Paris* as the hinge of this discussion. In choosing this story and examining its role in representative media, it is not my intention to propose *Notre-Dame de Paris*, in any form, as the pinnacle of deaf or disabled representation. It would be remiss of me to ignore that there are many people within these communities that look upon the story with some level of contempt or at least apathy. In a survey taken by Dynelle Fields et al., upon interviewing deaf literature students about representation in classical literature, it was found that many students found Quasimodo to be "not only inauthentic [to their experiences], but also offensive" in how Quasimodo's treatment within the novel is emblematic of the cruel and stigmatic views of deaf peoples from the 15th century onward (Fields et al. 95). In his work exploring the Disney animated film adaptation, Martin Norden describes the ways that the film's production teams often intentionally ignored and silenced the voices and views of disabled peoples who were against the project (Norden 164). Taking these criticisms of *Notre-Dame de Paris* into account (whatever the adaptation), I would argue that while the story may not have been written with modern disability discourses in mind, it does show the necessity and lack of communication and community that have historically plagued the deaf and disabled communities. Furthermore, the act of exploring historical representations of deafness and disability lay important groundwork in understanding not only the history of those populations

but also the present views and treatments of them. In doing so, this story is not about a perfect representation of a deaf or disabled person, but instead a prime representation of the consequences of the normative world acting on such a person. As such, this novel is a prime candidate for examining the gutting effect that misrepresentation, erasure, and poor adaptations can have on the work that representation of deaf and disabled peoples does not only in reference to the work the story does, but to the larger societal implications of that work as well.

In looking at *Notre-Dame de Paris* through a lens of disability studies, my first inclination was to address and then largely move away from Hugo's obsession with the cathedral as an architectural work in favor of focusing my attentions on Quasimodo's characterization inside the cathedral. As I began constructing this analysis though, like Hugo's novel, it seemed that the Notre-Dame Cathedral became an inseparable touchstone and one that I will decidedly return to throughout this discussion. Acknowledging this as well as the aforementioned tensions that shadow the novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*' exploration of deafness, disability, and the anomalous body goes beyond the metaphorical situating of a marginalized person at the heart of a cultural relic. Indeed, some of the major themes the novel explores through its focus on Quasimodo pertain to difficulties in communication and the importance of community, both of which are also largely a part of the history and struggle of both the deaf and disabled communities. For context, in the 15th century there was very little recognized organization to the formation of a formal deaf community. Undoubtedly what existed which might mirror a modern deaf community was likely small pockets of deaf individuals who chanced upon one another or shared in congenital deafness. In her work about the historical experience of deaf people in the 19th century, *Deafness: Representation, Sign Language, and Community, c. 1800-1920*, Esme Cleall explains that it was not until the 19th century that the western deaf population gained a

public interest – and not infrequently a public obsession – of the hearing population.

Coincidentally, this was also the period in which Victor Hugo wrote *Notre-Dame de Paris*.

Cleall also explores the representation of the deaf as well as the development of deaf culture and community within the Victorian period in which Hugo lived and wrote. Although the plot of *Notre-Dame* takes place in the 15th century it is important to note that Hugo's intentions for the novel had modern interests and rhetorical goals and therefore were likely to mirror those interests of the population and audience for whom he wrote. Cleall goes on to describe that within the 19th and early 20th centuries the deaf population was seen as set apart from the larger more "pitiable" and charity-worthy disabled populations for a number of reasons (1). For one, the deaf were unable to hear the "word of God" being spoken in churches and therefore were seen as exiled from the religious communities, furthermore little effort was put into educating deaf peoples within normative education systems, or even in general, and finally the pathologizing of deafness and medical advancements of the period offered little to no "solutions" for the "problem" at hand (1-2). Remembering Davis' *Constructing Normalcy*, this normative frustration was likely heightened by the societal sense that the deaf, as well as any other disabled peoples, must be "normalized" and integrated into normative society (24). That being said, the exasperation that normative society held towards the deaf population was met with action. Cleall describes in her work that, "while medical and technological treatments for deafness were limited, education was highly prized as a means of "reaching", "treating", or "saving" the deaf" (2). Often that education was at the hands of the religious (Cleall 2). In writing *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Hugo seemed to have an awareness of these cultural perspectives about deafness and chose not only to explore them within his novel but in some places perhaps even challenge them.

Considering then Hugo's call for the cathedral's reverence, and what appears to be an understanding of the cultural norms of the period in which he lived, we return then to Hugo's placement of Quasimodo, a deaf, disabled, and anomalously bodied man, at the heart of Notre-Dame. In her work regarding Hugo's focus on the cathedral, Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston describes the importance of the cathedral in understanding the larger themes at play in the novel when she explains that, "understanding the book cathedral relationship leads to a more profound reading of the book" and understanding of the story (24). Though I would perhaps exchange the word "profound" with "thorough," I would agree with scholar Zarifopol-Johnston in her notion that the dramatic plot of the novel should not, as it has often been, be divorced from the novel's long and rambling prose regarding the cathedral. This is especially so when considering representations of deafness and disability within the novel. In looking, though, at *Notre-Dame de Paris*' film and theatrical adaptations it would seem that this relationship between the cathedral and all other aspects of the novel, including Quasimodo, fall apart. Instead of acting as a major gesture of symbolic anomaly and national identity, as it does in Hugo's novels, Notre-Dame becomes what could be described as simply as a really neat backdrop. Of course, the fact that Notre-Dame is a cathedral matters to the plot, but in both the play and the animation, it could have been indiscriminately any cathedral. While this may seem small, this matter because Hugo's intention was not just to have an interesting plot in a cathedral, but to propose that Notre-Dame specifically was a place of great national significance and identity, and within that location he placed Quasimodo. In Chapter One of the novel, Hugo details with some anxiety the changes that Notre-Dame has undergone over its lifetime, so much so that the cathedral is hardly recognizable with its original construction. That being said, Hugo ends this passage with this description of the cathedral:

However, all these shades, all these differences, do not affect the surfaces of edifices only There is always the same internal woodwork, the same logical arrangement of parts. Whatever may be the carved and embroidered envelope of a cathedral, one always finds beneath it—in the state of a germ, and of a rudiment at the least—the Roman basilica . . . Statues, stained glass, rose windows, arabesques, denticulations, capitals, bas-reliefs,—she combines all these imaginings according to the arrangement which best suits her. Hence, the prodigious exterior variety of these edifices, at whose foundation dwells so much order and unity. The trunk of a tree is immovable; the foliage is capricious. (Hugo)

Though not a direct bodily metaphor, Hugo's description of the cathedral as a fragmented by added and subtracted edifices is not far from Lacan's, as well as many disability scholars', understanding of the human body as an imagined whole – a completed collection of parts – whatever their assemblage may be. Indeed, in his final line, Hugo seems to understand that the foundational body, regardless of its “foliage” is still something that is undeniably whole despite what fragmentation may come (Hugo). The 20th century French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan describes his theories surrounding wholeness in his work on the mirror stage as the point in a child's development where they begin to delineate between themselves and “the other” as they encounter their own image in the mirror, as well as images of other people who either reflect their sense of self or are “other” (Lacan 1112-14). Predating Lacan's work by over one-hundred years, Hugo is then declaring the cathedral, a site of national identity, as a fragmented and imperfect whole. And though Hugo's ideas of wholeness precede Lacan's later philosophies, the concept of an unideal national identity predates Hugo's novel and his call to France. In *Constructing Normalcy*, Davis describes that in the early 17th century the ideal human body was not seen as it is in modernity as the average human body, but as an unobtainable goal (24-25). It

was a construction not obtainable by any humans and comprised of the best parts from all kinds of people. Consequently, this meant that all people were in some way imperfect or unideal. Some were further from the ideal than others, but there was no standard achievable assemblage of pieces that could or would define what it was to be “normal”, this idea of normalcy would not come until around the 19th century with the advent of western statistics (Davis 24). It is interesting then that Hugo would ask France to identify with something as unideal and anomalous as he describes Notre-Dame to be. In pushing for the nations identifying with Notre-Dame, Hugo is explicitly implying that the nation and its people should identify not with an “ideal”, but instead with a wholeness comprised of many parts. The cathedral itself is an anomalous body added to, cut to pieces, burned, and rebuilt. In being an anomalous body itself, Hugo’s Notre-Dame is not an untouchable relic, but a cradle for the anomalous. Within this cradle Hugo placed Quasimodo whose very name translates to “almost merely”, and who is described as “incomplete, and hardly sketched out ... blind, hunchbacked, knock-kneed, was only an “almost” (Hugo). It is inside the imperfect and fragmented heart of France that Hugo places an intentional human mirror of that imperfect fragmentation and challenges those normative notions that the deaf and disabled belong in the margins of society. In the telling of Quasimodo’s story in *Notre-Dame de Paris*, that Hugo begins to approach some of the larger conversations pertaining to the deaf and disabled, many of which are in some ways still going on today: the importance of community development, and understanding of the significance of communication in the lives of the deaf and disabled. Though the telling of *Notre-Dame de Paris* is expected to differ between adaptations in what is highlighted or underplayed, I would argue that it is paramount in any adaptation to preserve the work done by the original story.

Invoking Lacan's ideas about wholeness and the fragmented self, Davis describes that Lacan's "mirror stage" is the developmental stage wherein a person sees their own image in the mirror and identifies with that separated, mirrored "self" therefore rendering its sense of self fragmented (Davis 1112-14). This means that Quasimodo would not have known that he was any different from another until he was met with his own image in comparison with that of the normative bodies of others. The self-image that Quasimodo has for himself is largely based on what he sees in the mirror, and on the paternal image of what a person "should" be like, Frollo. Claude Frollo being Quasimodo's only true source of interaction and community is consequently the only human to which Quasimodo can try to ascertain his sense of "self" through. While Quasimodo is described at best as an "almost", Claude Frollo is described to be a tall, imperious, and severe man, devoutly religious and proudly academic (Hugo). It is inevitable that the child Quasimodo would search for a mirror for himself through which he might begin to understand his own self of personhood within his anomalous and disabled body. That being said, Quasimodo's upbringing is carried out by an individual who looks nothing like Quasimodo, and importantly, does not attempt to offer Quasimodo the opportunity to see any other people in the world with whom he might begin to develop a positive sense of wholeness, self, and community. In fact, from the outset, Frollo acts as might be expected of normative society. He names the child he takes in "Quasimodo" which, as previously stated, roughly translates to "almost-merely", solidifying the assumption that Quasimodo, because of his anomalous body can never be anything but an unwhole, fragmented, almost. The telling of this portion of Quasimodo's story is fairly standard across most interpretations, with a few small variances in the reasoning behind why Frollo chose to adopt Quasimodo – in the Disney film he killed Quasimodo's Romani mother and is looking for forgiveness from God, and in the novel and play he is looking

to gain favor with God. The sentiment is similar enough so as to be fairly inconsequential. If nothing else, it seems to be understood universally that the anomalous “should” be locked away, hidden, and isolated from the rest of normative society. That being said, as detailed earlier in this paper, it is the novel’s intense relationship with the cathedral as an architectural anomaly that grounds Quasimodo’s tragic isolation as more than just the sequestering away of another anomalous body, as was so often done. What’s more, is that it is the Notre-Dame Cathedral in the novel with whom Quasimodo build a self-constructed community and in the Lacanian sense, an identification with a body which mirrors his own – even more so when he is appointed bell ringer by Frollo. Hugo describes that “It is thus that, little by little, developing always in sympathy with the cathedral, living there, sleeping there, hardly ever leaving it, subject every hour to the mysterious impress, [Quasimodo] came to resemble it, he incrustated himself in it, so to speak, and became an integral part of it. His salient angles fitted into the retreating angles of the cathedral (if we may be allowed this figure of speech), and he seemed not only its inhabitant but more than that, its natural tenant” and when becomes the bell ringer, “[Quasimodo] caught hold, mechanically, of the ropes to the towers, and hung suspended from them, and set the bell to clanging, it produced upon his adopted father, Claude, the effect of a child whose tongue is unloosed and who begins to speak” (Hugo). It is obvious from these passages that Quasimodo’s isolation was met with a self-identification with the cathedral and in the place of communication and community; Quasimodo found himself mirrored back to him within the shapes anomalies of the cathedral and used the bells which have names as both friends and a proxy for his own voice. After all, Quasimodo was barred from interacting and creating community with the normative world, the bells were a voice that could daily speak out beyond the walls of Notre-Dame, even if the relationship he had with the normative world was largely parasocial in this respect. This too

is not lost in the adaptations listed. Quasimodo's interest in and isolation from the normative world is more than apparent in both the Disney animation as well as the musical. Both adaptations feature the same song titled, "Out There" wherein Quasimodo describes his desire to join in with the actions and communities of normative society. In the musical theater adaptation, there are some lines added, but the song is identical in message and meaning. At the beginning of the song, Frollo attempt to remind Quasimodo that he is too different to interact with the normative world. That being said, Quasimodo, though anomalous, seems to not accept that there is no place for himself in the normative world. Just as Quasimodo desires to join in with normative society in the novel, the Quasimodo of both the Disney animation as well as the 5th Avenue Theater's production desire a community. In both iterations of the song "Out There", Quasimodo describes that, "Just one day and then // I swear I'll be content // With my share // Won't resent // Won't despair // Old and bent // I won't care // I'll have spent // One day // Out there" (Cite Songs). Regardless of the fact that Quasimodo understands that he might be rejected, he desires that community with which he can identify. He wants to be "out there", whatever that means, instead of isolated. It is in this act of bucking against the normative strains of Frollo's imposed isolation in search of community that is then complicated by the deafening of the young Quasimodo and it is in the subsequent adaptations and representations of Quasimodo's deafness that the conversations about Quasimodo's ability to develop communication and community differ so greatly and the importance of representative adaptations is made most apparent.

In Hugo's novel, Quasimodo is deafened at age fourteen by the bells from which he had so fondly gained a community and a voice from. Hugo writes that, "the bells had broken the drums of his ears; he had become deaf. The only gate which nature had left wide open for him had been abruptly closed, and forever" and "in closing, it had cut off the only ray of joy and of

light which still made its way into the soul of Quasimodo. His soul fell into profound night. The wretched being's misery became as incurable and as complete as his deformity" (Hugo). These lines are in line with the sentiment of the time that the deaf were somehow "closed off" from the joys of the hearing world. Cleall quotes an anonymous source from the 19th century saying that the lives of the deaf "perpetual and cheerless silence" (Anon. 1864: 5-6 qt. in Cleall 2).

Furthermore, Cleall describes that during the 19th century, many people viewed the deaf as animalistic, unable to be educated, and irreligious based on the fact that they could not hear the word of God in churches (Cleall 2-5). It should go without saying that all of the 19th Century beliefs mentioned above are untrue, but it is those very notions that extended forth to the diminishing of deaf communities, deaf culture, and even the use of signed language. After Quasimodo is deafened, he makes the active choice to be mute and Frollo and Quasimodo develop a signed language between the two of them which is described as, "when the poor bellringer became deaf, there had been established between him and Claude Frollo, a language of signs, mysterious and understood by themselves alone. In this manner, the archdeacon was the sole human being with whom Quasimodo had preserved communication. He was in sympathy with but two things in this world: Notre-Dame and Claude Frollo" (Hugo). Again, the importance of the cathedral to Quasimodo's sense of community and belonging is highlighted, but what is more is that Quasimodo's desire but aversion to the normative world makes sense. Quasimodo desires a community with whom he can associate, communicate, and identify, but at his deafening, he has become a linguistic minority of which there is only one other speaker. The possibility that he would be able to find people with which he could even communicate is next to impossible, and due to the added stigmas, that follow his anomalous body communication and even integration into normative society would be even more difficult. All of this being said, the

importance and inclusion of Quasimodo's deafness has not often been highlighted in the adaptations of this story to visual mediums. Why though, is Quasimodo's anomaly typically preserved, but not his deafness? In their book *Narrative Prosthesis*, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder describe the negotiations that often take place in portraying the anomalous and disabled within visual mediums as, "physical anomalies offer photographic opportunities to display the titillating subject matter of disability" and describe that often, a character's physical appearance is in some way linked to their inner character in the thematic telling of the plot (Mitchell & Snyder 96). Though perhaps titillating is not the first word that comes to mind when considering "the subject matter of disability", it is certainly apt when considering Rosemarie-Garland Thompson's work "Staring at the Other" wherein she explores the ways that the normative world stares at those considered "other", at the spectacle of disability, and with the intention to make sense of what is being stared at when compared to the "norm" (Garland Thompson 2). It might be argued then, that deafness is not as "titillating" because an audience member cannot visually see deafness on a person in the same way that one might view an anomalous body. This notion that deafness is not visual however is largely untrue as much of the communication and interactions among deaf individuals are done through visual means, whether it be signing, pantomime, or lip reading. It is within this failed understanding of the visual and physical nature of deafness that adaptations of *Notre-Dame de Paris* fail to be representative of not only the deaf but also in their explorations of community and communication as they pertain to deafness and the anomalous body.

In the Disney adaption titled *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, it is immediately noticeable that the title of the story has been changed to focus not on the cathedral, but on Quasimodo's anomalous body. From the outset, the title of this film reduces Quasimodo to his anomalousness.

In doing so, an audience would rightfully expect from the film at very least, a hunched back. In changing the title in this way, there is a message of warning, as well as welcome, to a normative audience stating: “Beware! Come in and see the anomalous”. Mitchell and Snyder describe the condensation of character and anomaly as a way of also condensing exposition, that there is an expected level of tragedy, hardship, or horror to be had from the introduction of disability within the visual medium (96). That being said, the Disney animated film adaptation of *Notre-Dame de Paris* is even more confounding in the way that it approaches Quasimodo’s anomalous body and deafness. Whereas the film’s title promises some level of bodily grotesquery, there is an active and conscious effort to avoid even that. While the film does follow a vaguely similar plot to both the novel and the play, there were intentional decisions made to “normalize” and “domesticate” Quasimodo for the film. As film scholar Michael Norden describes, the animators who worked on Quasimodo’s design had difficulties making him look “kid-friendly” and the supervising animator even admitted that the goal was to make Quasimodo “grotesque, downtrodden, and appealing at the same time” (Norden 167). In working towards this goal, the Quasimodo they achieved turned out to be fairly childish looking, round, with toddler-esque features, a sweet-enough face, friendly with a shy demeanor, a wonderful voice, and an explicitly intentional lack of deafness. Aside from using disability as a way to insinuate hardship and abridge plot, Mitchell and Snyder also describe in their book *Narrative Prosthesis* the way that narratives containing disability work to bring those who are disabled or anomalous culturally closer to the defined structure of normalcy. This is what they call “narrative prosthesis”. Illustrated further in the first chapter of *Narrative Prosthesis*, Mitchell and Snyder describe that, “if disability falls too far from the acceptable norm, a prosthetic intervention seeks to accomplish an erasure of difference altogether; yet; failing that, as is always the case with prosthesis, the minimal goal is to return

one to an acceptable degree of difference (7). This means that within narratives containing those with disabilities or anomalous bodies, there is very often an effort made to bring them closer to the norm and as stated later in their book, there is often a moral message, detail of characterization, or even an assumed plot attached to the disabled body as well. Disney seems to be doing all of these things in their characterization of Quasimodo. Not only is he drawn up as a quirky cuddly misfit, but Quasimodo's self-hatred is almost entirely because of his physical appearance. By the end of the film, Quasimodo still has an anomalous body, but he has overcome his shyness and aversion to the outside world and now has friends which as Mitchell and Snyder might put it is a degree closer to "normal" than when he started the film. That being said, there is still the question of Quasimodo's deafness. Norden describes that after this development was through that the decision was made by the creators to then erase two major factors of Quasimodo's identity found in the novel, "his profound deafness... and his self-imposed uncommunicativeness" (Norden 167). There are a number of reasons that Quasimodo's deafness may have been overlooked in this film. First and perhaps most disturbing is that directors Trousdale and Wise who oversaw the design and characterization of Quasimodo, instructed the character designers that he "wanted [Quasimodo] to hear, speak, and sing perfectly well" and to absolutely not be deaf – implying therefore that deaf people can do none of those things. Disturbing prejudices noted, there is also again the assumption alluded to above by Mitchell and Snyder that visual disability sells and that deafness is not a visual disability. In misinterpreting the visual nature of deafness, there is an entire bodily element lost to this film in its immediate erasure of Quasimodo's deafness. Finally, but certainly not exhaustively, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* was an animated film. The logistics of negotiating signed language with hearing characters who did not know the language, the nuances of deaf and hearing

interactions, as well as the time-intensive animation process that would likely follow such things was not something that Disney was likely not willing to pour money into when erasure is completely free and a version of the story could be sketched out without it. In this reforming of Quasimodo into something palatable, affordable, and manageable, we are not only reminded of Davis' descriptions of normative society acting upon the anomalous and disabled body, but we are also privy to the ways that adaptive works can retain the stripped bones of a work all the while intentionally setting aside the heart, soul, and arguably, the brain. The Disney film adaptations not only trivialize the anomalous nature of Quasimodo's body by reducing it to a quirky cuteness that can be overcome through personality, but also erases his deafness, which consequently diminishes any of the work Hugo did in establishing a conversation surrounding deafness.

It is in this space of poor negotiation and erasure that the 5th Avenue Theater's 2018 production of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* musical saw a lack and chose to focus their intentions. As stated earlier the visual medium has a history of using physical anomaly and disability as a rhetorical device and plot structure. I hypothesized that perhaps deafness was left out of this framing because of the initial understanding that an audience member cannot visually see deafness. That being said, though deafness is not visible, the language through which many deaf people communicate is entirely visual and this is where the 5th Avenue Theater's production planted their adaptation of the story. In this production, Quasimodo is played by hard-of-hearing (HOH) actor Joshua Castille. The way the play functioned was that Quasimodo spoke largely in sign language, while also speaking verbally when natural to both the character and story – after all in Hugo's novel, Quasimodo can in fact speak verbally, he just chooses to be mute upon his deafening due to the struggle that he faces in communicating with normative society. The major

musical numbers for Quasimodo however were signed by Castille and verbally sang by EJ Cardona, an actor playing a gargoyle who acts largely as Castille's voice and strongest voice of conscience. I was fortunate enough to interview Castille about his role as Quasimodo and began the interview by asking him about the ways that he chose to negotiate his characterization of Quasimodo as both a deaf and disabled character – being that Castille himself is hard of hearing. Castille described his process as, “I wanted to bring depth to the character. Quasimodo is a very complicated character and he had to find his way through the world. He started with the hunched back, and then his deafness, and plus, plus, plus, plus,” he explained as he described the many defining factors of Quasimodo's sense of self that he had to consider, “All those layers are very complicated to deal with. I had to keep all of that in mind ... And of course, considering that I myself am disabled – well labeled as disabled – it was also considering how society views individuals [like Quasimodo] and how they see me” (“Interview”). Comparing Castille's process of characterization with the process that the Disney production took, there is a stark contrast in the way that they approach both Quasimodo's deafness and anomalous body. Instead of seeing Quasimodo as something intensely difficult to translate to the visual medium, as something to be acted upon, his body negotiated with, and the parts that did not seem fitting, cast away, Castille and the 5th Avenue Theater approached Quasimodo with the knowledge that he may be a very difficult character to actualize given his descriptions in Hugo's novel, but with the intention of bringing the entirety of Quasimodo, even those parts that are more difficult to visually actualize, to fruition. This is the difference between adaptations that are successfully representative and those that are not.

It is within these representative adaptations that we can then see these original themes from Hugo's novel come to life. Returning then to the development of a community that

Quasimodo longs for in every adaptation, there is a dramatic difference in the ways that this is handled in the Disney film and in the 5th Avenue Theater's production. In Hugo's novel, which is largely quite serious, one surprising interaction of community in which Quasimodo finds himself is a small self-made community of gargoyles (grotesque decorative statues characteristic of gothic architecture) with whom he speaks to as he inhabits the towers of Notre-Dame. It is only mentioned a few times in the novel and in passing, but this self-made community that Quasimodo has chosen made its way into many adaptations of the novel, including the two under scrutiny here. In the novel, Hugo describes Quasimodo's relationships with the gargoyles as "The other statues, those of the monsters and demons, cherished no hatred for him, Quasimodo. He resembled them too much for that ... He sometimes passed whole hours crouching before one of these statues, in solitary conversation with it" (Hugo). Remembering Lacan, there is the impression that Quasimodo has chosen the gargoyle statues then, instead of the many statues of saints and apostles that line the edifices of Notre-Dame, because they mirror back to him something closer to the image of himself that he sees. They are kept high up and away from the streets below, they are meant to be frightening, and they are anomalous in their forms, but gargoyles are not evil despite these things. It is in this reflection of himself that Quasimodo finds a sort of community with which he can connect outside of that singular relationship with Frollo with whom he can scarcely identify. In the novel, the gargoyles generally appear as confidants and companions but are depicted very differently between adaptations of the story. In his critique of the Disney film adaptation Norden explains that "For the vast majority of the film's duration, there is no community for him of any sort except for his imaginary gargoyle friends" (Norden). Which is true. As well as being his only source of companionship for most of the film, the gargoyles act as both comic relief and as Norden describes as "split-off chunks of [Quasimodo's]

imagination and represent his conscience, fantasies, etc” (Norden 166). Norden describes with some disgust the role that although the gargoyles in this adaptation do offer community, the kind of community they offer is less than ideal. First, the gargoyles in this adaptation are largely there for comic relief. That being said, much of their humor comes at the expense of Quasimodo, meaning that the community in which Quasimodo has surrounded himself is only slightly better than the one who later rejects him. Norden quotes the gargoyles as saying, “you’re a surprise from every angle” and that they compare the shape of [Quasimodo’s] body to that of a croissant” (Norden 164). These are less the acts of a community in which Quasimodo can identify with and feel safe spending hours talking to, and more so the acts of a normative screenwriting team making jokes about the anomalous body of a man whom they have already stripped of many of his integral character aspects. Not only does this adaptation not preserve Quasimodo’s sense of self, but it also mockingly perpetuates the othering of Quasimodo based on the watered-down versions of his anomalous body that it did keep intact. Although the gargoyles in this film act as guides and givers of advice, their role as Quasimodo’s sole community is not really highlighted, nor are they entirely integral to his character development over time. This is concerning because, as Cleall describes in her work, the formation of community for the deaf in the 19th Century was quickly growing with the advent of formal deaf advocacy organizations and was not only met with an alarming level of resistance, but there was even work done to dismantle what development populations of deaf individuals had made by debating the validity of signed language (Cleall 16-19). As Norden so aptly puts it the gargoyles play a role in the fact that “the movie appears to critique the view that “different” people should be kept separate and isolated, yet simultaneously perpetuates it and worse, wallows in it” by allowing the one community that is supposed to understand and accept Quasimodo, to further stigmatize him (Norden 164). This

rejection of the visually anomalous from production to product is disturbing when paired by the similarly staged and scripted, but very differently interpreted handling of the gargoyles by the 5th Avenue Theater.

One major difference in the play is that the cast of gargoyles is very large. There are many of them for Quasimodo to talk to and interact with, and given the Disney interpretation, there was ample opportunity for an all-out communal assault. That being said, Quasimodo's deafness being preserved in this production, helped to build upon the necessity of the gargoyles as Quasimodo's chosen community and helped to highlight Hugo's exploration of the importance of a representative and familiar community with which one can communicate. After all, Quasimodo created and chose this community for the fact that he sees himself mirrored in them, that he is suddenly deafmute, and that he has no other community (save Frollo) with whom he can talk. The gargoyles in this instance are not there to be funny or make jokes, but exist as a real internalized reaction to the issues that come with the way society reacts to and treats the deaf and those with anomalous bodies. In this way, the gargoyles might also function as a mirror of the modern deaf community: diverse, communal, and able to connect and communicate without concern in their own signed language. In the interview with Castille, the actor who played Quasimodo, I asked him to describe the ways that he negotiated Quasimodo's isolation with the large cast of gargoyles in the musical. Castille's replied that,

“...When my hearing aids are out, it's not silent. People think it's like in movies when you just turn off the sound ... but it's like phantom sounds. ... When our brains don't have enough stimulation, it starts to stimulate itself. So, [Quasimodo] just ... puts every possible perspective ... There was a Filipino woman, there was a guy from New Zealand,

there was a white guy, and there were all these different races and so I thought about it as if my brain was trying to have every one perspective to talk to...”

Castille’s interpretation of the gargoyles surrounding Quasimodo builds upon Hugo’s work in depicting a community for the deaf and disabled as necessary. Quasimodo refuses to live his entire life alone in the towers of Notre-Dame, and the hearing world and normative world has not offered Quasimodo any semblance of community, save for Frollo who despite developing a signed language with Quasimodo, keeps him sequestered away from all opportunity. In following Castille’s interpretation further, the community that Quasimodo creates for himself is one in which Quasimodo is not disabled due to his deafness, nor his anomalous body. His chosen community of gargoyles can understand his signing and sign back, they are comprised of men and women, people of many races and skin colors, and just like him, they are anomalous by their very nature of being gargoyles. It is this self-made community that he can not only talk to and be accepted by, but it is also one in which he is free to exist without the constraints of normative society trying to make sense of his anomaly and one where he is no longer a linguistic minority in a world of people who insist he learn their language instead. In her work on the importance of community for the deaf, “Talking Culture”, Carol Padden describes the ways that institutionalization and sequestering away of the deaf was problematic, but also how the self-recognition that deaf people – many of whom began their lives in hearing communities – felt when surrounded by people they could identify with. Padden describes this as, “for deaf people, the flip side of recognition by mirror is the possibility of elation – not deflation – at being surrounded for the first time in their lives by real-life versions of the self” (Padden 510). It is this idea of communal elation that Padden describes that is emphasized with The 5th Avenue Theaters production. This is also what makes Quasimodo’s disillusionment with normative society all the

more powerful because it is through this heartbreakingly idealistic community that Quasimodo builds that he finds the courage to approach the normative world and it subsequently rejected by it.

In the novel, this breakdown comes shortly after Quasimodo crowned the “Pope of Fools”. During the Carnival celebrations taking place during the novel, a beautiful Romani woman named Esmeralda is dancing and performing for money at the festival. Upon seeing her, Frollo becomes infatuated with her and violently lusts after her for the rest of the novel, eventually at the cost of her life. Abusing Quasimodo’s attachment and trust in him, Frollo convinces Quasimodo to kidnap Esmeralda for him. After being caught in the act, Quasimodo does not expose Frollo but is instead taken to be tried for the attempted assault. While in court, Quasimodo is judged by a judge named Florian, who like Quasimodo, is deaf. Wherein there is a chance for Quasimodo to be seen and understood by another person like himself, where there is perhaps a chance for that communal elation that Padden spoke of, there is instead a complete and utter communicative breakdown. Judge Florian asks Quasimodo questions that Quasimodo does not hear, and Quasimodo never attempts to explain himself for the sake that he did not know he was being asked questions. The two deaf men, who share ample opportunity to connect, talk past one another and Florian eventually sends Quasimodo to be tied up and flogged. This is yet another way in which the normative society in which Quasimodo dreamed of being a part of disables him and once again strips away his chances of communication and even connection. The signed language that Quasimodo knows is only known by him and Frollo and there is no attempt by the people at the trial to aid Florian or Quasimodo in understanding one another. The only time in the novel when somebody really attempts to understand Quasimodo is when he explains to Esmeralda that he is deaf, and cannot yet read her lips. He suggests how they may both learn

to communicate with one another and she agrees. The passage reads, “Yes, I am deaf; but you shall talk to me by gestures, by signs. I have a master who talks with me in that way. And then, I shall very soon know your wish from the movement of your lips, from your look.” (Hugo) It is in this instance that we see Hugo exploring the absolute power of equitable communication and understanding. Wherein one instance Quasimodo is being flogged for a failure in communication, in the next, when he is able to explain and define the terms of what communication looks like between himself and the hearing world, a connection is made. It is shown that it is through no fault of Quasimodo’s that he has struggled to find community and to communicate with other people. It is the underestimation and failures of the normative world (and largely Frollo) that have kept Quasimodo from such things. It is this taste of “normalcy” and acceptance that brings the novel to a bitter close at the hanging of Esmeralda by Frollo, the revenge murder of Claude Frollo by Quasimodo, and then Quasimodo’s suicide. The taste of true communal connection that Quasimodo feels with Esmeralda is stripped away and so he destroys the human embodiment of much of his torment at the hands of normative society and tragically ends his own life through starvation. Though a terribly sad ending, it does boldly highlight the necessity of community and communication not only for the deaf and anomalously bodied but for all people.

It is likely obvious from the “kid-friendly-ness” of the Disney adaptation that the animated film did not end this way. In the movie, Frollo is dropped from Notre-Dame to his death, Esmeralda marries the conventionally attractive, if not overly masculine, city guard Phoebus, and Quasimodo ends the movie with a total of two friends and a life to live alone in the towers of Notre-Dame. Norden suspected that the film’s message was supposed to fall somewhere along the lines of “it’s what’s on the inside that matters”, but considering the subtext

of the plot and the fact that Quasimodo does indeed end up alone, right back where he started this moral to the story is hardly supported (174). As Norden goes on to explain that “people are afraid of [Quasimodo] and cheer when he is pilloried and subjected to cruel taunting and being pelted with rotten vegetables. The film illustrates, right and wrong, that looks do matter – at least initially” (Norden 174). In the 5th Avenue Theater production, however, Quasimodo’s understanding and disillusionment are not just with Frollo and the normative world but also with his own idealism. It also becomes apparent to the audience how absolutely dire Quasimodo’s isolation is. In a song not shared with the Disney animation, “Made of Stone”, Quasimodo works through these different layers of his crumbling trust and hopefulness. This appears in the play after Quasimodo realizes that Esmerelda is going to die in part because of his involvement with her and Claude Frollo. Though he dreams of the outside, normative world, the internal world that Quasimodo has created for himself is idealistic, safe, and equitable. Upon finding the outside world is nothing like the community he created for himself, Quasimodo begins to deconstruct his own constructed community. In looking at “Made of Stone” it must not be forgotten that in this interpretation of the gargoyles they are indeed a creation of Quasimodo’s mind. What this means is that however these characters interact with him, whatever they say or do, is in some way a reflection of Quasimodo’s internal conflict. In the interview with Castille, he described in detail the ways that he interpreted the gargoyles not only as a fabrication of community but also as emblematic of Quasimodo’s inner voice. He said, “Oh! They are his consciousness, his conscience, there are moments when he is against them, and when he is with them” (Castille). What is so impactful about this then, is that it begins to really unravel the absolute truth to Quasimodo’s solitude. The community he built was all within himself and without the fortitude

of that community, he sees himself as the normative world sees him. The song “Made of Stone” reads:

[Quasimodo]

What do you know of me?

What do you know of all the things I feel?

You're only made of stone.

Who is it that you see, instead of seeing what I am for real?

This twisted flesh and bone...

[Gargoyles]

You're right, Quasimodo, we're only made of stone.

We just thought that you were made of something stronger. (Schwartz)

In understanding that the communal elation that he felt with these gargoyles was only self-constructed, that there was never a community to fall back on, that he was only listening to his own advice and ideas, and that he has nobody, and no way to save the only real person that he loves and who has ever made an effort to honestly understand him, Quasimodo begins to send the gargoyles away until there is only one left. This is devastating compared to the Disney animations approach wherein Quasimodo, after being scorned and shunned, glumly asserts that he will never try to reenter society again in a somewhat pouting voice. In the play, as Castille's Quasimodo signs the ending lyrics of the song, the gargoyle played by EJ Cardona who sings the translations of Castille's songs faces Quasimodo, and reaches out and grabs Quasimodo's hands at the last word and holds them. Though at first seemingly only an act of sympathy, it is important to remember that Quasimodo communicates mainly through his hands. The way in which Quasimodo interacts with the world and his chosen method of communication is a

physical one. In grabbing Quasimodo's hands, Cardona's gargoyle is not only offering him a final vestige of physical community but also stopping Quasimodo from saying anything more. Given the relationship of these characters, it is surmisable that this is a final act between Quasimodo and the community with which he has surrounded himself with. In the interview, Castille described to me the different ways that they chose to have Quasimodo interact with other characters through sign-language. In one instance – though it did not make it into the final performance – Castille described having Claude Frollo physically grab or hit Quasimodo's hands when Quasimodo signed to him ("Interview"). Though not a part of the final production, it illuminates just how important and how linked to his sense of self and community to his ability to communicate is, especially when paired with the gargoyle ending the song gripping Quasimodo's hands. The act of holding or hitting Quasimodo's hands is an act of communication. In one instance it is an act of complete understanding and empathy, and in the next it is using Quasimodo's own language as an act of violence against him.

Before Quasimodo sends his community of gargoyles away, he begins to rationalize and internalize all of the things that Frollo has taught him about the "real world" in contrast to his idealistic community that he has created for himself. In doing so he says:

[Quasimodo]

... the only one worth believing in was my master!

He's the one who never lied.

He told me it was cruel outside,

He told me how I had to hide;

His words were cold as stone, but they were true. (Schwartz)

Quasimodo's internalization of Frollo's words is not just that, but also the internalization of the normative structure's that Davis mentioned in his *Constructing Normalcy* when he said that the anomalous needs be rationalized, normalized, and contained or else rejected (Davis 2175). His actions thereafter, killing Frollo and then himself, are causally connected to the internalization of these ideas that he, because of his deafness and his anomalous body, cannot find and keep community except for which that he creates himself. And this is largely on track with the novel's reading of Quasimodo's intentions as well. In the novel, Hugo details the actions of the normative world that have soured Quasimodo's feelings towards it as:

“Malevolence was not, perhaps, innate in him. From his very first steps among men, he had felt himself, later on he had seen himself, spewed out, blasted, rejected. Human words were, for him, always a raillery or a malediction. As he grew up, he had found nothing but hatred around him. He had caught the general malevolence. He had picked up the weapon with which he had been wounded.” (Hugo)

I would argue here that the common novel trope of “better dead than disabled” is not what is at play here though. With the inclusion of the aforementioned passage as well as the events of the novel, it would seem that instead of reasoning that Quasimodo is better dead than disabled, that Hugo is instead illustrating the harmful, and often deadly, actions that normative society takes on those who are considered other. Quasimodo is not better dead than disabled, but he does decide for himself that he is better dead than having to live with the situations that the normative world has put him in due to his disabilities. This however is not the case in the Disney film adaptation. The supervising animator of the Disney film adaptation went so far as to explicitly say that “being bent over was a metaphor for his wanting to hide” as though if Quasimodo did not want to hide, his spinal curvature would suddenly straighten (Norden 167). Instead of focusing on the

ways that the normative world worked against Quasimodo, developing him into the person he is now, Disney began with Quasimodo's anomalous body and began the work of explaining why his body is shaped that way as if there was a moral, emotional, or social explanation to his anomaly and inability to find permanent and meaningful community with which he can identify. It is this act of looking at the anomalous body for an explanation of why it is the way it is, and why society treats it that way, that Mitchell and Snyder again root their concept of "narrative prosthesis" (7). In their first chapter, they describe the historical tendency to interlink physicality and characterization and spark the reader's interest as to whether "disability is the foundation of character itself" (Mitchel & Snyder 6). In many cases, and certainly in the case of Disney's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, this is the case. While the story of the *Notre-Dame de Paris* or *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* is in no cases a happy one, the domestication and diminishing of the character for which the novel is famous do not make the story any happier by erasing Quasimodo's deafness and diminishing his anomalous body to something child-like, what is achieved is the exact goals of normativity. The anomalous is carefully tucked and folded away into a container which is satisfying enough to look at, palatable enough to listen to, just grotesque enough to be interesting, and with a cheap moral tacked to it for good measure, which is another key element of Mitchell and Snyder's narrative prosthesis. Like anything else, it is an entire assemblage of parts, but it is not one that those who are deaf, and those who have anomalous bodies can see any sort of reflection in. Fortunately, with productions like the 5th Avenue Theater, as well as others, there is the chance not only for representation but also for exploration of the rich and contentious social issues that have mattered to the deaf and anomalously bodied since before Hugo explore them and continue today.

With the length of *Notre-Dame de Paris*, as well as the two adaptations explored, it is obvious that this conversation could go on much longer than it has here. But it seems that point has been well hashed that there is something lost in adaptations that intentionally erase and omit deafness and disability within the visual medium. Indeed, not only does it speak to the ways that normative power structures seek to regulate the image of anomalous, but it also shows a gross lack of understanding in the physical nature of deafness, the intersectional nature of disability and self, and an aversion to exploring the ways that normative society hinders communication and destroys attempts at community within such populations of people. As previously alluded to, the erasure of Quasimodo's deafness, disabilities, and anomalous body is not an anomaly or a mere blip in the history of representative literary adaptations. Furthermore, *Notre-Dame de Paris* is not even the most popular story to suffer this form of normative gutting in a subsequent adaptation. In Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* trilogy, the character Peeta Melark is an amputee with a prosthetic leg in the novels but is not in any of the four internationally popular film adaptations. In Matt Fraction's comic book series *Hawkeye*, the title hero is hard-of-hearing, self-identifies as deaf, uses hearing aids, communicates in sign language, and struggles with community building and isolation. That being said, the Hawkeye that appears in eight blockbuster Marvel Cinematic Universe adaptations is hearing with no sign of his literary canon deafness. Between these films and in both franchises, there were billions of dollars spent worldwide in ticket sales, and both franchises broke box office records. What might have been a moment of great representative adaptation and a step forward in representations of disabled and deaf characters in positive media failed to come to fruition, and given Norden's insights into Disney's willful ignorance in developing *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, it is hard to look at these missed opportunities and "almost merely's" with anything but the same brutal scrutiny

offered to other failed representative adaptations. This is not to say that there have not been major bounds made in both literature, film, and theater when it comes to deaf and disabled representation though, there certainly has been. This is to say, however, that there has been a history of erasure and editing of the deaf, disabled, and anomalous body in transition from literature to the visual medium and that this act of normative society deciding what bodies are and are not visually acceptable is a niche area of representative work that needs attention and remediation because the erasure can go unnoticed in translation. When Notre-Dame burned in 2019 President Macron, as well as much of the world, grieved the loss of history, literature, and identity. And although representation in literature is a much different thing than the Notre-Dame cathedral, I cannot help but grieve the loss of history, literature, and identity that comes at the expense of disability and deaf erasure.

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