

# Tracing the Footsteps of Dwarfs

Images, concepts and representations  
in popular culture

Edited by  
Feryal Cubukcu  
Sabine Planka

Königshausen & Neumann



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## Stunted Growth: Dwarfs and the Rejection of Sexuality in the *Artemis Fowl* Series

Kathryn Strong Hansen

In Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* books (2001-2012), the protagonist begins the series as a young criminal mastermind who infiltrates the heretofore hidden fairy realm for his own gain. Over the course of the series, Artemis changes rather dramatically, developing a conscience and transforming into an agent of protection for the fairy peoples. Yet Artemis does not grow in one key way: he adamantly refuses to allow himself to experience sexual feelings. Colfer has admitted that denying Artemis romantic plot lines was a specific goal of his. In a 2003 interview, he explained: "I don't want [Artemis] to get much older. I don't really want to get into girlfriends and romance."<sup>1</sup> While Colfer might have been worried that romance plots would alienate his young male readership, Artemis does more than merely turn away from romance. Artemis feels the stirrings of sexual attraction, yet makes a conscious decision to block those feelings. The books bolster Artemis's refusal of sexuality by constructing bodies as begin too abjectly disgusting to allow the possibility of considering them sexual, and the *Artemis Fowl* series depicts no fairy race as being as bodily disgusting as dwarfs. These books establish that dwarfs are resourceful and useful, principally because of their unique tunneling abilities. However, rather than employ dwarfs positively, the series presents them mostly as scatological jokes because, to tunnel through earth, they defecate the soil that they have eaten.

The continually-referenced bodily qualities of the dwarfs – their tunneling functions, their hardening saliva, their hair that acts as antennae – highlight their physicality, marking them as creatures that focus so intently on their bodies that their livelihood and survival depend on their body functions. While their physical capabilities are remarkable, these very capabilities keep dwarfs regarded by other characters primarily in terms of their bodies rather than in terms of their intellectual capacities. The series pointedly depicts dwarf bodies as repulsive and dirty. Because of this kind of depiction, dwarfs extend the *Artemis Fowl* series' insistence that sexual development is repellent and to be avoided. The presence of the dwarfs, who are used through much of the book as jokes regarding defecation and flatulence, establishes bodies as debased and disgusting. The degradation of the dwarf body contributes to rendering all bodily operations abhorrent to the young male protagonist, sending the message to young readers of the *Artemis Fowl* series that sexuality's reliance on bodies is a debasement.

The dwarfs' status as thieves furthers their positioning as stunted beings whose presence hinders others' positive, natural bodily experiences. Drawing on

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<sup>1</sup> Colfer, Eoin/ McDonald, Craig M.: "Eoin Colfer: An Exclusive Interview", in: *Art of the Word* (2003). Rpt. in: Burns, Tom (Ed.): *Children's Literature Review*. Vol. 112. Detroit: Gale 2006. *Literature Resource Center*. Web. Accessed 9 February 2015.

fairy-tale conventions that depict dwarfs as preventing others' sexual union, Colfer's series presents dwarfs as abject beings blocking the sexual fulfillment of others. This essay will trace this fairy-tale lineage as a precursor to the function of dwarfs in Colfer's work, which is to establish sexuality as unwelcome and will employ the concept of abjection to demonstrate how Colfer's dwarfs move beyond merely being visually unappealing to encouraging the rejection of the very idea of the sexualized body.

### Fairy Tale Dwarfs

In contemporary Western culture, the dwarfs from the *Snow White*-tale are arguably the best-known fairy-tale dwarfs, and as such shape popular ideas about dwarfs.<sup>2</sup> In Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's version of the story, sometimes titled *Snow-Drop*, a wicked queen experiences such jealousy at being made aware of the beauty of Snow White that she orders Snow White's murder. The man she orders to kill the girl cannot bring himself to commit the crime, so he sets the girl free in a forest. There, Snow White finds seven miners, all dwarfs, who allow her to live with them. The queen tries several times to kill the girl herself with poisoned items, and a piece of poisoned apple lodged in Snow White's throat gives her the appearance of being dead. Grief-stricken, the dwarfs enshrine her body in a glass coffin, and a passing prince falls in love with the seemingly lifeless Snow White. The prince wishes to take the girl's body away, and the dwarfs at first oppose this wish. In so doing, they initially thwart the tale's romantic resolution. Cristina Bacchilega writes that "Snow White's story symbolizes the process of sexual, psychological, and social development in women."<sup>3</sup> As Snow White progresses from an innocent child to a beautiful young woman, she demonstrates this development, which is brought to its narrative closure through her marriage with the prince. By attempting to keep Snow White and the prince apart, however briefly, the dwarfs in the tale act as impediments to sexual development.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The popularity of "Snow White" is of course helped by the 1937 Disney film version of the story. As Kay Stone has pointed out, Walt Disney borrowed from Hollywood conventions, and the one he specifically emphasized was romance. Ever since the film, the romance element of "Snow White" resonates as part of the tale, which makes anything that would interfere with romance in such stories, like the dwarfs, particularly unpleasing to audiences. Such is the cultural milieu with which any contemporary story of dwarfs and romance plots (or their thwarting) must grapple. See Stone, Kay F: "Fairy Tales for Adults: Walt Disney's Americanization of the *Märchen*", in: Burlakoff, Nikolai / Lindahl, Carl (Eds.): *Folklore on Two Continents: Essays in Honor of Linda Degh*. Bloomington, IN: Trickster 1980. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Bacchilega, Cristina: "Cracking the Mirror: Three Re-Visions of 'Snow White'", in: *boundary 2* 15/16.1 (1988), pp. 1-25, here p. 3. Web. Accessed 23 September 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Enikö Stringham has pointed out that dwarfs have been "often presented as abductors, normally of women," which demonstrates their long-standing role to separate men and women who might otherwise consummate a sexual relationship (567). See Stringham, Enikö: "Dwarfs in German Fairy Tales and Legends", in: *Economics, Management and*

The idea of abject bodies appears in the *Snow White* tale in the small and therefore insufficiently masculine bodies of the dwarfs. Their diminutive size may make them exceptionally well-suited to work in the constricted spaces of a mine, but it characterizes them as impossible love interests for Snow White, whom the tale constructs as the most beautiful woman in all the land. Their lack of interest in her, other than as a housekeeper and an aesthetic object, suggests that the dwarfs might not even be sexual beings and therefore are abject in their departure from the human norm of healthy masculinity. Further, the gothic notion of a (seemingly) dead body inspiring a prince's love suggests not only the decay inherent to all bodies, but also hints the wide range of non-normative sexual proclivities, such as necrophilia, before the tale's ending recuperates the narrative back into normative heterosexuality. These ideas of abject bodies and sexual abnormality may titillate, but the happily-ever-after marital union of Snow White and the Prince provides audiences with a reassuring ending that affirms romantic love as a natural outcome.

The inclusion of a "rosy and tempting" apple as the instrument of Snow White's seeming death calls to mind the apple in the story of man's fall from Eden.<sup>5</sup> While the Bible contains no specific mention of an apple as the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the apple has been associated with Adam and Eve's fall at least since painters like Albrecht Dürer depicted it as such. Snow White's temptation by the apple that the jealous queen offers her mirrors mankind's temptation by Satan. Because Snow White gives in to that temptation, she becomes available to the prince's gaze, which then leads to her recategorization from innocent victim to desirable bride. In this way, the Snow White tale steers its emphasis away from bodies as abject (while still acknowledging the inevitable abjection of death) and instead endorses a fall from innocence into sexual knowledge as natural and inevitable. The dwarfs may initially balk, but in this tale they do not prevent Snow White and the prince's union.

The lesser-known tale of *Snow-White and Rose-Red*, however, presents dwarfs as an even more serious impediment to its hero and heroine's union. In this tale, sisters Snow-White and Rose-Red live in a cottage with their poor widowed mother. One cold night, a bear knocks on their door asking to warm himself by their fire. Although frightened, the girls allow him in and become friends with him, and so the bear comes back every night to play with the girls and sleep in the warmth of their home. When spring arrives, the bear leaves to protect his treasure from an evil dwarf. In the bear's absence, the girls rescue a dwarf who has caught his beard in a tree, but instead of thanking them he chides them for harming his beard. Though they help the dwarf repeatedly, he shows himself to be extremely ungrateful each time. The last time that they aid the dwarf, with summer coming to a close, the girls see the dwarf with their friend the bear, and

*Financial Markets* 6.2 (2011), pp. 566-569. Web. Accessed 23 September 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Grimm, Jacob/Grimm, Wilhelm: "Snow Drop." *German Popular Stories*. Ed. by Edgar Taylor. London: Chatto and Windus 1875, pp. 87-94, here p. 92. Google Play book file.



the dwarf asks the bear to eat the girls instead of him. But the bear kills the dwarf and transforms into a handsome prince. The dwarf had cast a spell that caused the prince to turn into an animal, and he had stolen the prince's collection of precious stones. With the dwarf dead, the prince marries Snow-White, and Rose-Red marries the prince's brother. Even more so than in *Snow White*, here the dwarf's machinations thwart romantic pairing. Only when the dwarf dies can the love story progress to sexual fulfillment, making the dwarf a barrier to normal sexual development.

The dwarf in *Snow-White and Rose-Red* transforms the prince into a figure of frightful beastliness, which precludes any initial thought of him as a partner for either of the titular sisters. The dwarf very nearly denies the prince any possibility for normative sexual growth and expression, his dwarfish greed inspiring him to change the prince into a debased form. The degraded state of the prince in his ursine form reflects the dwarf's own abject state, suggesting that the dwarf wants no one to be more attractive than his own unappealing self. He has an "old wrinkled" face and is described as both being "weak" and possessing a "squeaking voice."<sup>6</sup> Snow-White and Rose-Red "differentiate their romantic desire for the kind of powerful masculinity embodied by the bear through their complete *lack* of desire for the tale's contrasting masculine figure", the dwarf.<sup>7</sup> All of these descriptors telegraph the dwarf's lack of physical appeal, and the dwarf's status as a "little man" also lessens him, shaping him as so sexually unattractive that he seeks to take away the physical charms of others.

But all bodies are at risk in this tale, with the seasonal pacing of the story hinting at the decay that is inherent to all bodies. The bear stays with the girls in the winter, before the girls have "blossomed" into womanhood, and therefore there is no hint of the girls experiencing sexual attraction when the tale begins. The bear/prince displays his awareness of the girls' impending womanhood when he gently admonishes them for playing with him too violently. "Leave me my life, you children, Snow-white and Rose-red," he cries out, "Or you'll never wed."<sup>8</sup> He expresses his awareness of sexual possibility by hinting that he is going to marry one of them. But the girls at this point still think of him as their friend. The only suggestion of change that either girl senses is when the Bear departs and Snow-White sees a "glittering of gold" beneath his fur.<sup>9</sup> But by the time the bear meets the girls again, summer is ending, and the ripeness and harvesting of their womanhood is suggested by the ending that sees the prince

and his brother marrying the sisters. The impending fall and winter suggest the inevitability of withering and decay, even for those as beautiful as the story's heroines. Underlying this tale, then, is the natural progress of the human body as it grows, decays, and breaks down after death.

Decay marks out all bodies as ultimately abject since, as Julia Kristeva explains, it is "not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order."<sup>10</sup> Death serves as the ultimate disturber of identity, and *Snow-White and Rose-Red* teaches that sexual consummation should take place before a body has succumbed to that abjection. Because of the strong association of dwarfs with tunneling and underground dwellings, they resonate as not fully belonging to the land of the living. Mulch in the *Artemis Fowl* books is so accustomed to living underground that, unlike the other fairy members of Artemis's team, he cannot withstand sunshine on his skin. Mulch must be below ground to be fully comfortable, suggesting that he has more in common with dead humans than with living ones. His need to be underground gives him a liminal status: he lives, but in a manner that invokes death. Because of this, he falls too far outside the pale of living humanity to be anything other than abject.

The presence of the dwarf also suggests that some bodies threaten the social order before the loss of identity that death provides. The dwarf's unappealing body is inhuman, a state he imposes on another by magicking away the humanity of the handsome prince. The dwarf embodies abjection, and "The abject confronts us, on the one hand, with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*. Thus, by way of abjection, primitive societies have marked out a precise area of their culture in order to remove it from the threatening world of animals or animalism."<sup>11</sup> Because the prince's foray into the realm of animal was magical, and capable of being magically reversed, he is restored to the world of humanity. But the dwarf falls so far out of limits of humanity that he must cease to exist rather than be allowed to threaten the sexual consummation of those in the human realm.

Madame d'Aulnoy's *The Story of the Yellow Dwarf*, popularized by inclusion in Andrew Lang's *The Blue Fairy Book*, depicts a dwarf who not only thwarts a young couple's true love, but causes their deaths.<sup>12</sup> In this tale, a queen worries that her daughter is too spoiled and vain to accept a suitor for her husband. At the age of fifteen, the queen asks All-Fair to marry a man of the queen's choosing. But the princess tells the queen that she is happy with the way she lives, and her "resolution [...] to live a maid" shows that she rejects sexuality

<sup>6</sup> Grimm, Jacob/Grimm, Wilhelm: "Snow-White and Rose-Red", in: *Household Stories*. London: Routledge, Warne, & Routledge 1861, pp. 422-426, here p. 424/425. Google Play book file.

<sup>7</sup> Friedenthal, Andrew J.: "The Lost Sister: Lesbian Eroticism and Female Empowerment in 'Snow White and Rose Red'", in: Turner, Kay/Greenhill, Pauline (Eds.): *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms*. Detroit: Wayne State UP 2012, pp. 161-178, here p. 167/168. Ebrary e-book.

<sup>8</sup> Grimm: "Snow-White and Rose-Red" (1861), p. 423.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

<sup>10</sup> Kristeva, Julia: *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia UP 1982, here p. 4. Print.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>12</sup> Toby A. Olshin points out another way that "The Yellow Dwarf" became popular: Dickens utilizes it to structure his Quilp/Little Nell plot in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. See Olshin, Toby A.: "The Yellow Dwarf" and *The Old Curiosity Shop*", in: *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25.1 (1970), pp. 96-99. Web. Accessed 1 March 2016.

and romance.<sup>13</sup> The queen visits the Fairy of the Desert for advice. Unable to pass the lions who guard the fairy's dwelling, the queen receives an offer for help from an ugly dwarf. The dwarf says that he will save the queen in exchange for her daughter's hand in marriage. The queen becomes ill with the thought of what she has promised, and so All-Fair seeks out the Fairy of the Desert for advice. The yellow dwarf is there as before, and tells All-Fair that her mother has arranged her marriage with the dwarf. The lions arrive, and the princess agrees to marry the dwarf if only he will save her from death.

Just as her mother had fallen ill, All-Fair sickens at the thought of marriage to the dwarf. To avoid this fate, she agrees to marry the king of the Gold Mines, and during the preparation time for their wedding the princess finds that she truly feels passion for the king. However, the yellow dwarf and the Fairy of the Desert, a shabby and decrepit old woman, stop their wedding. The dwarf carries All-Fair away, and the fairy falls in love with the king and imprisons him in a cave. Though the fairy changes herself to look like a young and beautiful woman, the king knows who she is because she is unable to enchant her griffin-like feet. The king tells her he hates her while he's in chains, but he will love her if she frees him. Once freed, the king lives in the fairy's castle, but seeks a way to find his beloved princess. A mermaid agrees to help him, and enchants searushes to look like him but pale and dead, as if drowned. Having thus ensured that the Fairy of the Desert will be fooled into thinking the king dead, the mermaid gives him sword endowed with the ability to make him face any danger. The king fights four sphinxes and six dragons, and avoids the snares of twenty-four lovely maidens along the way. He finds All-Fair, but the yellow dwarf kills him, and the princess dies of grief.

Dwarfs, then, appear in these fairy tales as stunted, lesser beings than the humans who function as protagonists. In *The Story of the Yellow Dwarf* as in *Snow-White and Rose-Red*, the dwarf is hideous and inhuman. d'Aulnoy's dwarf not only has an ugly yellow face but is also "without any hair to hide his large ears."<sup>14</sup> The threat of marriage to him is the reason that All-Fair decides to marry at all, having previously resolved to shun romantic relationships. But even though the yellow dwarf's hideousness is the necessary comparison to incite All-Fair to select and actually fall in love with the king of the Gold Mines, the dwarf's role is to separate the lovers and thwart the consummation of their love. The dwarf is so monstrous that he "was better pleased to see his princess void of life than in the arms of another."<sup>15</sup> The physical traits of each of these fairy-tale dwarfs make them ineligible to participate in romantic plots, and their outsider status encourages them to try to place the protagonists of their stories into a similar

<sup>13</sup> d'Aulnoy, Marie-Catherine: "The Story of the Yellow Dwarf", in: *Fairy Tales and Novels*. By the Countess D'Anois. Translated From the French. With a biographical preface in two volumes. Vol. I. Walter & Edwards: London 1817, pp. 167-186, here p. 168. Google Books file.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

sexual liminality. Dwarfs exist in these tales as too mired in unpleasantness to be incorporated into society's system of marriage, procreative sexuality, and social acceptability, and their presence threatens the normative sexual development of human characters. The fairy-tale heritage of dwarfs is one of abjection and inhumanity, and it is this cultural background that informs the use of dwarfs in Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series.

### Artemis, Mulch Diggums, and the Object Body

In Artemis's world, the abjection of the body is not expressed through a dwarf who keeps him from his beloved, as in the Grimms's fairy tales, but instead it is expressed through a dwarf whose object body invites the disgust of intradiegetic characters as well as the disgust of the books' readers. This repugnance makes romantic or sexual entanglements unappealing by associating the unsavory aspects of specifically dwarfish bodies with the more general concept of bodies. Artemis begins the series as a twelve-year-old criminal mastermind with no suggestion of sexual awareness, but as the series unfolds, he begins to experience stirrings of sexual attraction. Such feelings annoy Artemis because he views them as unwanted impediments to his grand schemes. "It's this blasted puberty," he complains to his bodyguard and closest companion, Butler. "Every time I see a pretty girl, I waste valuable mind space thinking about her."<sup>16</sup> Artemis would prefer to devote his mind space to the many nefarious, money-making plans he painstakingly researches and puts into effect. Shutting out any distractions from those plans keeps Artemis focused, but it also keeps Artemis from normal, healthy sexual development. Artemis Fowl's namesake Greek goddess Artemis hints at his own eventual fight against sexuality, since that goddess was explicitly described as a *parthenos*, or virgin. The goddess Artemis "had to remain permanently a *parthenos* and biologically a girl, for she could protect girls, brides, and adult women from the dangers of reproduction only if she herself was immune to its disabilities."<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Colfer's books suggest that Artemis Fowl can only exercise his immense intellectual capacities if he is immune to sexual attraction.

Artemis's rejection of sexuality recalls All-Fair's wish to remain a maiden, but the hideousness of dwarfs in these two stories works to different ends. In Colfer's series, the abjection of dwarfs implicates all bodies as object. The narration in the *Artemis Fowl* books describes the bodies of many subsets of the fairy peoples in very unflattering ways, including trolls, goblins, and dwarfs. Yet the readers' only sustained exposure to any of these groups is to dwarves. While few dwarfs populate the books, the dwarf Mulch Diggums appears prominently. Mulch's body might perpetuate ongoing toilet humor because of the defecation and flatulence involved when he engages in the act of creating tunnels, but it has

<sup>16</sup> Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl: The Lost Colony*. New York: Disney Hyperion Books 2006, p. 6. Print.

<sup>17</sup> Cole, Susan Guettel: *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space: The Ancient Greek Experience*. California: U of California Press 2004, p. 209. Print.



the added effect of creating repulsion. The narrator describes Mulch's distinctive bodily operations in the first book of the series:<sup>18</sup>

Mulch had a prodigious appetite for tunneling, and that, unfortunately, is a literal translation. For those unfamiliar with the mechanics of dwarf tunneling, I shall endeavor to explain them as tastefully as possible. Like some members of the reptile family, dwarf males can unhinge their jaws, allowing them to ingest several pounds of earth a second. This material is processed by a superefficient metabolism, stripped of any useful minerals and [...] ejected at the other end, as it were. Charming.<sup>19</sup>

Here, the narrator editorializes, guiding readers to view Mulch's body as disgusting with the last sarcastic word "charming," as well as by the use of the biased word "unfortunately." The *faux*-polite phrase "as tastefully as possible" also suggests that Mulch's body functions cannot be described tastefully at all. The narration here leaves neutrality behind to guide readers to see Mulch as abject. When Butler first sees Mulch, Butler's impression of Mulch contributes to the idea that Mulch is abject. In that first look, Butler isn't even certain what Mulch is. When the narration establishes Butler's confusion, it by extension suggests that Mulch's form strays too far away from human forms to make viewing him a pleasant experience. Artemis, too, sees Mulch in this way, calling him "an unsightly creature" when he first sees Mulch on video surveillance of his family's manor.<sup>20</sup> From readers' first introduction to the character, Mulch's body registers as unappealing, and the books repeatedly mention his unique physical capabilities.

Mulch's excretory tunneling methods are not his only distinctive bodily characteristics. His hair is "impressive, featuring both as an antenna and, once plucked, an instrument rather like a fine screwdriver or lock-pick."<sup>21</sup> Dwarf spittle hardens when exposed to air, allowing him to trap petty criminal Doodah Day by placing him inside of his mouth and then spitting him out. Dwarf spittle also glows when it hardened, allowing Mulch to use his saliva as a coating for walls to provide light. The pores of his skin, when he is insufficiently hydrated, act like suction cups that allow him to scale great vertical distances. Moreover, Mulch possesses the ability to control and direct the force of his flatulence, such as when he uses a burst of gas to turn a security camera and avoid detection. While these various traits aid Artemis, elf Holly Short, and the other protagonists, Mulch registers as disgusting rather than impressive, with multiple

<sup>18</sup> The first book contains a prologue that establishes an outside narrator, identified in that book's epilogue as Dr. J. Argon, an LEP psychologist. However, some of the subsequent books appear to have a third-person narrator, so I refer to the provider of all narration in the series as "narrator" for purposes of unity.

<sup>19</sup> Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl*. New York: Disney Hyperion Books 2001. iBooks file. Position 228.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, position 275.

<sup>21</sup> Keenan, Celia: "Who's Afraid of the Bad Little Fowl?", in: *Children's Literature in Education* 35.3 (2004), pp. 257-270, here 262. Web. Accessed 4 May 2015.

characters commenting not only on his unattractive appearance but also on his extremely potent, unpleasant odor. Mulch's bodily difference renders him abnormal and abject.

Mulch's abject body highlights the abject nature of all bodies, including Artemis's own body. Just as Mulch does not originally fit neatly into other characters' existing taxonomies, the books call attention to Artemis's abjection in part by depicting his sexuality as nebulous and difficult to categorize. Artemis's ambiguous sexuality places his body outside of the realm of normality. His nontraditional masculinity involves him being competitive and proud, yet simultaneously unathletic and interested in clothing, giving his sexuality a complicated and ambiguous character.<sup>22</sup> Despite his attempts to tamp down his sexual awareness, he finds himself attracted to several characters, all of whom are female: Holly Short, Juliette Butler, Maria the limousine driver, and Minerva Paradizo. Artemis's attraction to girls and women would seem to suggest that he is heterosexual. Yet Artemis's determination to resist puberty calls into question his masculinity. As Tison Pugh explains, Artemis's "masculinity is suspected precisely because his childish body has not yet undergone the transformations of puberty."<sup>23</sup> While Artemis's fears primarily center upon the threat that heterosexual attraction poses to his intellectual capacities, homosexuality as a threat also appears in the *Artemis Fowl* series. By rendering homosexuality as abject, the *Artemis Fowl* books take away the possibility that any form of sexuality can avoid abjection. In *The Opal Deception*, the supervillain Opal Koboi tries to kill Artemis and the fairy Holly Short. She does so indirectly, first ordering her henchman Scant to treat them with a substance that attracts rutting trolls:

Scant took a small atomizer from his pocket and doused Holly and Artemis liberally with the contents. The liquid was yellow and foul smelling.

"Troll pheromones," said Scant, almost apologetically. "These trolls will take one whiff of you and go absolutely crazy. To them you smell like females in heat. When they find out you're not, they'll tear you into a thousand little bits, then chew on the pieces [...]"<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Erica Hatley places *Artemis Fowl* in the tradition of other boy detective stories whose "narrative elements affirm heroic masculinity." Because of his knowledge of fine clothing, art, and technology as well as his lack of interest in the traditionally masculine pursuit of physical exercise, however, I argue that the books present Artemis's masculinity as non-normative. Artemis's rejection of heterosexual attraction is, to Tison Pugh, suggestive of Artemis's potential homosexuality. See Hatley, Erica: "Irregular Readers: Arthur Conan Doyle's 'six dirty scoundrels', Boyhood and Literacy in Contemporary Sherlockian Children's Literature", in: *Barnboken: Journal of Children's Literature Research* 37 (2014). Web. Accessed 11 January 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Pugh, Tison: *Innocence, Heterosexuality, and the Queerness of Children's Literature*. New York: Routledge 2011, here p. 123. Print.

<sup>24</sup> Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl: The Opal Deception*. New York: Scholastic 2005, here p. 178. Print.

Here, the books construct homosexual attraction as the impending instrument of death at the hands of lustful trolls whom Opal expects to be murderous in their disappointment. Sexuality in this instance is unambiguously a danger, and a particularly graphic one. The trolls' disappointed lust will, Scant promises, lead to a bodily fragmentation that is the epitome of abjection. If, as previously mentioned, abjection involves "the threatening world of animals or animalism", the kind of primally animalistic death that Opal tries to arrange for Artemis and Holly employs sexuality as its impetus.<sup>25</sup> But using sexuality as the instigator of such a violent death creates the sense for readers that it is sexuality as much as Opal's violent vengeance that should be feared. The *Artemis Fowl* books cast both heterosexual and homosexual attraction as experiences that threaten, and Artemis does not belong clearly in either group.

Artemis's ambiguous sexuality makes him as abject as Mulch Diggums. This is the case because "abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger."<sup>26</sup> Mulch is abject not only because the books depict his dwarfishness as ugly and nonhuman, but because dwarfs are associated with an inability to reproduce themselves. The fairy race of

dwarfs were almost always thought of as male. There were, of course, a few separate female representatives of the species. But, in the main, dwarfs were without women; whether solitary or members of male bands or herds, they did not have families or children in the usual way. Found repulsive by both fairy and moral women, they were often forced to kidnap them as well as children ... Without women, too, their power to reproduce remained mysterious while their motives for stealing women and infants became evident.<sup>27</sup>

Artemis's refusal to be sexual renders him similarly mysterious, but more than that, Artemis's abject body exudes monstrosity, specifically vampiric monstrosity. In nearly every book in the series, Colfer reminds readers of Artemis's vampiric appearance and tendencies. Artemis is "as white as a vampire and almost as testy in the light of day,"<sup>28</sup> and when he smiles, "one almost expected vampire fangs to sprout from his gums."<sup>29</sup> When he's ill he's "pale, more so than usual, like a creature of the night. A snow wolf maybe. The sharp cheekbones and triangular length of his face added to the impression."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Kristeva: *Powers of Horror* (1982), p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Silver, Carole G.: *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness*. New York: Oxford UP 1999, here p. 124. Ebrary e-book.

<sup>28</sup> Colfer: *Artemis Fowl* (2001), position 10.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, position 98.

<sup>30</sup> Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl: The Atlantis Complex*. New York: Disney Hyperion Books 2010, here p. 33. Print.

Artemis treats an adversary "to his best vampire smile,"<sup>31</sup> and Colfer even uses the same sentence twice to convey Artemis's vampiric qualities: "Artemis smiled his vampire smile."<sup>32</sup> The figure of the vampire, as many critics have noted, "has always threatened binaries, such as dead/alive, animal/human, male/ female, heterosexual/homosexual, and has often functioned as a destabiliser of the category of race."<sup>33</sup> Artemis's vampiric qualities perform just such destabilizing work while they also announce an almost supernatural set of abilities.

## Conclusion

The *Artemis Fowl* books construct sexuality and sexual attraction as the unappealing consequences of possessing a body. By rejecting his sexual side, Artemis endorses the body as something unsavory, and Artemis's inability to execute physical tasks well underscores just how untrustworthy he finds his body. Because the human body experiences great change during adolescence, puberty and sexual awakening are common themes for middle grade and young adult fiction, at least since Judy Blume's 1970 *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. But the *Artemis Fowl* series makes no attempt to reassure its readers about the naturalness of puberty. Indeed, elf Holly Short emphasizes how awful sexual awakening can be when she discusses having travelled back in time: "I was turned into an adolescent," said Holly, winking at Artemis. "Now *that* was gross."<sup>34</sup> Because the main character of the books rejects the normal functions of his body, bodies in the series register as unappealing and abject.

The books' locus of abjection, Mulch Diggums the dwarf, extends and intensifies the book's rejection of sexuality by invoking the fairy tale tradition of dwarfs that thwart sexual union. The only member of Artemis's associates described as physically unappealing, Mulch introduces abjection into the stories simply by existing. He is not solely responsible for the series' endorsement of bodies as abject and by extension, sexuality as unappealing, since Artemis's vampiric qualities heighten the sense that his body should create fear rather than desire. But Mulch brings with him the weight of fairy-tale tradition, in which

<sup>31</sup> Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl: The Eternity Code*. New York: Scholastic 2003, here p. 262. Print.

<sup>32</sup> Colfer: *Artemis Fowl* (2001), position 220, and Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident*. New York: Scholastic 2002, here p. 118. Print. Artemis's paleness offers further evidence that he appears vampiric, and repeated mentions of the whiteness of his skin help to perpetuate his vampire-like status. Artemis is "abnormally pale" (Colfer, *The Arctic Incident* (2002), p. 199) and "pale as the walls" (Colfer: *The Eternity Code* 239); he "looked like a healthy corpse" (Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl: The Time Paradox*. New York: Disney Hyperion Books 2008, p. 138. Print.). When he's worried, his "skin tone faded from pale to porcelain" (Colfer, Eoin: *Artemis Fowl: The Last Guardian*. New York: Disney Hyperion Books 2012, p. 45).

<sup>33</sup> Froreich, Kimberly A.: "Sullied Blood, Semen and Skin Vampires and the Spectre of Miscegenation", in: *Gothic Studies* 15.1 (2013), pp. 33-43, here p. 33 Web. Accessed 7 May 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Colfer: *Time Paradox* (2008), p. 382.



dwarfs act as impediments to the consummation of romantic love. Mulch's tunneling skills suggest one reason why dwarfs resonate as abject: because dwarfs work underground, they are associated with the underworld or land of the dead.

Using fairy tales to inform its background, the *Artemis Fowl* series upends many expectations, such as making its protagonist a rich criminal rather than a poor but hardworking lad and making fairies hide away from humans rather than seek interaction with them. But despite its attempted subversion of the fairy tale genre, the books perpetuate the goals of the most conservative of fairy tales. After all, "the literary fairy tale for children was not designed to be liberating: it was actually developed and cultivated by writers [...] to set inhibiting standards of civilization based on a bourgeois-aristocratic code of civilité."<sup>35</sup> Because Artemis represses his sexuality and the depiction of dwarfs constructs bodies as too abject to be sexual, the *Artemis Fowl* book series imposes a regressive view of sexuality on its readers. The inhibition of sexual curiosity is inextricably related to how dwarfs function in this series, which simply echoes the attempts at enforcing civilité of fairy tales from hundreds of years ago.

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<sup>35</sup> Zipes, Jack: "The Potential of Liberating Fairy Tales for Children", in: *New Literary History* 13.2 (1982), p. 309-325. Web. <http://www.jstor.org/citadel.idm.oclc.org/stable/468914>; accessed 27 February 2015.

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## "Glimpses of the Horror of Normalcy" – Female Dwarfs in Literature

Julia Reiker

During the last decades, new disciplines in literary and cultural theory have shed new lights on canonical texts with and about extraordinary bodies, including little people, 'dwarfs' or 'midgets'.<sup>1</sup> Following gender, black and minority studies, disability studies question world literature texts in their representation of people with disabilities, assuming that disability is an identity category that did not find enough recognition in the humanities before. For example, in a variety of texts Rosemarie Garland-Thomson shows that disabled characters such as Victor Hugo's Quasimodo or Charles Dickens' Tiny Tim mostly stay static without "any opportunity for subjectivity or agency."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder point out the reader's habit to overlook disabled characters when reading literary texts, even though there are more than first expected<sup>3</sup> – their representations, however, are far from realistic. In this, disability studies seem to clash with traditional understandings of extraordinary or 'grotesque' bodies, such as Mikhail Bakhtin's semiotic understanding that links singular bodies to the transgressions of carnival and laughter. Bakhtin saw the grotesque body "in the act of becoming", "never finished", "never completed"<sup>4</sup> and as a subversive force against the monologic rules of dominant society. In that, he was not so much interested in the character or emotions of extraordinary people, but saw them as symbols of transgression in fictional texts, mirroring the time of medieval carnival when rules of society were deferred for a limited time:

The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary [...] life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it - that is, everything resulting from socio-hierarchical inequality or another form of inequality among people.<sup>5</sup>

That extraordinary bodies indeed question our understanding of the concepts of 'normal' and 'abled' in many ways is also addressed by disability scholars to "attend to the subversive potential of the hyperbolic meanings invested in

<sup>1</sup> I decided to use terms such as 'dwarf', 'monster', 'freak', or 'disabled' deliberately, but in a non-derogatory way, to analyse them as cultural constructs that are inscribed with meaning throughout history.

<sup>2</sup> Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie: *Extraordinary Bodies. Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature*. New York: Columbia Press 1997, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, David/Snyder, Sharon: *Narrative Prosthesis. Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 2000, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Bakhtin, M.: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1984, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.