

INTRODUCTION

VariAbility: Beyond Sameness and Difference

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AS EARLY AS 1982, Henri-Jacques Stiker argued in *A History of Disability* for a celebration of the exceptional disabled body and against the “rhetoric of sameness” of the body that he claimed pervaded twentieth-century Europe. His book was couched in the Foucauldian philosophy of its time¹ and warned that bringing the disabled body into the center of study should not “normalize” it: should not deny its “abnormality” against which a majority defined itself as “normal.” For Stiker, disabled people should not be “assimilated” by a liberal culture that desired equality for all, but rather the disabled body could only be truly accepted by society in its incommensurateness. Acceptance of bodily difference, he argued, would produce a more flexible and tolerant society.

While I largely agree with this position, I believe that Stiker chose the methodology of analysis since, as he argued, “At the present time a historicist study of disability is not possible: there are too few in-depth studies. There are only soundings.”² I believe that the time has now come for just such historicist readings of the body in all its variations, of which this collection of essays is intended to be a part. I hope to demonstrate in this introduction that we have reached a point in the progress of the study of the history of disability where detailed historicist readings are not only possible but also necessary. I shall also propose a new analysis of the body—VariAbility—that goes beyond the rhetoric of sameness and difference that concerned scholars in the twentieth century.

Disability is a narrow vein of study which, I believe, should not be separated off into its constituent parts (blindness, deafness, learning or physical disability, deformity, etc.) since each person’s disability (under whichever banner it may subtend) is unlike any other person’s, while the experience of being disabled

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is the same for each disabled person. I am partially sighted and am accorded the same protections under legislation as all other vision impaired people in Britain. But I am also the first with the group of symptoms that my physician has recorded. I am unique, different, exceptional even among people “like me.” At the same time I share with my friend Robert, who is in a wheelchair, the desire to go for a walk by myself. Our experience of one of the limitations of our disability is the same, although our disabilities are very different. We are the “same only different.” Likewise, Robert and I are the “same only different” from people who do not class themselves as disabled. We all have a body that has its different capacities, we all make decisions about what we believe are the capabilities of that body and we all encounter other bodies with their peculiar capacities and capabilities and learn from them.

The History of the Study of Disability

Since Stiker, disability has been grouped with race, class, gender, and sexuality as a means for examining culture. Each analysis follows the poststructuralist methodology of bringing the excluded into the center of the debate, to demonstrate that white races define themselves negatively against the nonwhite, the upper classes define themselves negatively against the lower, men define themselves negatively against women, heterosexuals define themselves negatively against homosexuals, and the able-bodied define themselves negatively against the disabled. In want of a shared characteristic, the poststructuralist methodology suggests that the dominant “we” of a culture defines itself negatively as “not you” and casts its gaze at these five (among other) out-groups to define exactly what it is by excluding what it is not. By reversing the process of exclusion, or in the Foucauldian archaeology, by exploring carefully the history of the dominant group, the importance of those who have been excluded is demonstrated. The archaeology expects to find the excluded groups to have been relatively acquiescent, or the victims of injustice, and explores the moment when political activism brought about change that made society more flexible and tolerant. This methodology is clearly dominant in the study of disability after Stiker.

Susan Burch gives an excellent account of the various approaches to the study of disability published before 2005, which there is no need to rehearse fully here.³ Briefly, there are two types, both of which follow the Foucauldian analysis, one with a focus on disability as a topic, and the other which explores the intersections between disability and other theoretical concerns. Of the approaches to

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disability alone we find studies that are inclusive of a number of disabilities and others that treat exclusively with one. In *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, Paul K. Longmore and Laurie Umansky state that “disability belongs with race, class, and gender as a ‘standard analytical tool’ of historical analysis” and present the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), an act they demonstrate was the result of disability activism and one that marked a change in cultural values.⁴ However, a question is left unanswered by the study. Because of its goal, despite containing essays on a wide range of disabilities, the collection does not delve into history before the nineteenth century. We might ask why, in a country which is still governed by an amended eighteenth-century constitution, there was no mention or amendment made to it which would benefit disabled people. Was it because impairment, as David Turner points out,⁵ was always understood as part of eighteenth-century life as a badge of frail humanity to which all would eventually succumb? Was it because, as the later history of Ellis Island exclusions of disabled immigrants demonstrates, because there was a tacit requirement of able-bodiedness in Lazarus’s lines:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!⁶

Or had something dramatic happened to the view of the body in the shift between the eighteenth century and the nineteenth when the poem was written? This is not to say that Longmore and Umansky’s book is not a useful contribution to the history of disability, but that, since it concentrates on the events that led to the moment of change, the ADA, it calls out further work: a study of the prehistory of the history they give, which this book hopes to begin to address.

Writing exclusively about deafness, Lennard J. Davis’s *Enforcing Normalcy* also declares that “disability [is] the missing term in the race, class and gender triad” and at the same time that “deaf history is at once part of and separate from disability history.”⁷ Explaining this paradox, he argues for his Foucauldian methodology that “the first task is to understand and theorize the discourse of disability, to see that the object of disability studies is not the person using the wheelchair or the Deaf person but the set of social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and control the way we think through the body.”⁸ The move is eminently poststructuralist and follows Derrida’s famous dictum “Il n’y a pas

d'hors text," there is no outside of the text.⁹ In other words, everything we think and experience is textual. There is no real world out there that is unmediated by language. The power of the move is that if disability is treated as a discourse then one disability is a representative of all disabilities and Davis can explore all through the study of one. But to this I would question whether or not Davis is guilty of making all disabilities the same and ignoring difference: the very "rhetoric of sameness" that Stiker criticized in 1982. It might equally be argued that disability is not only a discourse but also a lived experience, a "thinking through the body" of a disabled person: the "person using the wheelchair or the Deaf person" each of whom "think through" bodies that are the same but impaired in different ways.

The third class of texts to which Burch also draws our attention are collections of essays that explore the intersections between disability and other theoretical concerns, such as *Deviant Bodies* edited by Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla and *Gendering Disability* edited by Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchinson.¹⁰ Again, these are fascinating studies, which are made possible by the similarity of the Foucauldian analyses of sexuality, gender, and disability. Also, they mark the moment in the history of the academy when hiring took place each year at MLA for an expert in the next new theory. I have published extensively in the history of sexuality, and it might seem logical that this book attempt to shed light on disability with the same sort of theoretical intersection. However, as I suggested in my latest (last?) collection on sexuality,¹¹ when Caroline Gonda and I set up the Queer People conferences at Christ's College in Cambridge in 2002, we were searching for our foremothers and forefathers, for the experiences of people who shared our same-sex sexualities but who lived in the eighteenth century or earlier. We were working in parallel with the theoretical using a historicist methodology to describe case studies of sexualities. Careful not to read ourselves into our subjects, the papers at the conferences explored examples of sexualities within their own peculiar context. The methodology was derived from the belief that rather than reducible to a discourse or a set of discourses, sexuality is better explained as the body acting upon its mind's desires. Sexuality was the link (or at least one link) between the mind and its body. And disability is perhaps another link, although it works in a different way.

I believe that my experience of my homosexuality is radically different from my experience of my vision impairment. I have always known I was a homosexual and never practiced any other form of sexuality, nor have I deliberately tried to pass as heterosexual. When I discuss my sexuality with friends, I explain that it was never possible for me to have tried heterosexuality since encounters with women

never led to my having an erection, while those with men did. My sexuality was never fluid or changeable. Sexually, I could never be other than I always have been.

My sight problem is equally deep seated as I have, until recently, been able to “get by adequately” with the vision I was born with. However, although I always felt there was something wrong with my sight from an early age, because I had no experience of anyone else’s sight against which to gauge the deficiencies of my own, I did not know how impaired my sight was until I was fifty when a new set of circumstances led to my first diagnosis. In consequence I have lived (or at least passed) as a sighted person most of my life. This is not to say that all experiences of sexuality and disability are the same as mine. On the contrary, I would argue that all experiences of sexuality and disability are different and they should be treated as different. But this is my point. My experiences of my sexuality and my disability are not commensurate with each other, and nor are they commensurate with those of other people. So I would question whether the intersections that are noticeable in the Foucauldian analyses of sexuality and disability may be products of the analytical tool rather than the history. My conclusion becomes clearer as vision impairment and homosexuality are remarkably the same for me politically since British laws protect me from discrimination both as a homosexual man and as a disabled man. My experience of each in my daily life may be very different but nevertheless I have learned the value of antidiscrimination legislation to gain me equality of access.

For this reason I neither criticize nor repudiate the Foucauldian analysis, nor the political activism it underpinned. I am a beneficiary of the work done to bring about the ADA and the British Equality Act of 2010. And while neither piece of legislation is perfect, and while I continue to struggle to get equal access for blind and partially sighted people to texts in the form they can use, which sighted people have, I believe that the Foucauldian part of disability history has reached its goal and we can move on to explore the histories of our disabled foremothers and forefathers in a different way. What I am suggesting is that disability studies should follow the typical academic trajectory of a subject area beginning with the general and all-encompassing theory and move toward the specific, local, and personal. When I discuss my vision impairment, my friends who have poor vision tell me they understand my problem because they too are blind when they do not wear their glasses. But their sympathy is predicated against the medical algorithm of dysfunction, diagnosis, treatment, cure, which starts from an unstable binary between able-bodiedness and disability. However, where my bespectacled friends can understand the binary because their sight is correctable (when they are clothed

they can see properly and when not they are blind), mine is not correctable and never has been. I have no concept of what seeing properly is other than that which I have learned from talking to others. Therefore, I can have no proper understanding of the able-bodied and disabled binary.

It could therefore be argued further that the medical algorithm, which holds up cure as a possible future, might be the source of the idea that disability exists in a binary with able-bodiedness. My retinologist has discharged me because I am incurable. My future is not as a patient, patiently waiting to be cured. And it is for this reason I believe that we should begin our histories of disability from the disabled person who by the very fact of being disabled is not in a socially constructed binary with able-bodiedness. Disabled people are defined by their disability, not by their relationship with the able-bodied. We therefore need not be interested in the able-bodied: they have histories of their own. We need histories that are about us.

Recent Developments

Taking up the bibliography of disability history where Burch left off in 2005,¹² there have been many new studies of disability in history of the types she listed, but all have remained within the Foucauldian fold.¹³ However, embedded within them at several places is the suggestion that lived experience of disabled people might be a way forward. Again I shall be brief rather than comprehensive and explore only three texts, the first being a special issue of *Radical History Review*, edited by Teresa Meade and David Serlin.¹⁴ The collection of essays continues the history of the ADA and similar laws worldwide, exploring civil disobedience tactics by disabled people. Most exciting for me is a declaration in the introduction where Meade and Serlin declare war not only on the effects of oppression and injustice suffered by disabled people but also on the results of poststructuralist nihilism, declaring that:

Definitions and meanings attached to disability are always historically and culturally specific and never ideologically neutral. Yet this does not mean that disability is merely an artifact of poststructural dematerialization of the individual body of subjective experience.¹⁵

Furthermore, the collection is billed by its publishers in a way that suggests it parallels the local and specific of the queer project, “disclos[ing] how the ways in which we define ‘disability’ may expose biases and limitations of a given historical moment rather than a universal truth.”¹⁶ Together these two propositions, that

disability is an embodied state rather than textual and that the analyses should be confined to the disabled body in particular historical moments, might suggest that the collection fulfills the criteria I suggested above. The cover photograph of CeCe Weeks, a disabled activist who chained himself to a wheelchair in Berkeley, California, seems to confirm this, as does the discussion of the historical moment of his protest about a cinema showing the extraordinary 1978 film about disability, *Coming Home*, which could not admit wheelchair-bound viewers.¹⁷ However, the discussions of individuals tend to flash by while the greater (if not universal) conclusions are drawn. The underlying problem with this otherwise excellent collection becomes clear when the editors note the paucity of premodern histories of disability. They wonder whether this is

because academic scholarship on disability rests largely on articulations of individualism and bodily sovereignty that have been shaped by constitutional democracies in North America and Europe since the late eighteenth century.¹⁸

This is the moment when the analytical tool, which is still at its heart Foucauldian, hijacks what is an otherwise wonderful project. Although the editors' intention is to present micro-histories, the concept of social construction is still dominant not only of disability but also of the sense of the individuality, which can see itself as disabled, the victim of injustice, and so be moved to activism. Meade and Serlin end on a note of hope that their collection will stimulate further research, and there has certainly been an increase in the production of historical work on disability. But the question of whether this new work marks a move forward methodologically is still not clear.

One way forward has been to widen the field of study to put an earlier date on the "articulations of individualism and bodily sovereignty" than the late eighteenth century, as does Kim E. Neilsen's *A Disability History of the United States*.¹⁹ Another has been to deepen the level of detail of the history of the disabled subjects under study, to encompass more of their political, social, and cultural selves as does David M. Turner's *Disability in eighteenth-century England: Imagining Physical Impairment*.²⁰

Neilsen's approach is to present the whole history of the United States from pre-Columbian times to the present day through the lens of disability, an unprecedented task, or as she puts it:

No-one has attempted to create a wide-ranging chronological history narrative told through the lives of people with disabilities.²¹

With so wide a historical sweep, the “lives of people with disabilities” must necessarily be explained carefully, so Neilsen spends some time defining, “Who are people with disabilities? And conversely what does it mean to be nondisabled?” The process does not lead to a definition but rather to a statement of intent:

Disability is not the story of someone else, it is the story of someone we love, the story of who we are and who we may become, and it is undoubtedly the story of our nation.

However, while declaring that

this is not to argue that we should all hold hands and cheerfully insist that we are all disabled in some way or another

The underlying binary between disability and “ableism” remains the book’s main analytical tool. In her attempt to give us a history that is not freighted with the negative view of disability, which she will go on to demonstrate was prevalent in much of the history of the United States, Neilsen cannot rid herself of a binary approach that turns the negative stereotype upon those whom she will term “ableist.”

To attempt a greater depth of engagement than Nielsen, David M. Turner’s *Disability in eighteenth-century England* explores a narrower field in terms of time and place (eighteenth-century England) and disability (only deformity).²² It is a really useful survey of that century, which by closing in the focus on deformity, is able to elicit details that more general studies cannot (nor are intended to). But the balance between the particular and the general remains weighted toward the general because Turner is still using race, class, and gender alongside disability as tools of analysis, which at times occlude some of the more subtle questions that arise.

For example, in his sketch of the life of William Hay, who wrote *Deformity: An Essay* in 1754,²³ Turner notes that “he [Hay] ‘never much valued’ the mock-heroic epithet ‘My Lord’ that was commonly applied to people of small stature yet it was ‘grown into such a habit with the Rabble.’” Following his analytical principles, Turner glosses this with the comment that “those who were ‘deformed’ could expect little of the respect that normally accrued to rank.”²⁴ But how can we be certain that this true to Hay’s response to name calling? Did he necessarily see himself as superior to those who carried him through the streets of London in sedan chairs? Hay was not entitled to be called “My Lord” being only a member of the landed gentry. Was perhaps his label of “the Rabble” given only to those who called him “My Lord”? Hay was not just a small man with a curved spine, he was a poet, politician, husband, and father. Perhaps his response to chair-men²⁵ who

called him “My Lord” was a defense mechanism against casual abuse he used in front of his wife and children? After all, Hay was a Whig member of parliament and his party stood for social equality rather than *noblesse oblige*.

Turner’s book, of course, does not have room for such detailed speculations since it is trying to cover the whole eighteenth century. The section on Hay is only seven pages long and although it is longer than the 1,000 word entry for William Hay in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*,²⁶ Turner adds little factually to the story told there. What is interesting in a comparison between these two accounts is that while Turner describes Hay’s life from the perspective of his deformity, Stephen Taylor’s *ODNB* entry does not mention that Hay was “born a hunchback dwarf” until the second to last paragraph, although we are told chronologically that his sight was damaged after smallpox while he was studying law in London. What would seem to be going on in the two versions of Hay is that Turner is centering on Hay the disabled person, while Taylor is giving us Hay the politician and writer. But this produces anomalies in each account. When Taylor tells us of the depth of Hay’s dedication to Whiggism and its leader (after Robert Walpole) the Duke of Newcastle, Thomas Pelham-Holles, he evidences:

The link with the powerful Newcastle connection at which this dedication hinted was confirmed on 3 May 1731 by Hay’s marriage to Elizabeth Pelham (1709–1793), the second daughter of Thomas Pelham of Catsfield Place, Sussex, and a cousin of the duke.

But this information is given before Taylor’s readers would know (if they knew nothing about Hay) that he was deformed and a dwarf. The wedding is thus presented without a sense of how it was understood in the eighteenth century. Was it seen as strange for a deformed man to marry at all? Was the marriage considered dynastic (as Taylor’s account suggests) or companionate? How were the four resulting children received? It might have been that Elizabeth loved and cherished William and their marriage bed was a happy one as well as fruitful. Nevertheless, we ought not avoid the question about how Hay saw himself as one partner in the alliance with Elizabeth, after all he published his *Essay on Deformity* a year before his death, which suggests that it was very important to him that it was published, and in it he records that he was never free from casual abuse about his shape. Was Hay’s wife subject to the same vilification? Did Hay suffer when he thought about the things that were said to the woman he loved? Was his suffering from abuse and the consequent desire to be treated as equal to those who were not small and with curved spines the reason for his Whiggish principles? The example demonstrates

that to treat disabled people as though their disability were marginal to their lives can miss something of great importance to them and theirs. Again, to be fair, it might be asked whether an *ODNB* entry is the right place for such speculations. But should a major and life defining disability be mentioned only in passing?

Turner's approach to Hay is also open to accusations of missing subtleties while putting a spin on his subject. And the fact of the *Essay* being an early example of a first-hand account of disability perhaps makes it more important than the rest of Hay's life to a book on deformity. Turner notes that Hay published *Remarks on the Laws relating to the Poor, with Proposals for their better Relief and Employment* (1731).²⁷ But this is the only one mention of the wide range of other texts of which Hay was author, including *An Essay on Civil Government* (1728); *Mount Caburn: A Poem* (1730); *Religio Philosophi: or, the principles of morality and Christianity illustrated from a view of the universe, and man's situation in it* (1753); *Martials Epigrammata Selecta* (1755).²⁸ Confronted with such riches, one wonders whether we ought to read Hay only for his contribution to the way we understand deformity. Hay was after all a politician who left one of the most complete parliamentary diaries of the early eighteenth century.²⁹

If we do not give a full context to Hay's life and writing, can we begin to pick up the subtleties of how he understood himself as a deformed man living in the eighteenth century? To give an example, in his *Essay* Hay attacks Francis Bacon for making the stereotypical claim that people with irregular bodies have twisted minds.³⁰ Exonerating his subject, Turner notes that on the republication of Hay's complete writing,³¹ the *Critical Review* glossed Hay's *Essay* with a comparison with Alexander Pope:

Hay's good-humoured treatment of his subject was contrasted with the work of another writer with spinal curvature, Alexander Pope—described [in the *Critical Review*] as “the irritable poet of Twickenham”—whose barbed attacks in the *Dunciad* and other satirical works (together with other anti-social qualities of his character that [Samuel] Johnson had described) seemed to embody the “scorn” that Bacon had attributed to “deformed” people.³²

For Turner, the *Critical Review* would thus seem to suggest that Hay was the “good deformed man” while Pope was the “bad.” But what Turner fails to explore is the detail of Pope's and Hay's knowledge of one another and one another's work, especially while Hay was writing his translation and imitation of Martial's *Epigrams*, which are as barbed as Pope's, and use Pope's name over and over again as the

modern literary model for his satire.³³ In the light of Hay's deference to Pope, it would seem difficult to argue as the *Critical Review* did, and the difference between the two men as poets may be suggested instead to be that Pope, the professional poet, had the temerity to publish his barbed attacks while he and his victims were still alive, while Hay, the poet politician, was careful of his public reputation and waited until he and his victims were dead before his barbed attacks were published by the best London publisher, Robert Dodsley. Hay himself would seem to make this case when he questions his decision to publish in his imitation of Martial's Epigram IV, which is used as a preface to his book:

Why in Pall-Mall with *Dodsley* will you dwell,
When in my desk you still might lodge so well?³⁴

The reason Hay thought his translations ought to remain hidden in his drawer was that he like Martial (and Pope) might be attacked:

You who castration dread, who hate my strokes,
And grave correction of your idle jokes, . . .³⁵

When we read the rest of the imitated epigrams, it becomes clear that Hay, like Martial, and like Pope, did not hide who he attacked. For example, Epigram XI names a phthisic Lady Mary Belair who is being wooed for her fortune as she dies of consumption:

To Lady Mary Belair makes addresses;
Presents he makes, sighs, presses, and professes.
Is she so fair?—No lady so ill off.
What is so captivating then?—Her cough.³⁶

In want of careful research, Lady Mary Belair and her suitor remain unknown to us for the present, but the pair would have been easily identifiable to readers of the epigram in manuscript when it was fresh and the barbed comment would have stung its targets or given rise to laughter in its readers.

But if this would seem to give the lie to Hay's attack on Bacon and make him out to be like Pope, and both like Richard III, and all "determined to prove a villain," then we miss out on the fun and the intention of eighteenth-century satire and imitation. What Hay, Pope, and Samuel Johnson attempted in their satirical imitations of the classical poets, respectively Martial, Virgil, and Juvenal, was to give classical weight to their jokes at the expense of the vanity of human wishes that they saw around them. But satire had been the dominant form of poetry only

in the early century and Pope is attacked in the *Critical Review* in 1796 because a form of writing more at ease with sensibility had taken its place after 1760 and Pope was out of favor. Hay comes away clean footed in comparison because his victims were never named and Lady Mary long dead before the epigram was published, and Hay himself died in the year of publication of his *Martial*. But the fact that the *Critical Review* could still make the attack on Pope's shape, and Samuel Johnson's ticks and physical oddities were the subject of mimicry by James Boswell and David Garrick, while Hay's attitude to his is applauded requires further study of these men as whole men, living and working in the eighteenth century, and negotiating their personal disability with dignity and humor.

Two thirds of this project has been carried out already by Helen Deutsch in *Resemblance and Disgrace*, and *Loving Dr. Johnson*,³⁷ two books which laid the ground work for much of what I have argued needs to be done to deepen and widen the scope of disability history in the eighteenth century. Each is a book length study of a disabled person that explores his life and work. *Resemblance and Disgrace* reads Alexander Pope "for deformity," that is to say it explores the intersections between Pope's work and his self-presentation as its author, his language and subject matter, his poetical intentions and his detractors' criticisms, from whom the title comes. Deutsch reads Pope's deformity as a metaphor of literature and how literature works to explore the experience of embodiment. While her book is specific to Pope it is also as wide ranging as Pope's influence on British poetry, but at the same time Deutsch is writing against the traditions of Pope criticism that are, she argues, "blind[. . .] to the way in which deformity for Pope is both a biographical fact and a literary method, a mode of conceiving."³⁸

Extending her visual metaphor Deutsch explains the problem of a deformed man writing poetry that imitates a classical and therefore supposedly perfect pre-existing form in the neo-classical period when representations of perfect physical forms were a common subject of painting and ceramics as well as poetry:

What I hope will become visible in the process is the function of Pope's deformity as a sign of the monstrosity of imitative authorship, a phenomenon which caused Lady Mary Wortley Montagu to brand both the poet's body and his printed book "at once *Resemblance and Disgrace*" of originals both artificial and natural.³⁹

What "becomes visible" in *Resemblance and Disgrace* is the balance between the personal and the society in which people find and define themselves, which is clearly negotiated in literature: which is perhaps the function of literature. Thus, in

this case, Deutsch argues that “literary imitation is Pope’s generic portrait,”⁴⁰ while at the same time the book explores Pope’s poetry as the topos of the encounter between the global and the local:

While *Windsor Forest* expands a garden to encompass an English empire, Pope’s garden at Twickenham creates a counter-empire within the confines of individuality and with the seemingly stable material of land.⁴¹

Later in the book imitative poetry presents an encounter between the classical (defined by its having survived from time immemorial) and the ephemerality of an individual human life, in the figure of the medal, or coin.

[It is the medal’s] defense against entropy and chaos in the shape of a human body which Pope wants print to perform in Horace’s likeness.⁴²

In these examples (as well as others in the book) Pope’s curved spine intervenes in the concept of “imitation” as his body’s unlikeness to the classical athlete imposes itself upon his attempts to create the most beautiful classical imitations in poetry.

While Deutsch’s work has set us a wonderful example of how to proceed, *Resemblance and Disgrace* has not exhausted the subject of imitation and disability in the eighteenth century. If I may enter into a debate with Deutsch about her interpretation of William Hay—and debate about interpretation is that on which literary scholarship thrives—she argues:

Hay closes his text with two complimentary gestures. He prints a “Last Will” in which he leaves his body to science and asks that it be opened, made a biological specimen and preserved in a medical museum (part of what he wishes to display is the efficacy of a particular brand of soap for ingestion as a cure for various ills). The body which he recommends as both educational oddity and potential commodity.⁴³

I would like to offer an alternate reading of Hay’s intention for leaving his body to Sir Hans Sloane: which is to demonstrate that his deformed body is still a body that can act as an example for other bodies. Hay’s deformed body is an adequate “imitation” (or perhaps iteration) of any other body since it works in the same way and can be helped by the use of a soap based medication to prevent bladder stones. Hay’s body is the same only different as that of the classical athlete. Hay’s attitude toward himself seems also to point out how much he thought he was “the same only different” from other people and that while Pope thought himself unfit for marriage, Hay did marry and had four children.

It is interpretations and comparisons between the experiences of disabled people that fuel the current collection, so I include this dialogue with Deutsch as an example of how important it is to continue to work with disabled subjects and to develop the methodologies with which we make such interpretations.

VariAbility: A New Analytical Tool

As early as 1999, Elizabeth Bredberg noticed that

in disability history, . . . accounts of the lived experience of disabled people remain very much under-represented. Disability history, in ironic consequence, seems to sustain the depersonalized and institutionalized representation of disabled people that its authors undoubtedly deplore.⁴⁴

At the same time the paper notes that there are several collections of biographies of deaf people, and she concludes with the suggestion that

any real development in disability history will come from the work of investigators who have developed interpretive competence with [primary experiential accounts] as well.⁴⁵

However, the question is left unanswered as to what “interpretive competence” might be, but I believe this is the nub of the matter, although probably in a different way from that which Bredberg intended. If we put together the undoubted fact that at this moment there is more work in deaf history than any other disability⁴⁶ with the question of interpretive competence we might find an answer. Deaf people write books because they can use them. There is a deaf university (Gallaudet) in Washington DC, which has an active academic publishing house. There are even two pictorial histories of the deaf, one of Britain and one of the United States.⁴⁷

The reason I draw attention to this undoubted fact is that the deaf even call themselves “the people of the eye.” Although much of their history has been a fight to use sign language as their main means of communication, the written word is the place where this fight has been recorded for posterity. Sign language is evanescent, like speech, and disappears as the signs are made, to become a personal mental image in the signer’s and signee’s minds. A conversation can be remembered, but memory of it becomes more and more indistinct as time passes. On the other hand, words on a page exist forever and can be studied again and again in a relationship between the eye and the colored characters. Words on a page may also be interpreted again and again, but they remain identical each time they are

seen. An eye can skim in many different ways across the page to pick up different nuances of meaning by noticing connections between words that exist simultaneously and come in and out of focus as the eye moves over the page. Sign language and speech leave only a passing impression that can never be revisited.

For text-disabled people, access to words is always like sign language or speaking. We also have our own language for which we have fought, braille, but touching white dots on a page, is as temporal an experience as listening to a voice. There is no simultaneity equivalent to perusing words on a page when reading requires the temporal pass of the finger. A braille reader can never stop and ponder a single word and take in all its letters in one view.

I have no competence with braille as I could learn to read print as a child, so I cannot comment on the experience of reading that way. My main language of textual communication is aural: either text-to-voice (for work) or audio book (for pleasure). In either form text cannot come to me simultaneously and I have to study it in a linear temporality, although I fold time back and forth as I click the “back 30 seconds” button to pick up pieces of information I have missed in a moment of inattention as the voice moves smoothly on.

The process of re-educating myself to read this way took about two years, and now I can read and grade student essays at 120 words a minute: a speed that my students cannot even hear as language. I can even hear spelling mistakes. During the process of relearning to read, I was writing my book, *Being the Body of Christ*,⁴⁸ which was intended to have a wider range of authors, one to a chapter, and only about 10,000 words on E.F Benson’s *David Blaize* trilogy. But I finally gave up on trying to read paper books after writing the chapters on Oscar Wilde, Alan Hollinghurst, Jeanette Winterson, and Edward Carpenter, and turned to text to voice. In the event, the detail I picked up from having to listen linearly word by word to Benson’s lovely books, led me to writing 40,000 words on them. My whole method of working changed. Since I could never read properly, I would spy out useful phrases by skimming over text very quickly with one eye held tightly shut to find relevant passages by recognizing word shapes, which I would then write out or type in order to read properly. After reading by sight became impossible I had to listen to every word, word by word, going back and forth across the text so as to remember which incident came before which. Until five years ago I could retain the shape of paragraphs on a page and hold a mental image of the page, or the copied out text, to bring me the experience of seeing words simultaneously. Now linear time has replaced simultaneity for me and I would argue that this is another language experience equally valid as sign language or braille.

Now, text-to-voice has become so dominant a language of work for me that when I am at a conference and hear a paper which describes the work of “Fow-coh” I wonder for a moment whose work is being referenced, until I remember the sound pattern “Fow-oo-coh-ault” which my computer reads to me when speaking the letters “Foucault.”⁴⁹

When I am reading for pleasure, and turn to audio books, that is, books that are performed for the listener by a professional reader, I touch the limits of my new access to text. If I am unfamiliar with a sound pattern I can lose out on levels of meaning, as for example, recently when I was reading Robert Jordan’s fantasy novel, *The Eye of the World*,⁵⁰ I heard the sound pattern “Eye-Siddeye,” which the text tells me are some kind of magicians, but the sound has no obvious homophonic metaphors to the ear. I checked out the word and discovered that it was spelled “Aes Sedai” in the printed version of the text, which abounds with suggestions of Aois Dàna (Aes Dana) the Old Irish race of bards, whom they resemble.

Thus, I might argue, in work and leisure, I am more disabled than deaf readers. When I have finished this book you are now reading and it comes back to me for proofing, I will not be able easily to understand these last two paragraphs with text-to-voice. A deaf person only has to look at them to understand them.

But here I am not trying to set up a hierarchy of disability where deaf/blind people might be “more disabled” than either blind or deaf people. And there is an excluded third party to the discussion, those who can both hear and see, what of them? Is their relationship to us the visually impaired, and you the deaf, the most important thing to know? I do not think so. The most important thing that identifies us is our differing capacities. We visually impaired access text the way we can, the deaf the way they can, each in our own peculiar way, and those who can both see and hear in theirs. Access for each group is different, valid, and has its strengths and weaknesses. It would be otiose to suggest that one type of access is better than another. But varying capacities might be a useful fact on which to base an analysis of people in history. Furthermore, since no one is totally “able” (in this example, to be totally able might be to see all words all at once on a page) and no one totally “disabled” (with no access to language at all), then we might dispense with the word “disabled” with its binary opposite, and call everyone “VariAble.” I would argue that this addresses the question that arose in reading Kim Neilsen’s *Disabled History of the United States* since we no longer have to define who are the disabled and who the able. We are all simply VariAble people.⁵¹

When we turn to look for more detail about the whole lives of historical people, VariAbility might also be of some help. VariAbility is no means transhis-

torical, as it would expect blind people in the eighteenth century to be different from blind people in the twenty-first century in the way they were treated or understood, in the same way that we would expect that every person in each century had different experiences of and with their peculiar abilities. But VariAbility would nevertheless expect that someone who was blind in the eighteenth century would have similar difficulties in, say, accessing text, as blind people in the twenty-first century, although they would understand themselves in a different way and expect different solutions. Above all, VariAbility would not suggest that difference was binary. Deaf people in the eighteenth-century were as different from blind people as they were different from those who thought themselves normal. There never was a reference point of “normal” that defined those who were not. VariAbility would expect that every “normal” person was as different (VariAble) as every other “normal” person.

VariAbility is a concept that enshrines uniqueness, has the patience to discover the peculiarities of each individual and by so doing captures particular people rather than an “institutionalized representation of disabled people.” As such it is a useless concept for those who are seeking “power relations” between groups who define themselves as the same against an other. But it is a good way to notice people in history.

If this sounds difficult, then try to untangle my experience of sight. I have always been visually impaired, but as I used to be able to see texts, I was educated in a mainstream school that did not know that I had a visual anomaly so did not treat me as disabled. Instead, as I coaxed my mind to use the vision I had to find some pattern to the words on the page, I was thought to be educationally subnormal. Now I am a full professor of English Literature although I cannot work with paper texts. When asked to describe my experience of vision, I say that “I can see everything but I can make out nothing.” If I see letters and am asked to say what I’ve seen I say “letters.” If I see a friend it is more than likely a stranger wearing my friend’s face. If someone comes towards me with a smile (which I can obviously see) I greet them with the name I think goes with them and am often wrong. So I must have a visual memory of the friend that I cannot and could never see.

Have patience with me, don’t simply call me blind, since I can see, or stupid as my school did, since I am really quite clever. Do not think of me as some “Other” who you are definitely not, since I share a lot of visual (and other) experiences with you. I like modern architecture (it is big and does not move and has little detail) and I love to walk around cities with you. Just don’t let me try to cross a road because I cannot see the traffic since it moves. Protect me and

cherish me, not as different from you but as a VariAble of you. I am “the same only different” from you. My visual capacity is not the same as yours. But it has its recompenses. Learning to read with text-to-voice brought me a wholly new way of working that has enhanced my life immeasurably, and I recommend it to you even if you can read paper texts.

However, those recompenses are in my conscious decision to accept or deny. My oldest friend has macular degeneration, another genetic condition, that means she has like me had to face blindness at the height of her active life. We meet regularly and laugh and weep together about our past and present and futures. But if we share the experience of losing sight in middle age, we do not share a future. My friend does not understand the recompenses of being blind. She refuses to be registered blind or get a travel permit or read audio books. She will not go to art galleries anymore because she says “she cannot see the wall, let alone the painting.” She would not go with me to the recent Edvard Munch exhibition in London⁵² even though some of the paintings represented his experience of her condition. Instead she sits at home poring over visual text magnified to the highest level her kindle will manage, reading for half an hour a day before she is too exhausted and has to sleep.

My response to what I understand as a “same only different” future has been to accept my visual anomaly with its limitations and to relearn how to read. Furthermore, nothing will keep me out of art galleries where I stand and peer at artworks through my dark glasses. I used to despise conceptual art, but now prefer the gross visual stimulus to the intricate detail of a pre-Raphaelite painting.

What is different between me and my friend with macular degeneration is our capability to live with our altered capacity. Capability I understand as the mind’s facility to accept difference and live with it or deny it. I can accept the physical constraints of my visual impairment, my friend cannot. Capability is experiential and nonjudgmental. It is not predictable and adds to the peculiarity of an individual. It is another element to be added to capacity as a way of noticing people in history. But if I seem to have set up yet another binary between capacity as body and capability as mind, then I must now point out that both capacity and capability only become apparent in encounters with others, and the three exist as a triplet.

What I want to maintain in the analysis of VariAbility, is the immediacy of individual lived experience. I believe that the three elements capacity, capability, and encounter, (which are not necessary to the central concept) can help to guide the analysis of experience, and highlight the relationship between body mind and other people as in the example I have just given.

The Essays

The essays illustrate different aspects of the subtitle of this volume: *the Idea of Disability in the Long Eighteenth Century*, and separate themselves neatly into three sections, the Methodological, the Conceptual, and the Experiential. The first group consider philosophies of the body before and after empiricism, and present an overall picture suggesting that empiricism, which might be argued to be the basis of the current scientific way people understand themselves as agents in the world, is filled with anxiety about failures in its method to explain different experiences of embodiment, and which, in the eighteenth century, was only one way to understand the body in all its forms—the others of which are more inclusive of aberration and empathetic toward difference. The second group of essays explores ways disability was conceptualized in the eighteenth century, in terms of literature and public consciousness, and we discover how literature disguises its representations of disability, while periodical and pamphlet literature was starkly direct in exposing the terrible tortures inflicted upon disabled people—especially the mentally disabled. The third group of essays, which explore the lives of disabled people throughout the century, demonstrates the dynamic tension between the personal desire for disabled people to be accepted and treated as autonomous individuals, while at the same time wanting to be part of groups either of other disabled people or of a wider community. In fact they demonstrate the way in which disabled people expressed concerns about their lives typical of the human social animal.

Theorizing Disability—Methodological Essays:

These consider philosophical writing dating between 1663 and 1788, a time in which the understanding of disability altered dramatically. We begin with Margaret Cavendish, whose natural philosophy was based upon an all but Hermetic view of “as above so below,” that led her to reject ideas of superiority or inferiority between individuals based upon physical or mental difference. We then move to John Locke, the founder of empiricism in 1680, who believed that the basis of knowledge was observability, but who, faced with the lack of anything to observe, broke his own epistemological rules in his explanation of mental illness. Quite probably understanding the problems that empiricism set up, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Lord Shaftesbury, turned in 1711 to moral philosophy, but also founded his philosophy on a flaw. While he believed in the harmony of “the aesthetic trinity of beauty, truth, and virtue” he could not believe that a disabled friend whom he knew to have been moral before his physical alteration could change inside. Lastly,

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we turn to Thomas Reid who returned to the body as the ground of philosophical enquiry, but this time in terms of power. The body seen as a whole is, for Reid, complete in itself, and wanting nothing, be it missing a sense (Reid was deaf) or a physical or mental capacity.

Working on the late seventeenth-century natural philosopher, Margaret Cavendish, Holly Nelson and Sharon Alker's essay demonstrates that before empiricism there was no simple binary opposition between able bodies and disabled bodies, which might be used in Foucauldian negative definition. Rather they argue that Cavendish believed in a diversity of physical and mental states akin to my own idea of VariAbility. This means that from as early as the seventeenth century, the language of superiority and inferiority is undermined. Nelson and Alker also explain that Cavendish treated only with the body and left incorporeal spiritual truths to churchmen, which took the religious sting out of disability. For her pains, Cavendish was routinely thought to be mad herself, though she does not seem to have cared much about the appellation.

Jess Keiser's paper examines the problem with eighteenth-century empiricism's understanding of mental disability by examining a contradiction in John Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Although Locke states plainly that his work will not "meddle with the Physical Consideration of the Mind," (that is neurophysiology, a term coined by Locke's teacher, Thomas Willis) his writings on madness point to the flux of animal spirits in the brain as a probable cause for mental derangement, thus: "the brain tricks the mad into perceiving otherwise irrational connections in the mind's ideas." In spite of this contradiction, Locke's writings on madness share with the rest of the *Essay* a concern that we cannot discover the mechanisms of the body because the real source of those mechanisms remains just out of sight, an insoluble problem, which led to the skepticism of David Hume and George Berkeley, and Shaftesbury's turn to describe morality. By surveying the similarities in these disparate moments in the *Essay*, Keiser's paper brings to light the anxiety around the hidden interactions of body and brain that pervades Locke's writings, to which we might conclude: empiricism is not a fit tool for explaining the complexities of how the disabled body works.

Paul Kelleher's essay begins where Locke's methodology failed—trying to comment upon a subject that could not be observed—in this case moral philosophy. However, Shaftesbury's "vision of moral harmony" as an "inward anatomy" in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) was also not free from criticism for its treatment of disabled subjects, this time that his work follows the Baconian model that the outwardly deformed must be morally deformed also. As

Kelleher writes: “moral philosophy addresses the fundamental question of what constitutes the good life: what is a life well lived, it asks, and how is such a life conducted in a world shared by others and sustained in a world comprised of materials and objects? Any answers to these questions necessarily implicate those who, at different times, have been regarded as monstrous, deformed, freakish, deviant, or disabled. As even a cursory glance reveals, the pages of moral-philosophical treatises are replete with invocations—or more accurately, deprecations—of “deformity.” Nevertheless, after a careful reading of the *Characteristics*, and a brief look at Shaftesbury’s philosophical notes, the *Askēmata* (recently published in full for the first time), Kelleher demonstrates that if we “respect the ambiguities of any body of thought” we discover that Shaftesbury did not simply accept “the aesthetic trinity of beauty, truth, and virtue” and denigrate “the deformed, false and vicious.” For example, if a friend whom we know to be morally virtuous travels in “the remotest parts of the East and the hottest countries of the South” and becomes physically deformed by disease, our friend has not changed morally because they are now ugly: “It is not we who change when our complexion or shape changes.” Thus, Kelleher argues that Shaftesbury’s aestheticization of morality—or what comes to the same, his *moralization of aesthetics*—does not overtly argue that what we today refer to as “disability” is synonymous with “moral deformity.”

Emile Bojesen explores the way the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid criticizes the binary of disabled able-bodied, finding it the product of empiricism and skepticism. As an alternative, Reid offers a common sense philosophy of power, where power is what differentiates beings with a “will” from those without, and makes them the author of their actions and their life. The idea is a complex one, the more so since empiricism and skepticism have become so engrained in our culture, but the outcome is liberating since, according to Reid, the agent has power over their dis/ability rather than their dis/ability having power over them. Power dictates the direction of the will and locates the will as being subject to the various bodily faculties: emphasizing the variable experience of the body and mind before the direction of the will. No two bodies are the same, be they able or disabled, but they are all fully capable of doing what they can.

Thinking about Disability—Conceptual Essays

At the heart of the study of any historical artifact is the question of where to look for evidence, and when looking for evidence of disability, we have largely to rely upon texts. However, texts come in many forms, and the two essays here explore

three types, the novel, the periodical and the pamphlet, which pour out their riches in different ways.

Anna K. Sagal's paper explores the intersections between language and disability in Laurence Sterne's character of Uncle Toby in *Tristram Shandy*. What becomes more complex here, is the fact that although Toby can be read as an equivalent of a modern traumatized war veteran, he was also an eighteenth-century man who used that century's language to express and come to terms with his disability, which makes for a fascinating comparison. The language games which so famously define Sterne's novel do not cease to be played when we try to pin down any of its characters, who are "in search for their own comprehensible narratives within a larger narrative," which might be a personal search for the meaning of one's disability. What becomes tragic, however, is that this meaning must be hidden within the language games themselves as a puzzle that needs to be solved in order to be expressed as disability is too awful to be expressed on the polite page of the novel.

Dana Gliserman Kopans's essay argues that the claim that literary portrayals of false imprisonment for insanity are overstated needs to be reconsidered in the light of contemporary periodical and pamphlet accounts which fed widespread fears that the "trade in lunacy" was so voracious that no one was safe. While the essay considers the problem of false imprisonment for insanity in a case documented by Daniel Defoe in *The Review*, and two others by the falsely imprisoned James Bruckshaw and James Belcher, the punishment handed out to the unnamed woman and the two men must have been typical of that meted out to those who were really mentally disabled. The essay gives a truly harrowing account of the dreadful treatment of mentally disabled people in the eighteenth century, set within the contemporary regimes of incarceration for insanity: William Battie's private confinement (in St Luke's) for vitiated senses and John Monro's public display (in Bedlam) for vitiated judgment, both of which led to mentally disabled people being tortured. What is most ironic about this is that it was Battie and Monro who testified to the 1763 House of Commons Report on the state of madhouses in England, a trade in which both had made vast fortunes, and which neither wanted to be questioned about their running private prisons for the incarceration of unwanted relatives.

Living with Disability—Experiential Essays

Not all people have left a large body of work on which to base biographical accounts, and with relatively few disabled people (there are, for example only

fifteen blind writers noted on Eighteenth-Century Collections Online) the evidence is even more sparse and the lives even more evanescent. These four essays begin to bring to light little known disabled people, or people who are little known for their disability, giving various forms of biographical accounts of Susanna Harrison, Sarah Scott, Priscilla Poynton, and Thomas Gills, who are all but forgotten in the academic (Scott perhaps less so) as well as the public consciousness. When I was researching Thomas Gills in Bury St. Edmunds, I told the archivists about their blind poet but none had even heard of him, though he sold his pamphlets at the steps of St Mary's church every day until he died in 1716—a few yards from their door.

Jamie Kinsley's essay on the devout poetry of Susanna Harrison explores the way this pain-wracked poet followed successfully the economic example of another religious poet, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, while at the same time giving a voice to her own suffering and her methods of coping with daily unmitigated pain. The result gives us an extraordinarily personal experience of disability. What is interesting is how Harrison writes for a supportive coterie, and how her longing to be always a part of the public worship of her congregational community is necessary for her understanding of her sense of herself as part of a divine family. In this sense, Harrison's poetry gives us a glimpse of what Lennard J. Davis has suggested is the period in which the signifiers for disability begin shifting from perceived vice to perceived virtue. At the same time the fact that Harrison's poems were edited by her minister and presented as the work of a poor disabled poet, we might find a reason for the shift was connected with the economics of charity rather than the purported divine purpose of using the suffering of the disabled body as an example of the suffering of Jesus: a process that the essay argues marginalizes disabled people.

Jason Farr also develops Lennard J. Davis's idea about the change in consciousness about and of physical deformity during the eighteenth century from public spectacle to a test for virtue to overcome, using the eighteenth-century concept of sensibility. His essay argues against the idea of a docile minority of deformed people, suggesting rather William Hay's challenge to the ugly club is another example of how he subverts established modes of thinking that were promoted by both the literary establishment, represented by Steele, and scientific thought, epitomized by Bacon. Instead, Farr argues that the writings of William Hay and Sarah Scott go beyond merely procuring sympathy for the disabled: they attempt to reconfigure cultural perceptions about the body by extolling deformity as a most desirable physical condition. By rereading Sarah Scott's novel, *Agreeable Ugliness*, Farr's essay demonstrates that people afflicted by facial deformity were

not subject to the wishes of a dominant public or familial pressure to conform, but used their wit and intelligence to get what they wanted.

Jess Domanico presents a study of Priscilla Poynton, a blind poet who discusses her own experience of life as a blind woman in her autobiographical poetry. Although noting that there are few other facts known about her life other than her two collections of poetry, the paper becomes a call for a full-length piece of work to be done on Poynton, who was part of the tradition of blind people making an economic life for themselves in whatever ways they could. The paper also notes the limits of the understanding of disability both in the eighteenth century and now, and asks that we listen to the individual explain their own disability. Domanico also suggests that Poynton's "blindness is actually enabling—i.e. it enables her to read her own life as she envisions it." This challenging essay therefore suggests that we can read the poet herself through her own writing about herself as an example of VariAbility—as the woman she was rather than as a blind prisoner of her disability. Poynton's poetry, Domanico argues, is where we encounter Poynton reading herself—and subsequently defining herself—as a woman writer.

My essay also gives a study of a blind poet, Thomas Gills of Bury St. Edmunds, who wrote poetry in order to help himself to economic independence. The essay discusses the place of literary studies in the history of disability, and argues that a carefully contextualized account of a disabled person can bring to light a great deal about the whole person working within the ebbs and flows of historical change and continuity, while remaining aware of the fact that presenting evidence from a variety of disparate sources, and using all the tricks and partial truths that the construction of a single narrative implies, the resultant "total vision" will be to a degree distorted. In the same vein, I argue that the language of address by the poor to their benefactors comprised various forms: as the example of Gills's various publications and his publication strategy imply.

Notes

1. Stiker's bibliography cites: "Foucault, Michel. *Histoire de la Folie à l'Age classique*. Plon, 1961. Reprint, Ed. Gallimard, 1972. Foucault, Michel. *Naissance de la Clinique*. PUF, 1963. Foucault, Michel. *Surveiller et punir*. Ed. Gallimard, 1975," as well as Gilles Deleuze's book on Foucault: "Foucault, Ed. De Minuit, 1968." Stiker's bibliography also cites four books by the structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss: "*Anthropologie Structurale*. 1958. Reprint Plon, 1974. *La Pensée sauvage*. Plon, 1962. *Anthropologie structural deux*. Plon, 1973. *L'impossible prison. Recherches sur le système pénitentiaire au XIXe siècle*, ed. Michelle Perrot. Le Seuil, 1980." The lack of a reference to the works of Jacques Derrida would suggest that Stiker had come down on the side of Foucault in the poststructuralist debate sparked off by Derrida's attack on Foucault in 1962, published as

- “Cogito and the History of Madness,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, 36-77 (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1978).
2. Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability*, tr. William Sayers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 18. Please note that the studies to which I refer in this introduction are mostly journal articles, and where books are referenced they tend to be quotes taken from reviews or fragments available on Google books. I have chosen this practice as a statement of intent since, as a partially sighted scholar, I cannot easily work with texts that cannot be translated by text to voice. I have used some whole books, but only those that are freely and legally given to me as unencrypted electronic text. I have made a policy of not signing disclaimers stating that I will not put such texts online as a hurdle to getting access since this demand expects me to be a criminal first and a partially sighted scholar second. Nor will I read freely given texts by publishers whom I have had to threaten with legal action before a book is sent to me, which every sighted scholar in Britain gets free access to through the copyright deposit system. My practice also means that some of the page numbers I give are inaccurate as they come from (legal) online sources or from pre-publication copies.
 3. Susan Burch, “Disability History: Suggested Readings—An Annotated Bibliography,” *The Public Historian* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 63–74.
 4. Paul K. Longmore and Laurie Umansky, *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 15.
 5. David Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
 6. Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” <http://www.libertystatepark.com/emma.htm>.
 7. Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Deafness, Disability and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995), 67.
 8. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 2.
 9. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 158.
 10. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, eds., *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives in Science and Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchison eds., *Gendering Disability* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Burch, “Disability History,” 70.
 11. Chris Mounsey, ed., *Developments in the Histories of Sexualities: In Search of the Normal* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 1.
 12. Susan Burch, “Disability History.”
 13. Iain Hutchison, *A history of disability in nineteenth-century Scotland* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007); L. Linthicum, “Integrative Practice: Oral History, Dress and Disability Studies,” in *Journal of design history* 19, no. 4 (2006): 309–318; Susan M. Schweik, “Disability Politics and American Literary History: Some Suggestions,” *American Literary History* 20, no. 1–2, (2008): 217–237; Bryan Breed, *From Scorn to Dignity: A brief history of disability* (London: New European, 2008); Julie Anderson and A. Carden-Coyne, “Enabling the Past: New Perspectives in the History of Disability,” *European review of history/ Revue europeenne d’histoire* 14, no. 4 (2007): 447–457;

- Anne Borsay, *Disability and social policy in Britain since 1750: a history of exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); C. F. Goodey, *A history of intelligence and 'intellectual disability': the shaping of psychology in early modern Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Susan M. Schweik, *The ugly laws: disability in public* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); David Wright, *Down's: the history of a disability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Julie Anderson, *War, disability and rehabilitation in Britain: "soul of a nation"* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Anne Borsay, "History, Power and Identity," in *Disability Studies Today*, ed. Colin Barnes, Michael Oliver, and Len Barton, 92-119, (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).
14. Teresa Meade and David Serlin, eds., "Disability and History," *Radical History Review* 94, Special Issue, (Winter 2006).
 15. Meade and Serlin, *Radical History Review*, 3.
 16. <https://www.dukeupress.edu/Catalog/ViewProduct.php?productid=16259>. Accessed 12 January 2013.
 17. *Coming Home*, movie, Hal Ashby, 1987, Los Angeles, CA, United Artists.
 18. Meade and Serlin, *Radical History Review*, 8.
 19. Kim E. Neilsen, *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).
 20. For publication details, see endnote 4.
 21. Nielsen's book on googlebooks preview is unpaginated, so I will not note further references.
 22. Turner, *Disability in eighteenth-century England*, passim.
 23. William Hay, *Deformity: An Essay* (London: George Faulkner, 1754).
 24. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, 117.
 25. Sedan-chair carriers: the eighteenth-century equivalent to taxi drivers.
 26. Stephen Taylor, "William Hay," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12739?docPos=5>, accessed February 6, 2013.
 27. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, 117.
 28. William Hay, *Remarks on the Laws relating to the Poor, with Proposals for their better Relief and Employment* (London: J. Stagg, 1731); William Hay, *An Essay on Civil Government* (London: R. Gosling, 1728); William Hay, *Mount Caburn: A Poem* (London: J. Stagg, 1730); William Hay, *Religio Philosophi: or, the principles of morality and Christianity illustrated from a view of the universe, and man's situation in it* (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1753).
 29. Recently discovered and published as part of Stephen Taylor and Clyve Jones, *Tory and Whig* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998).
 30. Hay, *Deformity: An Essay*, p.29–31.
 31. William Hay, *The Works of William Hay* (London: J. Dodsley, 1795).
 32. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, 122.
 33. *Martial's Epigrams Selected, Translated and Imitated by William Hay, Esq.* (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1755).

34. Hay, *Martial's Epigrams*, 3.
35. Hay, *Martial's Epigrams*, 3.
36. Hay, *Martial's Epigrams*, 5.
37. Helen Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), and *Loving Dr. Johnson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). I have not quoted from the Dr. Johnson book as the form in which it was presented to me by the publishers was not amenable to the text to voice technology to which I am accustomed.
38. Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, p.4.
39. Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, p.10.
40. Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, p.27.
41. Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, p.84.
42. Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, p.139.
43. Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, p.42.
44. Elizabeth Bredberg, "Writing Disability History: Problems, perspectives and sources," *Disability & Society*, 14, no.2 (1999): 189–201, 191–92.
45. Bredberg, "Writing Disability History," 195.
46. A quick survey of the British Library catalogue for example brings up eleven books on blind history books, sixty-four on deaf history.
47. Peter Jackson, *A Pictorial History of deaf Britain* (Winsford: Deafprint, 2001); and Douglas C. Baynton, *Through Deaf Eyes, A Photographic History of a Deaf Community* (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 2007).
48. Chris Mounsey, *Being the Body of Christ: Towards a Twenty First Century Homosexual Theology for the Anglican Church* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012).
49. Listening to this paragraph is very odd for me since only the word in scare quotes at the end sounds right. Try listening to it on your computer's text to voice feature.
50. Robert Jordan, *The Eye of the World* (New York: T. Doherty Associates, 1990).
51. Paul Kelleher has drawn my attention to some similarities in my argument and that of complex embodiment explored by Tobin Siebers in *Disability Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 25, where he writes: The theory of complex embodiment raises awareness of the effects of disabling environments on people's lived experience of the body, but it emphasizes as well that some factors affecting disability, such as chronic pain, secondary health effects, and aging, derive from the body. These last disabilities are neither less significant than disabilities caused by the environment nor to be considered defects or deviations merely because they are resistant to change. Rather, they belong to the spectrum of human variation, conceived both as variability between individuals and as variability within an individual's life cycle, and they need to be considered in tandem with social forces affecting disability. The theory of complex embodiment views the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal. Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative.
52. "Edvard Munch: The Modern Eye," Tate Modern, Bankside, London, August 12, 2012.