

The materiality of disability in American poetry: a case study of "Beauty is a Verb THE NEW
POETRY OF DISABILITY"



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POETRY OF DISABILITY"

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kaiser Haq', is displayed on a light gray rectangular background.

(Kaiser Hamidul Haq, PhD)

Professor

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgment of collaborative research and discussions.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my respected teacher Prof. Shamsad Mortuza who taught me how to approach poems step by step and interpret it by understanding both the science and art of poems. His passionate poetry class in the undergraduate course *ENG 1201: Introduction to Poetry and Drama* contributed to developing the poetry skills that eventually encouraged me to write a dissertation in disability poetry.

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Abbreviation

BIAV: throughout the thesis, BIAV will mean *Beauty is a Verb THE NEW POETRY OF DISABILITY*, a poetry anthology by American poets with physical disabilities edited by Jennifer Bartlett, Sheila Black, & Michael Northen. Cinco Puntos Press, 2011.

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Abstract

Critical disability studies offers a heightened understanding of how the material body, poetry, and culture are intriguing. This paper explores the materiality of disability poetics in a poetry anthology by American poets with disabilities: *Beauty is a Verb THE NEW POETRY OF DISABILITY* (2011). Hence, I argue that a reconstruction of disability is realizable through the restructuring of the underlying cultural assumptions and traditional poetics. Theoretically, I applied the existential and embodied phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Judith Butler to substantiate my argument. The paper found that applying phenomenological approaches to disability poetics could contribute to a delicate understanding of ‘differing’ conditions of human life and provide a critical tool to defamiliarize the traditional poetic texts and produce alternative poetic artisanship and poetic philosophy. This study is likely to contribute to a better understanding of critical interrelations among three factors: the phenomenological aspect of disability, poetic narrative arch on disability, and disability aesthetics. Hence, the *introductory chapter* briefly introduces disability poetics, selected text *Beauty is a Verb THE NEW POETRY OF DISABILITY*, and orients the background of the thesis, identifies research questions, and the pertinency of the chosen topic. The *second* chapter critically reviews the prevailing literature on disability poetry to find out new avenues of literary inquiry. The *third* chapter analyzes the research methodology. The *fourth* chapter discusses the materiality of disability in poetic practices: interplay between body, perception, and poetry. The *following* chapter explores the gendered body in disability poetics: from the theatre of reasoning to alternative poetics. And the *final* chapter succinctly reflects the key findings of this thesis.

Keywords: disability, disability poetics, existentialism, phenomenology, embodiment, gender performativity, perception, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Judith Butler.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Disability poetics explores poetics from a critical perspective applying fundamental philosophical principles of autonomy, equality, poetic thoughts, language, and disability aesthetics. It provides a poetic lens to reflect and rectify disability discourses and practices. It defies the body as a theatre of reasoning. This study analyzes some selected poems and essays based on *Beauty is a Verb THE NEW POETRY OF DISABILITY (2011)* (thereafter BIAV) – a poetry anthology by American poets with physical disabilities edited by Jennifer Bartlett, Sheila Black, & Michael Northen. This anthology covers twentieth-century American English literature at large.

BIAV - the first of its kind - is a pioneering poetry anthology by American poets with disabilities who write their disability experiences and aspirations. I chose this anthology because this is written by disabled people and reflected their own experiences. It goes beyond the linear narrative of disability and enables poetic possibilities. I will reflect on selected poems and essays with reference to the concepts and theories of existential and embodied phenomenology as explained in chapter three.

Existential and embodied phenomenology is a research form that seeks to understand the aspects of human life as a lived experience from the first-person perspective. It provides suspension of 'objective' viewpoints and offers new feet to discover non-reductive yet powerful truths. I employed this theoretical lens as poetry often goes to explore novel aspects of life and poetic truths are resulted from subjective yet systematic (poetic means) and sustained reflection on thoughts, life, surroundings, and eternity. Phenomenological research is a research approach

that examines the perspectives, perceptions, thoughts, languages, emotions, imaginations, and understanding of a particular human act, event, or condition and how related individual(s) deal with the meaning and essence of that experience. This research is useful for this study as it can give us a hitherto unknown and deeper understanding and insights into disability poetry by elucidating the elements of poetry and interactions between and within a poet and her material or imaginary surroundings. This study, applying the phenomenological methodology in disability poetry, is likely to contribute to the development of new disability poetics and or new theories of disability.

The study seeks to explore a set of questions: what materiality constitutes disability poetry? How does poetry defy cultural embodiment that pervades poetic practices and social praxis? What are the borderlines that make disability poetics an independent and alternative genre?

Disability poetry displays that the experience of disability can be an important avenue of poetic inquiry, expression, and realization. Its findings are likely to explore overlooked schisms of social forces that generate sufferings for individuals. Hence, as a literary remedy, disability poetry creates an artistic platform that sources disarrayed outlooks toward disability, examines existing assumptions on disability and its dire consequences, and finally provides poetic pathways that contribute to a better poetic artisanship and a heightened understanding of ‘differing’ conditions of human life. Disability is a victim of different medical and cultural gazes and academic ablenormative assumptions. Hence, this investigation can be instrumental in both epistemic and societal exercises that are likely to reshape the public critical conversation.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature review

Disability poetry can be recognized by several characteristics: a challenge to stereotypes and an insistence on self-definition; foregrounding of the perspective of people with disabilities; an emphasis on embodiment, especially atypical embodiment; and alternative techniques and poetics. ----- Jim Ferris

I shall survey the existing available literature that clarifies key concepts, literary aspects, and theoretic trends on disability poetry and poetics to identify critical gaps in the prevalent literature.

a. Literature on disability poetics and poetry

The concept of disability poetics as a genre is still emerging. From the 1980s and 1990s onward, disability poetry was observed to be visible on the American literary scene. In the literary history of disability poetics, Ammons' essay *A poem is a walk* (1967) is usually regarded as an originaive work. It argues that a poem is a whole process that encompasses both material-spiritual and body-mind, which can be compared with a walk that requires a coordinating system of both physiological and circulatory systems. He contests: "A whole body is not a disabled one." (Ammons 12). It suggests the imposition of disability as a generic category is not plausible. Ammons also challenges conventional concepts such as poem and suggests shaping them anew: "...A poem is not simply a mental activity: it has body, rhythm, feeling, sound, and mind, conscious and subconscious." (16). To Ammons, poetry is a representation of behavior. Poetry suggests a multiplicity of reality. It concludes by suggesting that "poetry leads us to the unstructured sources of our beings, to the unknown, and returns us to

our rational, structured selves refreshed." (20). Thus, this essay shows poetry is a dynamic force and implies that the realities of disability should reflect in poetic forms and contents. However, while this essay opens a gateway to the possibility of disability poetry, does not specifically connect phenomenology with poetic practices.

Anthologies contributed to bringing writers with visible and invisible disabilities to the forefront. Specifically, two such anthologies – *Despite this flesh: The disabled in stories and poems. (1985)* and *With Wings: Anthology of Literature by and about Women with Disabilities (1987)* – are worth mentioning. The former focused on highlighting the work of women writers with disabilities that added much literary impetus to the barren disability field; while, the latter featured disability issues in poems and stories of forty-five poets and writers. Both anthologies evidentially signified the feasibility of disability literature as an independent genre. Both works called for subtleties and sensitivities in dealing with disabled family members to realize their maximum potential as often handicapped people are like "Genius imprisoned in a defective body". In doing so, it rhetorically asked how a mind of a disabled person placed in an electric wheelchair interplay restricted movement. Although both anthologies filled up a part of the vacuum of much-needed disability textbooks, did not dig down disability poetics from literary and theoretic excellence.

There was a dearth of disability poetry genres as 'mainstream' poetry would hardly deal with disability aspects. In 1986, perhaps the first of its kind, Baird published *Toward Solomon's Mountain: The Experience of Disability in Poetry (1986)* which could be marked as a genesis of disability poetry. This work laid a foundation to portray disability experiences through poetry. Conventional poetry regarding disability issues was constricted on a fixed frame that roughly covered poetic expressions such as sentimental, sympathized, and conveying care mentality.

Baird can be credited as a pioneer of unsentimental disability poetry. This anthology honed the possibilities of unsentimental disability poetry but could not expound how unsentimentality is linked with disability phenomena and poetic realizations.

In the past, disability was often diluted to divinity due to the charity model. Andrews, in his *The Hemophiliac's Motorcycle (1994)*, brought spirituality to social space by highlighting poetic themes such as illness, fears, frustrations, and religious-inspired optimism. It discloses the inner state of a hospital-ridden disabled person in a heart-wrenching way:

“... The trilliums

are gone, the tiny veins of new ferns fill with rain.

There is no substitute for a lifetime.” (Andrews, 30)

In the poem - Hymning the Kanawha - the poet talks with his brother ruminating about their shared lived experience sought for strength where two single-line stanzas are noteworthy: "You see we're in trouble/... Give us strength enough." (Andrews, 35). These reflect the memories and required resilience to overcome handicapped life. Though this work has been instrumental in the advancement of disability poetry, is likely to pose a passive submission to illness as a sacred source of suffering.

Fundamental features of disability poetry are the embodiment, philosophic and artistic aspects of poetry. Ferris, in his *The Hospital Poems (2004)*, broke down the body borderline in poetic practices and poetically projected a new notion of the body in a way that ushered in an alternative aesthetics of disability poetics. He challenged the writing of poetry based on the socio-culturally constructed body. This work demonstrated the need and functionality of autonomous poetic locus of disability poetry subverting the ethical, medical, and accommodative models. It further contrasted the naive archetype: a disabled person as a hero overcomes the

challenges of life. It showed a concrete possibility of disability poetry aesthetics, however, left out how disability aesthetics could diversify and heighten the understanding of disability poetics.

The nexus between disability and poetry can pertinently be compared with the contested notion of 'body'. Ferris's essay *The Enjambed Body: A Step Toward a Crippled Poetics* (2004) argues that poetry is like a body:

Body metaphors abound in discourse about poetry. From the basic unit of meter to discussions of language and form, from the long, skinny finger of the dactyl to the poems beating heart and loping flesh, the body is not just an important image in poetry, it is also an important image of poetry." (219).

He refers to his own 'uneven' feet as poetry. Based on this argument he writes poems through strikingly unconventional poetic forms in order to signify protestation to prejudicial social structure. It concludes that if one loves one's body – scars, lumps, limp, and all – then s/he can love poems too. Thus, this creative work can be considered one of the modern classics of disability literature. Undoubtedly, this essay brought an unconventional poetic construction contributing to the poetic theory despite it missed the phenomenological dimension of both physical and literary bodies.

Terms in disability poetics are contested due to their associated intricacies and cultural nuances. Hence, Ferris's article *CRIP POETRY, OR HOW I LEARNED TO LOVE THE LIMP* (2007) gives much clarity about convoluted terms such as 'disability poetry' and 'crip poetry'. Contrasting to the conventional established definition of poetry, Ferris goes on to define disability poetry and crip poetry that "seeks to explore and validate the lived experience of moving through the world with a disability. ... it embodies a disability consciousness; it is informed by and contributes to disability culture." (Ferris). However, although Ferris states that

the central concern of crip poetry is showing to take control over gazes and expressing the terms that victimize disabled people, does not touch philosophical factors that can explain how disabled people are gazed at.

The use of widespread metaphors on disability causes misperceptions and intellectual prejudices. The recent anthology, *We Are Not Your Metaphor: A Disability Poetry Anthology* (2019) shows how poetry, visibly and subtly, forms misperceptions regarding disability through the persistent use of ableist metaphors. It further elucidates how poetic metaphors consciously and subconsciously create alienation. In order to support the argument, this anthology provides poetry of eleven poets with disabilities who defy 'mainstream' poetic metaphors on the disabled. While this anthology criticizes the use of ableist metaphors and disentangles poetic biases, does not deal with sources of ablenormativism.

b. The theoretical literature on disability thinking, philosophies, and practices.

Disability has ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological aspects. Oliver, in his groundbreaking book, *Understanding Disability From Theory to Practice* (1996), explores disability from three fundamental dimensions: ontology, epistemology, and experience. It analyzes the hegemony of disability by using these three dimensions and offers an integrated understanding of society and its treatment of disability: "assumptions and concerns exert a considerable influence on the way disability is experienced by both able-bodied and disabled people alike". (Oliver, 129). Hence, this study calls for the reconstitution of a new social movement that will critically assess the social and political forms and processes of valuation that jeopardize disabled individuals. However, this book does not clearly delineate ways to translate theoretical propositions into practical domains.

Disability is perpetuated through the complex mythic process. Kuppers in her literary essay, *Disability Culture Poetry: The Sound of the Bones* (2006) studies the roles of Greek mythology in disability culture. Through intensive readings of some selected poems by Jim Ferris, Philip Dowd's and Neil Marcus, she looks for a connection between poetry and crip culture. She further attempts to show that the mythic language creates a cultural conundrum. In this intricate process, the individual body becomes an object of literature where disability as an identity is subverted. Hence, Kuppers posits against the mythic poetic theatre that subdues the intrinsic essence of disabled people and offers a novel locus of feeling that will generate what she calls 'a different baseline'. This essay provides cultural insights and literary excellence but turns itself toward sentimentality.

Disability studies through phenomenological approaches can exude philosophical truths. In *Critical Theory and Disability A Phenomenological Approach* 2015, Mladenov proposes a conceptual and methodological framework of phenomenology in disability studies that critically reflects disability ideas and practices. It argues three cardinal concepts – bodily differences, mediation, and restrictions of activity – are crucial to apprehending disability appropriately. To his view, accommodating first-person perspective, phenomenology provides philosophical insights regarding the meaning and being: It states: "Existential-ontological suspicion, then, is a major prerequisite for challenging the status quo, including the one of disabling social and material contexts." (Mladenov, 2). Thus, disability study from the first-person perspective is likely to be instrumental to excavate the literary and cultural truths that the rational framework is systematically constricted to dig out. Although it theoretically guides us to interpret social praxis and understand disability from the lived experience viewpoint, does not consider poetry its scope of the investigation.

From this literature review, we find disability poetics and theories from multiple literary and theoretic angles. However, in spite of ample works on disability, it does not adequately explain the composite factors, poetics, and phenomenology of disability specifically, which is, I believe, a critical gap and therefore requires to be explored.

CHAPTER THREE

Research methodology

How can the content be separated from the poem 'fluid and breathing body'? -----Mary Oliver

Theories provide a lens to understand the phenomenological fact that disability is a situation, not an objective reality. In this investigation, I will follow the form of qualitative inquiry. Particularly, I will apply the existential and embodied phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Judith Butler (1956-). This approach helps to discover, understand, and interpret the disability as a shared experience. Thus, it will be instrumental to analyze disability poetics from psychology, biology, language, art, history, politics, perception, religion, etc. Hence, three keywords – existence, embodiment, and phenomenology – are important to understand from conceptual and theoretical perspectives.

Existentialism emphasizes three core concepts: freedom, project, and anxiety. Human being creates themselves by careful choice. Life is nothing but an outcome of our projects. Realization of freedom and formulizing projects help us overcome the anxiety and angst. Ponty points out: “We take our fate in our hands, we become responsible for our history through reflection, but equally by a decision on which we stake our life,” (PP xxiii). Titus defines existentialism: “Existentialism is an attitude and outlook that emphasizes human existence – that is, the distinctive qualities of individual persons – rather than man in the abstract or nature and the world in general.” (296); while, Stumpf states: “...Existentialism urges a life of thorough-going engagement and involvement as the surest way of creating meaning of human existence.” (467). It lays emphasis on the self and attempts to supersede anxiety, frustration, and elements of impersonality from within and outside what Heidegger marked as a dynamic

self-exploration: "Only through the discovery of the dynamic nature of existence can man be saved from the chaos and frustration that threaten him. (Titus, 305).

In his magnum opus - *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Ponty argues that the sense of self, physical body, and perception are interconnected whole. In Ponty's view, perception is a process of active communication with the world. Scott understands the perception of Ponty as "a system of meanings by which a phenomenal object is recognized." (Scott). Counter argumentative to the Cartesian precept that perception is deceptive, Ponty posits that perception is inseparable from human senses and helps to make the self and surroundings. He further asserts that the biological body is inseparable from the social body. Scott simplifies the nexus between the subjects and objects of Ponty: "The relationships between objects in space are revealed by the experience of the perceiving subject." (*ibid*). To his view, the former is the 'objective body' while the latter is the 'lived body'. Hence, the body is not reducible to a mere object, rather, it is like a mirror where the physical body interfaces with the social body. This theorization defies the Cartesian dichotomies such as body-mind, internal-external, and knower and known, etc. In other words, it is the body that forms the original subjects, and all other consciousness (realities) springs from it. 'The realities' are inherently built-in in this process of consciousness from where the possible world is derived. Thus, consciousness determines the structures of human experiences in a complex yet dynamic way. To Ponty, embodiment emanates from an intermingling of both biological consciousness and perceptual experiences. His concept of existence is 'an act on the world' which is inexorably linked with the physical and socio-cultural condition. Dreyfus sums up Ponty's points: "The cultural world is thus also correlative with our body; this time with our acquired cultural skills." (Dreyfus). To Ponty's argument, the property of the body is constituted by both the biological facts and perceptual impressions: " 'Body

image' was at first understood to mean a compendium of our bodily experience, capable of giving a commentary and meaning to the internal impressions and the impression of possessing a body at any moment." (113). It is a symbiosis of bodily existence and its relationality to the formed facts from the habitus beyond the body: "existence is tied up and the body has become 'the place where life hides away'. (Ponty, 190).

The conception of Ponty's embodiment gives clarity of conventional complexity between the perceiving subject and the objective realities: "Since the genesis of the objective body is only a moment in the constitution of the object, the body, by withdrawing from the objective world, will carry with it the intentional threads linking it to its surrounding and finally reveal to us the perceiving subject as the perceived world." (83). To Ponty's framing, consciousness comes from body and spirit: "Before being an objective fact, the union of soul and body had to be, then, a possibility of consciousness itself. (110).

Ponty's framework of existential phenomenology rejects Heidegger's speculations and Husserl's idealistic inclination; instead, he asserts that consciousness is situated in the body, albeit not in a mechanical sense. In the process, politicality-external condition interplays with the formation of human subjects. Thus, Ponty's phenomenological lens entails seeing the disability anew.

On other hand, the idea of embodiment outlined by Butler is in line with the gendered dimension. Butler, in her essay – "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" – diagnoses the underlying framework of the gendered body and the way it gets constituted by the perceptions and acts of social collectives, which eventually deeply shackle(d) the body politics. Butler argues that gender is a corporeal style mediated by intentional and performative acts. Referring to the phenomenological theory of

'acts,' she states that "social agents constitute social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign." (Butler, 270). She posits that the body functions through a network of the interplay of performative acts. In her view, gender is an expression and intensification of 'acts' that make up 'psychological interiority'. (Butler, 279). In such a process of embodiment, identities are constituted through the dominant social process. Butler asserts: " ... One is compelled to live in a world in which gender constitute univocal signifiers, in which gender stabilized, polarized ... ". (279). This system of univocal social signification serves as a repressive and identity marker mechanism that regulates gendered bodies. In Butler's view - " ... gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confine of already existing directives." (277). Possibilities are shaped by social realities made by social agents as Butler explains: "The formulation of the body as a mode of dramatizing or enacting possibilities offers a way to understand how a cultural convention is embodied and enacted." (276).

Lastly, the term 'phenomenology' derives from the Greek words *phainomenon*, a participial form of *phainein* ('to show'), and *logos* ('reason' or 'study'), and literally means 'the study of things shown'. (Macey, 297). Phenomenology is 'the study of consciousness as such', and consciousness as 'the appearance [or phenomenon] of mind'. (*Ibid*, 297). Broadly, phenomenology is a direct investigation of a particular human experience intending to find out its meanings and essence. Phenomenology is the study of the structure of human experience. It seeks to understand phenomena as it appears to suspend all presuppositions and individual and socio-cultural prejudices, which is phenomenologically named as 'bracketing'. It searches for the inherent meanings and essences of appearances of human phenomena. Manen defines phenomenology precisely: "the study of an individual's lived experience of the world." (MV).

While, to Ponty, it is the study of essences; ...the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness,..." (Preface, viix). It follows that phenomenology provides 'a direct description of our experience' that scientific or sociohistorical analysis cannot as these are 'the second-order expression.' Phenomenology operates in intersubjective realms: "The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. (Ponty, xXii).

Moreover, existential phenomenology believes that the human condition can better be understood through the analysis of individual existence. It takes experiences seriously and looks at how we are constituted by the conditionality of the ins and outs of human experiences. It examines the constitutive apparatus of 'reality' and 'the self' by both internal (psychological and biological) conditions and external manifestations. Thus, three interconnected loci of existential phenomenology are embodied existence, autonomous consciousness, and the self's surroundings. Hence, existential phenomenology asserts that these three important dimensions are interpreted and understood from lived experiences.

Thus, phenomenology helps to fill the gap by providing a sound conceptual foundation for addressing the human being in a holistic manner; and it turns out to be useful for criticizing modern reductions of the human that pervade all aspects of disabled people's lives. Importantly, this theoretical look deals with existential-ontological reflexivity, questions, and assumptions in order to understand the critical meanings of disability and challenges the regimes of disability in poetic practices and possibilities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

The materiality of disability in poetic practices: interplay between body, perception, and poetry.

Poetry is man's rebellion against being what he is. ----- James Branch Cabel

Disability is a recurrent poetic property. In conventional ablenormativist poetic literature, disability has often been portrayed as an element of objectification, which has lately been challenged by disability poetics. Hence, naturally, the question arises what is the materiality of disability poetics? In this thesis, materiality refers to elements, qualities, and possibilities of disability poetry. It means the special poetic and content aspects that differentiate it from traditional poetry. It also implies how disability poetry distinctly engages in the creative process of producing poetic text, context, and stylistics.

As a central investigation of this study, a textual survey with the application of existential and embodied phenomenology on BIAV finds a plethora of poetic materiality that can be identified as some materiality features of disability poetics that are explained as follows:

To begin with, the phenomenology of pain is one of the constitutive factors of disability poetics. In 'In a Mute Season' poem, the poetry of Cynthia Hogue adeptly portrays the phenomenology of pain and the power of poetry to transform ail and suffering into a new order and motion:

//

I visit doctors because
my body drives me to them,
beyond my dictates. Ailing,
I am healing before
my mind understands

that the phenomenology of pain
 harbors words which refuse
 syntax and order, predictable,
 eventual inevitability,

until I grasp that order
 eludes us, dispersing,
 a wall of fog we drive through,
 so frugal of speed, spendthrifts
 of time. To feel alone is merely
 the mind's last defense-
 a physiological white-out-
 from the spirit's largesse.

(10-27, BIAV 533)

It shows the poet's intuitive power to handle external pressures and social sufferings and forcefully invent a new phenomenology and poetic devices and expression. Thus, Hogue's poem portrays the path of disregarding illness through poetic proclamations. This poetic and phenomenological pain contrasts the conventional notion that the 'disabled' body destroys language and suffering silences the disabled mind. It puts forward an argument that poetry can also be born from a so-called medicalized body. Seeing from this lens, poetry is a way of resistance and a new form of existence. Similarly, Kuppers' poetry focused on lived experiences and perceptions of a disabled person through poetic imagery. Her poetic language, images, crippling, and communication are interrelated in a complex but creative way. In a more counterintuitive way, she states that pain contains paradoxical power:

//

But when I touch the steel wheel, I feel
 that it grew as a silver plant
 in a waterless waste, drew from a deep clear well,
 a shoot pushed hard through the crust,
 thrust past caked clay and grew rock.
 With the effort of meal and bone,
 the plant grasped the air, no resistance
 pressed fast moving cells,

it arched up, spiraled back onto itself,
 completed a circle that pushes far out,
 forward, on and on:
 my body, propelled by evergreen forces,
 touches fire and earth, forge and flow,
 my finger tight on the rim. (The Origin of My Wheelchair 5-18, BIAV 184)
 //

Hence, the poet thinks and feels the objects of a wheelchair and crafts poetic lines that put both poet and the wheelchair in a similar situation. Her poem explores the strangeness of disabled bodies and pushes movement of the mind, and perhaps finds the strengths from the interplaying thoughts, traumas, memories, and speech. Kuppers' poetic dexterity and literary skill allow her and her readers to reshape bodies and passions and celebrate those in a way that creates meaning and force in the 'limits' of bodies and imposed discrimination. Kuppers' poetics presents a phenomenology of body and mind-space-time-consciousness.

Next, disability poetics posits that the body and existence are inseparable. Deep existential thoughts on disability generate new meanings. For Dorris, musings on existence create a distinct poetics: "My own poetics lean towards erasing, running and eventually disassembling illusions." (588). Seeing bodily existence from this lens forges a new way of reasoning within and outside the body. In addition, the poetry of Larry Eigner (1927–1996) creates a positive synergy between external forces and internal performance and thus heightens human existential conditions. This poetic process travels from thoughts to external forces and forms an intersubjectivity which Davidson terms as "acts of perception and cognition" and "an immersion of the subject into his perceptual acts." (50). This poetic assertion and phenomenal realization are a way of being as illustrated by Eigner:

//

mist the road up
the hedges
bringing the sea to life

views
transparent
beside each other

this is all

the small
and the relative

the trees sharpening windows
taper to steady

the wind turns them
enhance the feel (JULY 3 64: 4-16 lines, BIAV 52)

//

Furthermore, in her 'Reconstruction' poem, Black goes to explore the intricacies between the existential selves of the disabled and the delicate way they apprehend nature:

I think of the trees there first:
how large and tender
they seemed, breathing green
above the brick colonials,
the loneliness of other people's windows,
glittering under the sulfurous
street lamps, past midnight
when the pills stopped
working, and I could feel
my bones knitting themselves
into a new shape. (1-11, BIAV 365)

//

This first stanza of the poem reveals that through the relational thoughts on nature along with its inner and outer expressions people with disabilities are likely to find a new realization of life and of poetry. The poem suggests a fundamental interconnection between interior and exterior landscapes that necessarily informs the language, imagery, and construction of the poem itself. Natural imagery used in the poem are juxtaposition that could be compared with the interconnectedness of Ponty's embodiment and perceptions.

The BIAV projects the poet's sensual observations and associations to spark his internal mindscape that allows expanding spaces in his life. Eigner's poetic mind moves from physical spaces to psychological spaces in a way that supersedes his socially conditioned physical limitations and finds freedom providing new meaning and spirit to his life. Brian Teare echoes: "...I have to write from a place of uncertainty and flux, despite my deepest desire for certainty and stability, because the nature of things—both interior and exterior—is transience." (312). These expansions of spaces in poetic forms appear to be a refusal of different social layers of the agency. His JUNE 19 SEPTEMBER 9 70 poem can be read as a critical reflection of dubious social treatment and the tragic fate that disabled people often face:

the window opening
no, already opened
nothing but the windup (1-3, BIAV 55)

Davidson pertinently frames Eigner's poetry in three specific references: "the page on which he worked, the room in which he lived, the weather or landscape he saw from that room." (BIAV, 46). To a large extent, the source of the content of his poems is the property of thoughts (internal) rather than speech (external). A close look at the selected poem of Eigner in BIAV indicates the bifurcation of two worlds: the subjective realm and the objective world. He exerts a poetic capacity for the internalization of externalities in meaning-generating ways:

//

not to escape father, mother, but get
away from crowds

everywhere fog in the distance (AUGUST 12 65: 9-11, BIAV 54)

//

His poetry overcomes constricted spaces of a disabled person and intensifies imaginations to make life more realizable:

//

reflecting to the sky

sit on the hard surface

tug the small tree

the dog's sleeping under

times it rains

and the sun shines

the far-away gets dim

the stars sleep in your

dreams (JULY 3 64: 20-28, BIAV 53)

Hence, the unconventional composition of lines and poetic elements defies the objective world as a poetic attempt of building an autonomous realm of the subjective world. He seems to acquire a personal pulse through the poetic personification of flora and fauna and natural landscape. Using natural imagery and juxtaposing with those empower them to supersede the borderlines determined by society and conventional poetic forms. All in all, Eigner seems to suggest that disability poetry can transform existential conditions into a new realization.

One of the important facets of disability poetics as illustrated in BIAV is the angst and anguish of disabled people are exacerbated from within and the outside. The poetry of Bernadette Mayer (1945-) rings the anxiety and anger of disabled bodies and minds:

//

& then, I'm awake. Night-
swallows knife through the morning

fog as I stand at the window
listening to the coyote song.

My entire body is killing me,
& I have witnessed my own death

& lived- I whisper my wagers
against disaster into the dark air. (It Had Only Been Dead a Few Hours 23-30, BIAV 284)

The speaker sets herself with the sad surroundings and resonates with the pains of living and the strength to sail the dark and disaster of a life. Similarly, Kaier's poem 'The Examining Table' speaks about the 'shame' sourced from the bodily facts and social-sensual expectations:

My skin cracks like scorched earth.
A rash beneath my breasts shames me.
I hide in bed. I hide in the sun. (1-3, BIAV 403)

In her fantasy poem named 'Cosseted' she disproves the disability and social praxis. It rhetorically defies:

//

As a child, playing in the sand,
squinting at my chest,
jumping around the truth of my legs,
words screened my eyes:

*no, no, no, that's not me
there's nothing wrong.*

My playmate said: "You were burned."

Was I? I wondered. (23-30, BIAV, 397)

The poem points out somatic as well as symbolic aspects. language is a vehicle for transferring bodily state and affective aspects of human life. Her poetry is an outcome of the abstraction of body and mind and the interplay of both. The body as a source of pain needs to be free from societal shackles in the poem: Subterfuge –

I remember my father, slight,
staggering in with his Underwood,
bearing it in his arms like an awkward bouquet

for his spastic child who sits down
on the floor, one knee on the frame
of the typewriter, and holding her wrist

with her right hand, in that precision known
to the crippled, peck at the keys
with a sparrow's preoccupation.

Falling by chance on rhyme, novel and curious bubble
blown with magic pipe, she tries them over and over,
spellbound by life's clashing in accord or against itself,

pretending pretense and playing at playing,
she does her childhood backward as children do,
her fun a delaying action against what she knows.

My father must lose her, his runaway on her treadmill
will lose the terrible favor that life has done him
as she toils at tomorrow, tensed at her makeshift toy. (1-18, BIAV 87)

In this poem, Miller pleads for an inclusive society. She uses a bouquet of flowers as a simile of typewriter in the third line. She carefully puts vivid details of (special) seating arrangements as to give the real taste of movement of a physically challenging person. However, in the last line of the third stanza 'a sparrow's preoccupation' insinuates despite being a small sparrow is not in a disadvantageous position; it postulates disability has its own beautiful grammar of life. The poetic phrase in the last line of the fourth stanza "spellbound by life's clashing" symbolizes her private recurrent fight for learning typing and tenacity she shows to acquire it. The fourteenth line "she does her childhood backward as children do," reveals tragic aspects of life's state that even at her mature age she is to go through the process of learning like a child. In the last stanza: 'the terrible favor' of her father explains the situational complexities of a father of a disabled child, on the one hand, a father loves his child and has troubling fear of not to ripe a child's full potential due to the limitation of disability. Poet hence seems to provide the literary community with a conflicting state to deal with disability in poetic nuances. The poem attempts to convey to the readers the intricate learning and teaching process of a disabled person and by doing so she perhaps pleads for genuine and persistent partnership in their tumultuous journey to realize a life like everyone else. In this poem, Miller goes on to make the case that any kind of limitation cannot and should not be a bar to fulfilling human life.

Miller's poem is her account of angst and assertion of equalized social treatment. Poetic refrain reflects the repetition of pain and suffering. Essbaum remarks on Miller's poetic self: "When she writes of another's suffering, she speaks with the authority of one who knows full well what it means to live in physical agony." (78). Her poetic lines are replete with care and sympathy for the whole of humanity's broken condition. Her poems are resolute, unwavering, which could be exemplified from the poem – The Common Core:

Each man's sorrow is an absolute
Each man's pain is a norm
No one can prove and no one refute. (1-3, BIAV, 85)
//

Every experience of humans is unique and hence she seems to suggest seeing it on its own terms,
not an aberration:

//
No man's sickness has a synonym,
No man's disease has a double.
You weep for your love, I for my limbs— (The Common Core 7-9)
//
Gangrene is fire and cancer is burning.
Which one's deadlier? Toss (The Common Core 13-14)
//
You die of fire and I of burning. (The Common Core 18)

She presents this poem in a way that frames social stereotypes toward the disabled body.

Miler's painful account of the experience with intersubjective connections reveals human existence is a beautiful convergence of diversified human experiences.

Another materiality of disability poetics is disabled poets' poetic inspiration emanates from the understanding of the prisoned body and healing from trauma caused by disabling conditions and aspirations of disentanglements. Kupperts' reminiscence on her wheelchair opens up a switch gate that pours out pains and aches of her growing up and living as a disabled individual. In the poem - The Origin of My Wheelchair - Kupperts gives a metonymic account of a wheelchair's journey of how it becomes a finished product from raw materials to the production floor to the consumer in the juxtaposition to the conditions and experiences of a disabled person.

At times, the experiences of disabled people are forced to put them in a state of exile and loss. Likewise, in her poetry, Black frames these exile and loss. The feelings of loss and longing are vividly visible in the last few lines of 'Objects Waiting to Be Dangerous':

//
 a feeling rising in me
 so shapeless and yet so sharp,
 I can't keep my mind in one place,
 but dark around, hunting,
 pecking like a women who can't find the key
 to her house but is sure it's right in front of her,

 rights under the nose, so close that
 all she needs to do is put out her hand
 and she will touch it. (34-42, BIAV 369)

However, Black views this loss and exile as a point of connection for the disabled community and tends to turn these connections into an alternative and creative space free from dominant expectations. She showed that poetic language has the capacity to overcome social mountains often faced by disabled people in actions and rhetoric. Thus, Black's poetry aspires to explore and expand the creative and material possibility of forming a collective space to support rather than suppression. Zoeglossia (a literary organization for disabled poets) may be considered as one of such spaces free from ableist rhetoric and manufactured valorization of ablenormativist terms such as supercrip- the disabled individual who superseded disability limits.

Furthermore, in disability poetry, the body, memory, and sentiment interpose in an intricate way. In fact, disability poetry is a forceful form that connects memories with current situations and realizes life anew. The poetry of Josephine Miles (1911–1985) shows how sentimental gaze shakes disability experience. Miles in her *Album* poem reveals her father's

sentimental gaze toward her crippled condition (degenerative arthritis) to bolster her argument that sentimentality also works in the process of constituting disability:

This is a hard life you are having
 While you are young,
 My father said,
 As I scratched my casted knees with a paper knife.
 By laws of compensation
 Your old age should be grand.

 Not grand, but of a terrible
 Compensation, to perceive
 Past the energy of survival
 In its sadness
 The hard life of the young. (1-11, BIAV, 129)

Miles also excavates how memory recurrently pervades the experience and interpolates body and memory in an intriguing way:

What is a scar if not the memory of a once open wound?
 You press your finger between my toes, slide

 the soap up the side of my leg, until you reach
 the scar with the two holes, where the pins were

 inserted twenty years ago. Leaning back, I
 remember how I pulled the pin from my leg, how

 in a waist-high cast, I dragged myself
 from my room to show my parents what I had done.

 Your hand on my scar brings me back to the tub
 and I want to ask you: What do you feel

 when you touch me there? I want you to ask me:

What are you feeling now? But we do not speak.

You drop the soup in the water and I continue
washing, alone. Do you know my father would

bathe my feet, as you do, as if it was the most
natural thing. But up to now, I have allowed
only two pair of hands to touch me there,
to be the salve for what still feels like an open wound.

The skin has healed but the scars grow deeper -
When you touch them what do they tell you about my life? (Body Language 1-20,
BIAV 168)

Miles's poetic lines in 'Body Language' poem vividly put small details of touch, feelings, details of physical contact, and affective exchange in a forceful way. To Miles, speech is the material from which poetry is made (BIAV, 104). She attempts to explore the "Reason" behind the disability practices. Her poetry is a witness of how memory can be a material form that springs poetry.

In the materiality aspect, much of disability culture is ingrained in socially constructed misnomers. So-called disability poets challenge social stereotypes and offer a deeper look at the cultural process of manufacturing those misnomers. Disability poetics questions the conventional content formation of poetry, poetic metrical form, and poetic aesthetics. The poetry of Jennifer Bartlett looks at the intriguing process of how individual and social messages transfer and takes prejudiced form through repeated internalization. Her poetry posits to argue that there is a little line of differentiation between disabled and able-bodied people who are in essence internally and externally the same. Bartlett sees the differences in bodily movements as a kind of inherent aesthetics that able-bodied people misses:

//

sometimes the body misses
then collapses

sometimes
it shatters

with this particular knowledge

a movement spastic
and unwieldy

is its own lyric and
the able-bodied are

tone-deaf to this singing (Five Poems from Autobiography 8-17)

//

Bartlett labels crippling as a cultural makeup and marks cultural conceptualization of crippling as
insanity and erosion:

to be crippled means to have window
into the insanity of the able-bodied

//

to be crippled means to have
access to people's fear

of their own eroding (Five Poems from Autobiography: 33-42, BIAV, 522)

//

By poetic application of biological facts and philosophical terms she supports her poetic premise
that disabled and able-bodied people are the same and sees no point in cultural classification:

//

of water and light

this is my body

I am its light (Five Poems from Autobiography 55-57, BIAV 523)

//

BIAV displays that society still sees disability with an eye of foreignness - outsiders. In his poem, *Instructions to Hearing persons Desiring a Deaf Man*, Raymond Luczak depicts the state of a deaf person's foreignness s/he faces. The poem highlights unfair instructions often a disabled person is to hear due to deafness. It starts: His eyebrows shadows everywhere./You are a difficult language to speak. (BIAV, 383). The last six lines of the poem exude mixed messages to society and disabled people:

//

His eyes will flicker with a bright fire when
you purge your passport of sound.

Let your hands be your new passport, for
he will then stamp it with approval.

A deaf man is always a foreign country.

He remains forever a language to learn. (*Instructions to Hearing Persons Desiring a Deaf Man* 11-16, BIAV 383)

The poem is depleted with the use of hands, beard, eyes, eyebrows, and face implying despite having similar bodies to nondisabled people they are like spectacular objects for tourists' attraction. The poet puts a painful mental state in a series of bodily images that colludes with social situations. In the concluding part of the poem, the narrator of the poem inspires disabled people to move from frustration and form their own passports (identity).

The poetry of Vassar Miller (1924-98), a great American poet, who was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 1961, explores religious faith, social isolation, and physical disability; her poems' could be marked as rigorous formal control, clarity, and directness. Her

religious appeal and poetic self are revealed in 'If I had wheels or love' poem. She expresses her willful state of mind of a disabled person's hitherto unrealized life:

I could make prayers or poems on and on,
Relax or labor all the summer day,
If I had wheels or love, I would be gone. (1-3, BIAV, 81)
//

She questions the social treatment of disability by the juxtaposition of wheel and love. The entire poem is a poetic account of the unfulfillment of different simple wishes in life. However, retrospectively she feels that by experiencing the natural sublime surroundings, and enjoying corporeal contact, despite the impairment, one's can lead a life fulfilled:

I walk naked under my clothes like anyone else,
and I'm not a bomb to explode in your hands. (Dramatic Monologue in the Speaker's
Own Voice 1-2)
//
...I'm either a monster
in search of a horror movie to be in,
or else I'm a brain floating within a body
whose sides I must gingerly touch while you glance
discreetly away.... (11-14)
//

I wish you'd learn better before we all totter
into our coffins where there's no straight way to lie crooked. (15-16, BIAV, 83)

The final line asserts a simple wish for equal treatment. Hence, she poetically feels improvement in social learning toward the disabled community.

Finally, an important materiality of disability poetry is embodiment. Poets write poetry about their own bodies. Their poetry echoes the confrontation of the realities of their bodily and mental conditions as well as the pressurized perceptions that they receive from the outside.

Ammons resonances: "poet's body beyond the range of skin and flesh". In a poetic reflection, they start to find socially defined 'deformations' as part of the eternal and natural world. Poetry allows them to prove it. In such a poetic and mereological frame, a 'flawed' body becomes a 'perfect' body. This kind of poetic practice brings beauty, essence, and fulfillment by adding phenomenal meaning to the conditions of disability. Through poetic contents and forms, bodies travel and transform themselves, which seems to suggest freedom and provide new meanings and fulfillment in their existence. As such, disability poetry, on the one hand, shows how desires and dreams are shattered in the colliding social reality and how to reshape those shattered dreams and desires in a meaningful way on the other hand.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis

The gendered body in disability poetics: from the theatre of reasoning to alternative poetics

We have not yet determined what a body can do. ----- Baruch Spinoza

Language is at the core of culture. It forges conscious decisions about bodies through cultural communication. As such, poetry is a phenomenal vehicle of cultural communication that perceives and expresses the body. Poetry is also a rich and critical skill that requires a high level of intelligence. Through poetic means, people with disabilities express the disavowal of the societal tendency to label disabled communities as inferior other. They question the politics of social space. Siebers pertinently puts: “When a disabled body moves into a social space, the lack of fit exposes the shape of the normative body for which the space was originally designed.” (8). This ideologically framed embodiment point out that it is social stereotypes that make people with disabilities physically handicapped and 'twisted body' and at times named with mere medical jargon – not human being. This framing is often powered by imposing the idea of the able-body: "...socio-physical nightmares—our culture has been, and remains, intensely invested in the able body. (Pafunda, 539-40).

Likewise, Miles questions the ableist gender construction and challenges the dominant notion of disability in both politics and poetics. Her poetry posits against the categorization of disability as such. She underlies this labeling occurs due to unconscious reasoning and fact-formation processes. Hence, her two poems – Doll and Care – are worth mentioning. The first one demonstrates how gender categorization creates cultural and material vulnerability for the disabled and the latter shows how the manufactured notion of 'lack' enacts a prejudiced lens.

She states poetically: “Or do I learn your lack,/ Not mine, and give it back, /As mine, the empty lack as mine / That makes me worsen?” (Schweik, 118). This rhetorical question shows social stereotypes and the resilience of the disabled.

To Koppers, poetry is a cogent tool to express societal discrimination and ways to beat those to make a better community. She observed how the limitations of the bodies are exposed in poetry and cultural practices. In order to overcome this, she suggests a new structure of feeling:

"To claim disability as an identity, rather than a shape for an individual body, means struggle, submission, elation, comradeship and a location. The form around which a body of work composes itself is no longer the tension between the abstraction of language and the specificity of one's individual bodily being. Instead, a third can enter: a way of knowing, a structure of feeling,... ." (Koppers, 178).

As a poet of disability, in BIAV, Black attempts to reveal the paradoxical images of violence and beauty that are resulted from ‘other people’s perceptions’ regarding disabled conditions. She realizes the agony of the disabled is exacerbated due to the constant trepidation of others, not the disabling condition per se. Black bespeaks:

//

Crippled they called us when I was young
 later the word was disabled and then differently abled,
 but those were all names given by outsiders,
 none of whom could imagine
 that the crooked body they spoke of,
 the body, which made walking difficult
 and running practically impossible,
 except as a kind of dance, a sideways looping ... (What You Mourn 16-23, BIAV 362)

//

The last line is an indication of the inability of normal bodies to understand the beauty of bodies, which she names as 'a kind of corrective repression' (BIAV 350) by the heteronormative outsiders. Furthermore, in her 'Playing Dead', she excavates the inner dead, dark, and decay, and then in a poetic epiphany she suggests transforming those deadly states into a radiance:

Begin by imagining
a failure of will,
the boundaries of the body erased
like lines on a chalkboard.

You might picture the usual things:
night sky, waveless sea,
the greeny depths
which plummet to pure dark
//

It is the absence of conscious
motion that takes getting used to,
no sound but the slow
settling, the ripening of decay:

burst liquid, gelid light.
The old story of how stars
are born of frozen dust
and radiance

from this house of bone. (1-25, BIAV 359-60)

Hence, the poet points out the relationship between the fluidity of the body and becoming nature gloomy. For that, she blames the absence of conscious motion and calls for steering consciousness to enkindle the bone and beauty of the life of the disabled. In Black's view, this socially stratified embodiment is an exile for the disabled. Her poem 'What You Mourn' writes:

//
feel like the exile I believed

I was, imprisoned in a foreign body
 like a person imprisoned in a foreign land
 forced to speak a strange tongue
 heavy in the mouth, a mouth full of stones. (What You Mourn 11-15, BIAV 362-3)
 //

Entering into the past when she was entangled by the exile built by the outsiders' Black metaphors it as 'a person imprisoned in a foreign land' signaling the othering process. The line 'forced to speak a strange tongue' implies how speech is conditioned with the 'limits' of the body, which is an unreasonable correlation.

BIAV displays a poetic argument against the embodiment. According to Ferris, poetry is a platform for the disabled to reclaim their 'places' and 'spaces'. Ferris posits against the medicalization of the body and making disability an object of their gazes:

This world is not open to you-
 leave now, trespassers, you who seek to gaze
 on my humiliation. (BIAV, 34)

Hence, Ferris seems to refer that the medical gazes originate from the cultural and collective attitude toward the disabled. This openly challenges the socially discriminatory gazes of the disabled. This poem is an assertion of bodily and psychological autonomy. He writes:

Let me be a poet of cripples,
 of hollow men and boys groping
 to be whole,... (Poet of Cripples 1-3, BIAV 147)
 //

Hence, Ferris clearly posits against the gendered classification that makes the disabled as a 'different' body of people. In cultural contrast to the societal lens, he happily declares himself as a poet of 'cripples'. What is more important to look deep here is that he identifies the poet of cripples as a poet beyond binaries, which signifies the rectification of social outlooks towards the

disabled. The last three lines of the poem offer a resolution that calls for an inclusive society that does not differentiate based on bodies and their limitations:

//

... Look with care, look deep.

Know that you are a cripple too.

I sing for cripples; I sing for you. (Poet of Cripples 12-14, BIAV 147)

Furthermore, a close reading of BIAV finds that disability poetry sets poetry, spaces, and phenomena in a confluencing process. For example, the conception of varied spaces interplays in Eigner's poetic content. Moving objects and natural landscapes such as plants, clouds, and squirrels are occupied in his poetry. Eigner's careful spacing of letters and words, his indentations and double columns, could be seen as typographic idiosyncrasy: "cognitive maps of his internally distanced relation to space." (Davidson, 47). His deliberate irregularity of poetic pattern is a revelation of prosodic principle symbolizing physical and socially imposed limitations on a disabled person. He observes surrounding images and sets those in an internal setting to create new meanings. The two poems – AUGUST 16 65 and DECEMBER 2-3 92 – are paramount examples:

quiet thing quiet thing

walk

in my eyes death

in the certain distance how many

go on

I live not far away

over the horizon

still

(August 16 65: lines 1-8, BIAV 54)

DECEMBER 2-3 92

the whole orchestra
 risen
 up into the air
 for dancing

after the storm (1-5, BIAV 56)

The above two short poems are paradoxical in thematic meaning but reveal a whole meaning eventually. The former looks to be a frustrating expression of disabled conditions while the latter poem is an annunciation of transforming life in a more braved way. Eigner's this approach of putting poetry and phenomena in an interrelated poetic framing fits with Ponty's theoretical exploration of deformation in historical trajectory: "The style of an artist is not merely subjective but lived as a historical trajectory of expression that begins with perception itself and effects a "coherent deformation" in inherited traditions." (Toadvine).

BIAV also challenges the conceptual process of embodiment that humiliates the disabled. For example, Kenny Fries muses on beauty and its variations and puts a transparent ball to question the definitional framework of beauty:

What is it like to be so beautiful? I dip
 my hands inside you, come up with-*what?*

Beauty, at birth applied, does not transfer
 to my hands. But every night, your hands

touch my scars, raise my twisted limbs to
 graze against your lips. Lips that never

from the words-*you are beautiful*-transform
 my deformed bones into-*what?* -if not beauty. (Beauty and Variations 1-8, BIAV 170)

//

Hence, the poet objects to the way beauty is conceived in a heteronormative framework. She questions the criteria for being beautiful. The rhetorical question - transform my deformed bones into - what - if not beauty? And 'can blood be beautiful?' in the sixteenth line of the same poem – destabilizes the conventional beauty regime.

Viewing poetry as a bodily being opens up a lot of poetic possibilities. Firstly, it works as a healing with both bodily and artistic senses of the term. Poets observe and express experiences through poetic verses. For example, Kuppens in her 'The Sound of the Bones' speaks about the sounds of experiences: "Every disease is a work of art / if you play it rightly." (BIAV, 177). Thus, disability poetry expands the horizon, which Kuppens names 'another land and language.' (BIAV, 177). Secondly, it debunks paradoxes and generates alternative poetic forms and features: "...following the punctuations into pauses. Again, a different bodily being presses against my ear, onto my tongue, into my windpipe. I sing a new rhythm into my bones, and enjoy the ride." (BIAV, 181).

In disability poetics, traditional poetic language and forms are inadequate to convey the states of the disabled and comprehend the beauties of differences: "In my writing, I am in search of a transparent, mobile language that moves, even when it occludes. This speaks directly to the processes of the body." (DiPietra, 472). Furthermore, disability poetry dilutes syntax and poetic structure that heightened the content of poems. It explores the possibilities of language to expand the conditions of the disabled. Essbaum states "If poetry is anything at all it is the assimilation of experience into lines on the page." (BIAV, 78). To Bartlett, poetry is to change the world: "as a poet with a disability, I have an ethical responsibility to challenge the norm of how society perceives disability...." (BIAV, 518).

Thus, this chapter displays that disability poetics defies different models of disabilities constructed by ablenormativist practices, which eventually contribute to generating a new and rich form of disability literature.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Poetry is just evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash. -- Leonard Cohen

This study reviewed poetic and theoretical literature on disability poetics and identified a critical gap: the dearth of phenomenological perspective on disability poetry. It then discussed the materiality of disability in American poetry exemplified by the selected poems and essays from the "Beauty is a Verb THE NEW POETRY OF DISABILITY" anthology and explained it under the backdrop of existential and embodied phenomenology. The study also showed intriguing relations between body, perception, and poetry. Finally, it analyzed the gendered dimension in disability poetics where it argued that disability poetics is instrumental to deconstruct the gendered logic by an ableist imagination and create an alternative and inclusive poetics.

This study concludes that BIAV brought new poetic perspectives. From the 1980s onward, although there have been some salient works on Disability Literary Studies in general, there have been a few works on Disability Poetics. Specifically, poetic philosophies of disability poetry are rare. Disability poetry is still in the constitutive literary period. Few rigorous academic works on disability poetry are available.

Through a close textual survey, most of the poems anthologized in the BIAV, to a large extent, have a commonality in at least three aspects: first, the materiality of disability poetry; second, gender dimension; and third, creative and alternative poetics.

Applying the existential and embodied phenomenology in selected poems of BIAV the findings of this study can be concluded as follows:

Firstly, in disability poetics, poetry, phenomenology, and imagination have heightened interrelations. Poetic images reveal new aspects of being that help to emerge new meanings. Poetic images counter cultural preconceptions and ingrain a sense of wonder to realize life afresh. The usage of images in poetry lays hitherto unexplored layers in human conditions.

Secondly, disability poetry posits against the formal poetic and follows a distinct poetic style in both form and content perhaps intentionally to make an alternative literary landscape. The poetic mind interfaces the external physical and cultural landscape and merges her disabled self in a way that breeds a delicate poetic philosophy.

Thirdly, the advent of disability poetics intended to address the lapse of traditional poetic forms to represent the essence and aesthetics of disability issues and offered a breakthrough in terms of poetic invention, content creation, disability aesthetics, and the stylistics of poetry. It also finds that in disability poetics, the structure itself can be cogent content that expresses the voices and underlined messages of the so-called disabled community.

Fourthly, the subject matter of disability poetry shows diversity and multiplicity of reflections, as well as complex consciousness about disability and its wider perception. It provides a critical tool to defamiliarize the conventional way of interpreting literary and cultural texts.

Fifthly, the condition of disability instills imagination and narrative power that enforce people and poets with disabilities to tell a story. They use poetic devices to solidify their intended messages. Hence, their indigenous metaphors and aesthetics help them craft messages and verses fiercely and ornamentally.

Finally, disability poetry emphasizes maintaining a fine balance between poetic integrity and integrity of survival and better existence.

In a gist, anthologized poems and essays in BIAV reveal the disability experiences of relevant poets and contribute to the development of modern disability poetics. On the one hand, this anthology presents a genesis of the disability poetry movement in American literature and gives versatile ideas and forms of what disability poetry looks like on other hand. Included and interpreted poems touched upon philosophy, debates, body politics, and different models of disability; displayed diversified forms of disability poetry, and showed the significance of disability poetics as an independent and alternative poetic genre. Thus, this study is likely to contribute to disability poetics in particular and literary disability studies in general.

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