



Disability incarcerated: imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada

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Doing Disability Differently is rich and full of intriguing examples and insights, and it is one of the most important texts to tackle the important issues of design, disability and disablism. Its very presence highlights the paucity of writings in this field and the indifference of the academic research cultures, in architecture, design and cognate disciplines, to thinking, researching and writing about design and disability. The chapters are well crafted and organised and beautifully illustrated with many examples from art, architecture and disability cultures and practices. If the book was to be revised and brought out as a second edition, then I would like to see more acknowledgement of the social relations of design and construction, and, in particular, the ways in which architects are constrained by broader structural forces and relations often beyond their ability to shape. The book says little about the politics and economics of design, and the feeling conveyed is that if only we change the values and practices of architects, then a more progressive, sensitive, architecture would ensue. The question is how is this to be done given that the design process extends well beyond the architect and the design studio environment. In many instances, architects have little role in the design process, and so a broader socio-cultural transformation is required that is simultaneously a critique of corporatised design cultures, and the underlying disablist attitudes that frame societal engagements with the body.

Reference

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Disability incarcerated: imprisonment and disability in the United States and Canada, edited by Liat Ben-Moshe, Chris Chapman, and Allison G. Carey, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 316 pp., £25.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-137-40405-3

From the outset, it is important to know that *Disability Incarcerated* is an excellent text and I am wholly recommending it for a range of interests. To name but a few, the book is a must for those in disability studies, mad studies, penology and criminology – in fact, any critical field that has a stake in the ‘caring’ or custodial human sciences. However, as may be the case with many critical reader-type texts, it should also be read by those who deliver care within (and without) institutions, as an ethical check; it would be hard to read this book and not have questions about the role of caring in the suppression of difference, and the funnelling role of education into the broad carceral field, of which psychiatry is a part. It is the case that this book is mainly orientated to US and Canadian contexts, but it has clear messages for comparable penal, psychiatric and caring fields elsewhere. The first half of *Disability Incarcerated* situates the concerns it raises historically, and in the

present, and mainly in the United States and Canada. The second half looks forward and begins to consider beyond the North American continent (for instance, Mirza's 'Refugee Camps, Asylum Detention, and the Geopolitics of Transnational Migration ...').

Building on the seminal works of Foucault and Goffman, *Disability Incarcerated*, eschews an easy formulation of how disabled people (with a broad and inclusive definition) become incarcerated, and in particular it works on the growing area of intersectionalities. In a number of chapters we are given the evidence that the criminal justice system is a neo-colonial project with its over-representation of minorities. *Disability Incarcerated* posits that this is a direct result of practices such as zero tolerance to drugs and weapons policies, minimum sentencing that unduly affects those with minor offences (particularly women), and the growth of private incarceration and Big Pharma, as big business interests. Such critique of contemporary practices suggests that what was 'old hat', nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century eugenicist theorizing about the common links between deviancy (madness and criminality) and race are extant. In effect, the means and technologies may have changed, but the ethos remains consistent – some lives are a danger to society (and to certain valued, privileged norms), and are sufficiently other to warrant expulsion and containment, if not destruction (Reuame's 'Eugenics Incarceration and Expulsion: Daniel G. and Andrew T.'s Deportation from 1928 Toronto, Canada'). *Disability Incarcerated* has a clear strength in that it bases its arguments and positions almost entirely in real, material accounts that make relevant, clarifying use of theory; and so the text never loses its grip in the lived experience of people incarcerated and quantified as deviant.

To be able to toggle between macropolitics and the personal narratives of disabled people; to be able to offer sufficient theoretical content to make sense of experience without a loss of the real lived experience – that is, the essence of praxis – is no mean feat. Clearly, this attests to the scholarship of the individual contributors, but also to the skilled editing.

Thematically, there is a recurring discussion of place (the carceral as a site) (Chapman et al.'s 'Reconsidering Confinement: Interlocking Locations and Logics of Incarceration'), that nods to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. But there is also a temporal line of argument that crosses this rarefied notion of place, and in so doing permits the emergence of a 'present' of disabled people's incarceration, our activism and stories. With the present comes an awareness of the intentional (and if unintentional, then not valuing) revision and erasure of disabled people's stories as current, and critical, issues of rights. The crossing of the physical and temporal registers show the points where stories become available to activism (Abbas and Voronka's 'Remembering Institutional Erasures: the Meaning of Histories of Disability Incarceration in Ontario') and are the points of resistance to dominant discourses on deviancy, disability, madness and criminality. Strategies of erasure include the discrediting of disabled people's own accounts, through whatever means is available (Friedman and Beckwith's 'Self-advocacy: The Emancipation Movement Led by People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities'), and the rebranding and sanitizing of former carceral sites for redevelopment (Abbas and Voronka's chapter). Mirza's chapter on refugees and disability also highlights a further strategy for erasure which is in the hinterland where refugees are detained, reminiscent of Derrida's ideas on hospitality and cosmopolitanism. That hinterland is a spectral place, without citizenship, and even sometimes without a responsible

sovereignty, other than that exercised by the ‘border police’. Nations can constitute ‘non-spaces’ within their own borders, or locate their refugees in another country, or have overseas aid workers administer on their behalf, with the effect being to deny or delay claims on asylum and citizenship. These strategies have dire consequences for all but, as Mirza points out, especially for the disabled, as there is a further spectre present, that of eugenics; as the refugee and the seeker of asylum are processed, at least in part, on the basis of what they offer to a new host home.

By way of criticism, there are two areas that need to be considered. Firstly, this is an absorbing text and is more rewarding for some pre-knowledge of disability studies and in an acceptance of intersectionality as a worthwhile venture in critical thought. For some, who might just have become acquainted with certain critical or marginal positionalities, this could be taxing. Secondly, the physicality of the book; as you flick through it, the text is dense and is potentially off-putting to a reader who would otherwise read on. These are small criticisms, however, in a read that is otherwise stimulating, horrifying and galvanizing.

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Fantasies of identification: disability, gender, race, by Ellen Samuels, New York, New York University Press, 2014, 273 pp., \$25.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-47-985949-8

Ellen Samuels suggests that, from the mid-nineteenth century until the present day, literature, film and medico-legal discourses have utilized ‘fantasies of identification’ involving exaggerated claims of scientific or medical authority in order to categorize people along axes of race/gender/disability. She states: ‘These fantasies of identification seek to definitively identify bodies, to place them in categories delineated by race, gender, or ability status, and then to validate that placement through a verifiable, biological mark of identity’ (2). Samuels argues that ‘despite being disproved’ (3), these fantasies persist. Moreover, the specter of disability is omnipresent in such social dynamics: ‘fantasies of identification are haunted by disability even when disabled bodies are not their immediate focus’ (3).

Fantasies of Identification is divided into three parts: ‘fantasies of fakery’, ‘fantasies of marking’, and ‘fantasies of measurement.’ The section on fakery revolves around the theme of the ‘disability con’ (28): the social anxiety associated with fearing that someone is an imposter and is not really disabled. She explores three cases where a disability con is prominent: representations of the case of Ellen Craft, a light-skinned African American woman who escaped slavery by pretending to be a wealthy, white disabled man; the discussion of fraud in the novel *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade* by Herman Melville; and the representation of the disability con in films – in particular, early cinema from 1889 to 1907, as well as a small number of more contemporary films including *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Trading Places*, and *The Usual Suspects*.