

Disability, Biased Treatments, and the Poetry of Jillian Weise

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ABSTRACT

*In contemporary American poetry, disability poetry has gained substantial popularity and societal influence on par with other forms of poetry, arguing against injustices based on race, ethnicity, class, or gender. In a society where identity politics rule and varied communities are divided based on gender, race, ethnicity, and religion, handicapped poets generally observe that poetry was and has been a potent medium for articulating their agonizing experiences and their grief of their crippled bodies. This paper, therefore, seeks to highlight the pervasiveness of disability representation in contemporary American poetry by taking Jillian Weise as an example to highlight the poetical richness of the often marginalized poetic genre. The paper adopts a theoretical framework as propounded by combining feminism and disability components to scrutinize gender inequality, biased treatment of disabled people, and beauty's double standards. Weise has written disability poetry combined with a feminist attitude to reclaim stolen disabled bodies from non-disabled ones. She is seen as resisting the sense of ableism in communities where they see the idea of beauty as embodied in their normalcy and beautiful bodies. By investigating Jillian Weise's poetry on disability selected from different collections, namely, *Amputate Guide to Sex* (Weise, 2007), *the Book of Goodbyes* (Weise, 2013), and *Cyborg Detective* (Weise, 2019), the paper first advances the argument that disability is a social and cultural enforcement rather than physical impairment. Secondly, it is concluded that disability is presented both as the primary goal and a means to subvert the conventional notions of beauty, sexuality, and normalcy across the American community.*

Keywords: ableism; crip poetry; disability; Jillian Weise; normalcy

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the pervasive presence of disability in contemporary poetry and investigates the poetic vitality of marginalised voices by taking Jillian Weise as an example. Specifically, the paper attempts to defy varied facets of social perspectives of disability and demonstrate that human subjects with a disability could re-establish their identities within the mainstream perspectives of the public rather than merely being referenced as second-class subjects without rights. By drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Garland-Thomson (1997) and Young (2005), which integrates feminist and disability studies to critique gender inequity, systemic ableism, and oppressive beauty norms, the study hopes to contribute to this dialogue by interrogating how disabled poets reclaim agency through poems. Through focusing on Weise, therefore, this paper might present some of the many ways in which a defiant feminist poet seizes back the disabled body from non-disabled appropriation, transforming personal and political struggle into art.

To an untrained eye, Weise is almost always identified as a 'Cyborg' for having a different form of leg. Weise is the author of three books, namely, *The Colony*, *The Amputee's Guide to Sex*, and *The Book of Goodbyes*, which was awarded the 2013 Isabella Gardner Poetry Award. Her writing has been published in *The New York Times* and *The Atlantic*, just to name a select few. By studying literary works by Weise, one may ascertain that there are heavily depicted stereotyped images of disability. That is, when characters are made disabled, deformed, blind, paralysed,

mentally ill, or physically impaired, they are often associated with villainy, wickedness or depicted literally as a handicap resulting from combat injuries.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the following sections, this paper attempts to introduce Weise as a poet. After that, this paper seeks to position Weise's work within the field of disability studies, although it must be emphasised that this work on accentuating the review of literature is far from comprehensive. Finally, we will be able to trace the many movements surrounding poetry, highlighting disability to contextualise the study. By structuring the review this way, this paper hopes to extend the discussion in the ways in which Weise exemplifies poetry to elevate the nuances concerning the intersection between disability, impairment, and imperfection.

Weise, born in Texas in 1981, has accomplished many, both as a poet and an academic. As a poet, performance artist, and disability rights activist, her work can be foremost following her graduation from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the University of Cincinnati. Awarded fellowships from the University of North Carolina, the Fulbright Program, and the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, she currently is a professor at Florida State University. Weise's poetic style is characterised by her smoothness and directness; in one sense, she adopts a resisting tone toward non-disabled bodies who marginalise her work and who carry poetry with an empowering attitude across readers and the public associated with disability. As much as disability is focused, A. J. Baird, a literary scholar, condemned poetry of disability prior to 1983 due to certain reasons that demonstrate poetry of disability as super-sentimental and self-pitying. In a sense, reading such poetry might give readers superficial empathy as opposed to an in-depth attachment. As David Pfeiffer (2002) argues, there is a sense of distaste for disability:

Disability is seen as a personal tragedy, a disgrace to the family, and/or a punishment from God. People with disabilities are to be pitied, and they are regarded as a burden to society, to their families, and to themselves...These attitudes are due to the fact that people with disabilities are diagnosed. They are viewed as having a deficit named in that diagnosis. Unlike members of other social movements, they are not allowed to self-identify.

(p. 4)

Baird subsequently sees this sort of poetry as unsuccessful, having failed to keep up with the artistic standards of mainstream poems (Bartlett et al., 2011).

Since its inception in the 1970s, The Disability Rights Movement saw activists ready to call for demonstrations, destroy social barriers, organise rallies, and push for legislative changes so that wheelchair users and people with disability could make their voices heard in the public arena. Specifically, a political stereotypical view of disability challenges the medical model, which views disability as a personal, biological issue that must be resolved, and it has since upheld the idea that those with disabilities are flawed, deserving of little respect, and not worthy of equal rights or full citizenship. Therefore, like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that witnessed the repeal of banned segregation based on race, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 made it unlawful to discriminate against anyone based on their impairment or their limitations (Yu, 2021).

Subsequently, the focus on disability gained traction. In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, American poets began to include disability more overtly in their poems in *Towards Solomon's Mountain* (Baird & Workman, 1986). Many of these poets, including Laura Hershey, Jim Ferris,

Kenny Fries, and Stephen Kuusisto, prioritise disability at the centre of their poetry by writing primarily for disabled readers rather than nondisabled ones, and their work additionally reflects their involvement in the Disability Rights Movement and disability culture as well as to their embodied experiences living with disability (Baird & Workman, 1986). But since its introduction, there has been a magnitude of calls for differentiating compendiums of conventional poetry and a specialised discipline and terminology that locates disability as its primary emphasis. As such, crip poetry is introduced as a way to designate the poems, but like other matters of intellectual faculty, discipline-specific terminologies are not without academic resistance.

One of the leading figures of disability poetry, Jim Ferris (2007), introduces disability or crip poetry in inaugural online journal issues, *Wordgathering*, as:

Poetry that seeks to explore and validate the lived experience of moving through the world with a disability. Sometimes referred to as crip poetry, disability poetry embodies a disability consciousness; it is informed by and contributes to disability culture.” That is a serviceable definition. But here’s what I left out: the possibility, the edgy potential, the openness and even the likelihood of transformation.

Crip poetry, like the rest of the disability arts movement, generally opposes the idea that disability is personal, tragic, pitiful, and humiliating. By positing a keen understanding of how societies generally interpret and react to human differences, frequently leading to prejudice, marginalisation, and discrimination, this consciousness-raising has demonstrated a significant portion of the impact that impairments have on people’s lives. Ferris believes that there are certain features of crip poetry which involve resisting stereotypes and demands instead the self-representation, centralising disabled voices and emphasising lived bodily experiences, especially those that are nonconforming (Bartlett et al., 2011). A clear line of distinction is apparently made between disability poetics and crip poetics by Meg Day (2021). According to Day, disability poetics is not for us, meaning that it falls short in preventing disability by non-disabled poets such as objectifying disability metaphors, generally employing tragic or reductively inspirational representations of disability. Day has thus made an attempt to approximate over the course of field-defining emphasis more with crip poetry than with disability poetry since, in her opinion, only crip poets like Gaia Thomas, Raymond Luczak, Daniel Simpson, and Ona Gritz heavily and objectively formulate people with disability as a major topic in their poetic writings (Yu, 2021). In the following pages, this paper focuses on the neglect of this aspect, particularly studying the crip poetry of Weise, as the magnitude of Weise’s work converges disability in her poetry.

MATERIAL AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study analyses seven poems from Weise’s *The Amputee’s Guide to Sex* (2007), *The Book of Goodbyes* (2013), and *Cyborg Detective* (2019), written in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which articulate her vision of disability as a literary, social, and cultural force. Alongside close readings, the research engages with critical scholarship and historical texts to raise awareness of the layered meanings in her work. Disability poetry remains an emergent field, one that intersects with medicine, identity, and broader cultural discourse. To illuminate its significance, this study attempts to synthesise and combine Garland-Thomson and Iris Marion Young’s critical theories as a framework for understanding Weise’s poetics. Her treatment of disability extends into intersectional explorations of gender, race, and selfhood, framed by these theoretical lenses. By utilising the integration of framework, this paper attempts to show that disability is not only a

medical issue, but disability can be a social and cultural construct, shaping and reshaping individuals who suffer from disability. It offers the visibility of the often-hidden layer of suffering of being disabled. This paper also sheds light on how disabled women, like Weise, while physically disabled, are mentally and poetically capable of resisting ableism by resorting to feminine power and boldness. The other goal of the paper is to scrutinise specific forms of violence, whether social, physical or even literal, committed against people with disability. This paper argues that such violence is not random but rather stems from an ideological devaluation of disabled people, particularly women, who generally face heightened sexual abuse due to their marginalised status.

THEORISING DISABILITY

The foundation of disability studies is formulated to combat the social exclusion of those with impairments. Disability, according to a large number of humanity academics involved in this topic, is not a peripheral concern in literary and cultural studies but rather a crucial and revolutionary critical category for understanding literature and literary theory. The frequent use of literary characters with impairments as simple emblems of evil, exoticism, frailty, or ugliness has drawn criticism from academics (Garland-Thomson, 2007). These critics examine the recurrent preconceptions that are supported by literary works and contend that traditional narratives about disabilities are frequently inaccurate and fall short of fully capturing the complexity of disability as an identity, a mode of existence, or an embodied, lived experience. According to these scholars, clichéd narrative scripts have the capacity to uphold ableist ideas that disability is an absence; handicapped characters are frequently employed only as a means of illuminating aspects of the non-disabled protagonist (Murray, 2012).

Disability studies gained more and more attention as a legitimate academic discipline starting in the 1980s. Scholars probe the relationship between disability as a subject position and as a location of human knowledge. Academics differentiate between two models concerning disability: the medical and social models. Numerous academics drew a clear line that they disagreed with the medical paradigm, which saw disability as only a personal shortcoming in the form of illness that needed to be remedied or hidden. They refuse to see disability as a disease or as a condition that requires treatment. The medical model of disability views disfigurement as a deficiency that can be remedied through medical and surgical interventions. In contrast, the social-moral model of disability links disfigurement to a person's morality and behaviour, with some individuals perceiving it as a sign of immortality. These differing perspectives evoke a wide range of emotions surrounding disfigurement and disability. Non-disabled individuals are inclined to perceive disabled individuals primarily through fear, disgust and pity. These emotions constitute a cast of effects that situate disabled individuals within morally precarious social contexts, wherein it is deemed acceptable to perpetuate both violence and charity towards them (Dahiya & Rani, 2024).

Rather, advocates and academics presented a social model of disability that is frequently referred to as the 'social constructionist' approach. This approach generally emphasises the structural and public dimensions of disability as well as the historical oppression of the disabled population. In short, they recommend that a crucial distinction be made between 'impairment' and 'disability.' Under this model of disability, a person's disability might be seen as a product of their relationship with the society in which they live. On the one hand, human subjects usually become 'disabled' when they are excluded from or subjected to society-based discrimination, and this can

take the forms of affective, sensory, cognitive, and architectural barriers. On the other hand, an impairment is a physical and functional limitation (Hall, 2016). For Tom Shakespeare (2010), the social model's articulation has a complicated and wide-ranging impact since it is seen as both an academic theory and an activist instrument. He maintains that it is a force for change on three avenues: 1) politically, by helping to mobilise the disabled community; 2) instrumentally, by emphasising the need for society to change and remove barriers; and 3) psychologically, by fostering the growth of a shared identity among individuals with disparate physical and mental disabilities.

In his book, Davis (2006) writes about disability from a historical point of view and how this field of study emerges as an interdisciplinary field with other discourses:

It is not as if disability studies have simply appeared out of someone's head at this historical moment. It would be more appropriate to say that disability studies have been in the making for many years but, like people with disabilities, have only recently recognised themselves as a political, discursive entity. Indeed, like the appearance of African-American studies following rapidly on the heels of the civil rights movement, there is a reciprocal connection between political praxis by people with disabilities and the formation of a discursive category of disability studies.

(p. xvi)

As stated by disability historian Paul Longmore, the history of disability studies may be broken down into "waves." The first wave was made up of activism and advocacy for civil rights, which resulted in the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The rise of disability studies as an academic subject that remained intimately related to collective identity and disability culture movements marked the second wave. In more recent times, academics have proposed that disability theory is about to enter a third phase, or wave, in which the discipline is starting to "fissure" around several important arguments. One of these splits revolves around the social model's central binary, which is the difference between disability and impairment (Adams, 2013, p. 496). The concept of disability studies by Tobin Siebers (2008) states that literary and cultural discourses offer a wealth of material for research:

Disability studies do not treat disease or disability, hoping to cure or avoid them; they study the social meanings, symbols, and stigmas attached to disability identity and ask how they relate to enforced systems of exclusion and expression.

(p.3)

These scholars scrutinise the repeated stereotypes that are underpinned by literary works and contend that typical narratives about disabilities are frequently inaccurate and fall short of fully capturing the nuanced nature of disability as an identity, a mode of existence, or lived experience. According to these researchers, stereotyped narrative scripts have the power to sustain ableist ideas that disability is an absence; handicapped characters are usually used only as an avenue of illuminating aspects of the non-disabled protagonists (Davis, 2006).

According to Davis, the novel is one of several "public venues" where the "abnormal" is shown to support hegemonic notions of the normal in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, and ability or disability. Davis calls this theory "enforcing normalcy" Lennard Davis believes that the idea of disability used as merely as a tool of illuminating or supporting the norm works supersede the level of character and involves the level of the genre (Davis, 2006). Davis' viewpoint is articulated and underpinned by Leonard Kriegel in his treatise entitled "Disability as Metaphor in Literature" (1988). Kriegel states that disability, as literary representation, is usually viewed as a source of pity or threat. The other metaphorical sense of disability is that it serves to reinforce and stabilise concepts of normalcy or to provide readers with more context for the story and a deeper

comprehension of the main, non-disabled characters. In a sense, disability is not shown for the sake of disability but for other purposes like notions of normalcy and hegemony.

Because the study focuses on a prominent female poet and because disability as a field of study is interdisciplinary, the study has adopted an eclectic approach where disability and feminism combine to analyse poems. This is motivated by a force like Dahiya and Rani (2024), who conducted a study showing that acid attack and disability alike cause traumatic psychological and emotional effects upon victims. They explain that violence could have negative implications that threaten self-esteem and identity formation. One of the implications of physical violence and disability, according to Goffman, is stigmatisation that might affect and disorient a person. A changing perception might prompt a human subject to develop a perception that has evolved from a human self into a monstrous, animalistic being. The idea of monstrosity, therefore, can be another unearthed layer of disability discourse or disfigurement.

Studies on disabilities and feminism have a lot in common and share a similar ground.

These movements concentrate on rights and have a commitment to uncovering the cultural conventions, social traditions and power structures that support ableism and sexism. Both of them sprang from activism for rights. A woman with a disability is probably to be humiliated, suffer, exploited, and experience sexual harassment than a non-disabled woman. Disabled woman is twice oppressed; first being a woman and second being a disabled woman. Dualistic identity theories have, therefore, been utilised by feminists and disability scholars to draw attention to the ways in which oppressive roles are created by society. First-wave disability researchers frequently make a difference between physical "impairment" and the socially created category of "disability," just as early feminists demanded a separation between biological "sex" and cultural presumptions about "gender." However, in more recent times, scholars like Tom Shakespeare and Judith Butler have started to wonder whether it is really possible to draw such a clear division between the social and the physical in both domains. The meeting points between feminism and disability are available and can be used as a framework to study literary and cultural texts. According to Susan Wendell (1997), a feminist disability studies proponent might better recognise the need for reciprocal interdependency among individuals due to the prevailing cultural belief that depending on the help of others is humiliating in a society which celebrates independence (p. 273). Here, a disability studies viewpoint highlights the ways in which conventional justifications for autonomy and independence frequently rest on an assumed, required able-bodiedness.

Iris Marion Young, a philosopher, shows how the nature of femaleness, disease, and disability is often associated with Western thought; women's bodies, like those of people with disabilities, are often perceived as deficient, heavy, and frail. They always carry within themselves the sense of lacking, whether as a woman or a disabled woman. There is an obvious connection between disability studies and feminism because of the sense of rejection of the medicalised idea that certain bodies are really inherently malformed, helpless, damaged, or dependent (2005). Thus, the study places feminism and disability in some sort of dialogue with each other, discussing the politics of appearance, standards of beauty, normality and abnormality. In such a critical area, Garland-Thomson has been a key figure in explaining the complex and reciprocal connection that exists between disability studies and feminism. Feminist disability studies are recognised as an area; the history of feminist disability studies can be understood through three waves: 'retrievals,' 'reimaginings,' and 'rethinkings' (Hall, 2016). Retrievals entails looking for literature that, although it may not directly address disability, still somehow conveys the feeling of being impaired. The works of the second wave, under the umbrella of reimaginings, frequently feature works by women with disabilities and actively challenge and rewrite repressive scripts. Rethinking has to do

with the intersectionality of disability with other areas of study, such as poststructuralism, race, and materiality. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2005) says:

Language about “figuring” and “representing” or “narratives” can dislodge the pervasive notions we all learn about disability and shake up our assumptions about what constitutes happiness, attractiveness, suffering, dignity, or a livable experience. Feminist disability studies thus reveal both the cultural work and the limits of language.

(p.1559)

Garland-Thomson claims that literary descriptions of disability directly influence how the public views disabilities. She is well aware of the significant social and political work that literary criticism can accomplish by exposing how disability is a socially constructed design implied through various representations, stories, and figures. Garland-Thomson (1997) *Extraordinary Bodies* foreshadows some ways to merge feminism and disability. The following pages shall borrow these integrations to investigate Weise's poems. By focusing on the combination of feminism and disability, the standards of beauty set by hegemonic powerful forces by employing politics of appearance and its relationship with beauty can be presented.

POETICS OF DISABILITY IN PRACTICE: WEISE'S POETRY

Jillian Weise is a poet, disability rights activist and professor who nicknamed herself a cyborg. Jillian Weise is renowned for her distinct and avant-garde lyrical style, which questions conventional ideas of form and organisation. One can easily notice that her writing frequently traverses the boundary between poetry and prose, interfusing aspects of each to produce a unique hybrid style. Weise's writing is distinguished by its unadorned honesty and boldly exploring challenging subjects like identity, disability, and power relations. She writes in a clear yet poetic style that captivates the reader with a sense of transparency and spontaneity. Her literary oeuvre includes writing famous collections: *Amputee Guide to Sex* (2007). *The Book of Goodbyes* (2013). *Cyborg Detective* (2019).

In her collection, *Amputee Guide to Sex* (2007), Weise presents disease and desire from a feminist point of view where the speaker is situated on different grounds and always in a state of dependency. In her poem, "Half-Portrait", one can observe from the title that there is some sort of incompleteness that a disabled individual suffers from:

If I look into a mirror, face forward into battle,
let the perimeter of the glass cut off the right half
of my body, I am whole. You can't hear the rattle of
a prosthetic leg.

(Weise, 2007)

Speaking directly into the mirror, the speaker explains that they could only see the left side of their body reflected back. The deliberate decision to cover up the right side, which may carry a prosthetic limb, suggests a desire to manage how they are viewed by others. They are able to retain a sense of completeness and hide any perceived defects or disparities by simply presenting just a part of who they are. This is an imaginary sense of completeness away from the reality of a prosthetic leg and a deformed body. This sense of incompleteness is highly reflected when the speaker imagines herself as a seductive female who cares about her beauty before her lover:

Half-me glides through gold-gilded bars, red
wine in hand, selects a cuff-linked man and leaves
him waking up the next morning alone in bed.

(Weise, 2007)

She plays the role of a prostitute in the glamorous room, which is only deserted in the morning. This stresses the illusion between appearance and reality, the sense of disconnection in the shallow and material-based relationships between two lovers. She does not state clearly what the reason for leaving her alone in bed is, but through the following lines: "I dream the Mona Lisa into a wheelchair //she smirks behind glass with a victory stare." (Weise, 2007). It can be confirmed that the speaker is living a complex portrait of self where the outer façade isn't compatible with the inner self. She looks for self-acceptance as she likens Mona Lisa, the symbol of beauty and love, to a disability who stands for her disabled situation. Being disabled and beautiful is not necessarily to be suitable for male suitors.

Weise presents a much more awful image concerning a disabled individual in "Notes on the Body (4)". The speaker's experience of being given orders is made clear in the first few words, which imply that they lack agency or authority over their own body:

I often hear commands with actions.
Examine. He tries to open me.
Operate. I cough and choke, a bird song.
Repair. His hands are scalpels.
Under the covers, my toes itch
until I remember I don't have toes.

(Weise, 2007)

The words "examine," "operate," and "repair" draw attention to how clinical and impersonal the contact was, underscoring how dehumanising medical processes can be. In this regard, we are met with a persona who is objectified and mechanised in such order without human feelings. A further layer of awkwardness and confusion is added by contrasting the speaker's coughing and breathing to a bird song, underscoring the disconnect between the speaker's internal experience and the outside world. The depiction of the speaker being open and functioning like a machine, likening the doctor's hands to scalpels, conveys a sense of assault and infringement.

Weise adopts a lyrical style that is highly remarkable in its use of repetition and fragmentation. She frequently utilises repeated phrases or imagery in her poems to establish rhythm and velocity that draws the reader in. The challenges she is examining are emphasised by this recurrence, which also highlights their importance and influence. This is evidently depicted in her poem, "Attack List", in which Weise depends on collecting numerous heinous headlines detailing numerous instances of violence, mistreatment, and prejudice directed at people with disabilities:

A woman jammed between two doors this morning
3 men held for gang-raping a mentally disabled woman for 3 days
Sicko rapes a disabled woman at the racetrack
.....
Disabled women prostituted by family members
Intellectually disabled women are paid \$1.25 an hour
wins landmark case
Disabled woman kidnapped and raped by Bahraini man
Disabled woman allowed to extend village home
Drug dealers assault disabled women in Leominster

(Weise, 2019)

The poem highlights the numerous difficulties and injustices that individuals with disabilities confront in society through these concise observations of television. As a metaphor for the literal and figurative hurdles that people with disabilities frequently face, the poem's opening picture shows a lady trapped between two doors. This establishes the tone for the remainder of the poem, which keeps bringing attention to acts of tyranny and violence directed at the disabled. Various misdeeds are covered in the headlines, such as theft, negligence, prejudice, and sexual assault and rape. Every headline serves as a reminder of the pervasiveness of ableism in society, as well as the vulnerability and marginalisation faced by people with disabilities. Weise includes a very long list of injustices and crimes committed against disabled people, showing those people are marginalised twice, first being women and being women with disability. She presents a lot of disabled women being raped and gang-raped by abled people. She ends the poem by saying, "I feel so isolated" Weise was disability activist before becoming a poet. These illustrations show how urgently more accessibility, assistance programs, and rights for people with disabilities are required. The basic needs of life are almost banned and violated.

Jillian Weise continues to probe into the history of disabled people who fall under the mercy of American laws. She wrote a poem entitled "The Ugly Laws," and it pertains to past laws from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that were in place in some American cities. As some labels had appeared as being "unsightly" or "offensive" to public sensibilities, these regulations usually targeted individuals who had impairments. City-to-city differences existed in the wording and implementation of the Ugly Laws, but generally speaking, they forbade those with obvious infirmities from being present in public areas like parks or streets:

wandering a Chicago street in my dress with my
parasol as a cane, on the verge of arrest, where arrest
could mean "stopping" or "to keep the mind fixed
on a subject," where the subject is the diseased,
maimed, mutilated self of 19th c. Chicago, the self
in any way deformed so as to be unsightly.

(Weise, 2013)

Weise here sheds light on how they were regulated into a certain formality. The U.S. government limits disabled people from being seen on public avenues. They add much more abnormality to their impairment. This sort of limitation goes beyond the imagination of an individual when such laws are applied even to the schools:

Why are the laws stacked with it and I never
in high school heard of it? The maimed shall not
therein or thereon expose himself or herself
to public view under penalty of staring.

(Weise, 2013)

Weise situates her poem in a binary equation where the abled, attractive individuals are highly valued and superior in contrast to the disabled people who are inferior and deformed into nothingness. This is clear when she refers to the U.S. government as "Big Logos." The Ugly Law is a powerful illustration of how the U.S. has attempted to control and stifle the exposure of specific oppressed groups in order to uphold standards of aptitude and physical attractiveness. Weise's writing forces readers to consider the legacy of such discriminatory laws and consider how they still influence how people view disabilities in the modern world:

I am not poor. I am not even unsightly. What a pretty face
I have, I've been told. Big Logos, will you attest
to my sightliness?

(Weise, 2013)

Weise's analysis of U.S. history as far as Ugly Laws are concerned highlights the significance of promoting disability rights and the continuous fight for inclusion and equality. Weise encourages critical debate on the ways that societal beliefs and policies have supported ableism and injustice by bringing attention to this frequently disregarded period of American history. Weise challenges readers to think about how we might strive toward a more inclusive and fair society for individuals of all abilities through her examination of the Ugly Law and affirming their place and beauty in society as a contrast or antibody against ableism.

In the throes of fighting ableism, Weise calls for solidarity, identification, and communication between non-disabled people and people with disability. In "I Want Your Fax", Weise introduces the sense of communication that had been for years: "I want to be a disability for you. / Make new signs for you" (Weise, 2019). It is a strong declaration of identity and ambition that begins the song. The speaker declares that they are prepared to accept and live with their disability—not as an obstacle or a barrier, but as a source of connection and empowerment. The phrase "making new signs" alludes to an urgent need to reframe and shift the community's preconceived notions and views of disability. In closing, the poem's speaker makes a promise to support and stand for their fellow. The speaker's goal, which is to deal with ableism while also encouraging and supporting the reader, is captured in this concluding verse, which embraces disability as a source of strength and solidarity rather than separation.

In the same tone and fighting spirit against ableism, nevertheless, in a different poetic style in her poem "Imaginary Interview," Weise renders her poem in question-and-answer poetic format. The poem takes the form of a fictitious interview in which Weise is probably questioned about her experiences and disabilities. The interview's style fosters a conversational tone that entices readers to take a peek into the speaker's ideas and contemplations. "Are you rendered incapable?" and "Are you disabled?" are the first inquiries that set the framework for a detailed examination of impairment. The speaker's comments cast doubt on oversimplified definitions and emphasise how crucial context and viewpoint are to comprehending disability:

Q: Are you limited by parts of the body?

A: My arms are not wings.

Q: Are you entitled to certain rights?

A: Yes, I am disabled.

Q: The U.S. Government disagrees.

A: You read the letter?

(Weise, 2019)

The speaker discusses the bureaucracy associated with handicaps and how society views it as the interview goes on. The reference to the U.S. Government's evaluation of the speaker's handicap status highlights the institutionalised discrimination that people with disabilities frequently experience. Despite the gravity of the subject, the speaker's caustic reaction to the government's choice injects some comedy. The poem explores the decision's emotional impact on the government while emphasising the human meaning of the term "disability." The speaker's response to the letter from the government highlights the hierarchical marginalisation that

permeates disability evaluations and diminishes complicated identities to little more than boxes to be checked and standards to be met:

Q: The same leg cannot be amputated twice.

A: Yes, I knew it would be difficult to explain. It was the same leg, the one you call artificial and fake and prosthetic. The one I call my leg. I had been wearing a series of hinge-style, basic knees. I knew the mechanics of my legs.

(Weise, 2019)

The poem is threaded with symbols that show a dehumanising effect and a sense of ignorance against disabled people. With allusions to an umbrella, a stalker, and the speaker's prosthetic limb, the poem's symbolism deepens the storyline. These symbols underline issues of vulnerability, surveillance, and adaptability while acting as metaphors for the speaker's experiences navigating the world with a disability. An additional element of annoyance and disappointment is introduced by the speaker's account of her encounters with medical personnel. Dismissive attitudes and ignorance on the part of certain healthcare professionals highlight the structural obstacles that handicapped people must overcome in order to receive high-quality treatment and assistance:

Q: We are all confused. Explain?

A: If I want my knee to flex slower on the step, I have to drive to the prosthetist's office, take off my pants and hook up to his computer. He has the software. Since this is my leg, it is my software. How can I bring you closer to me? Let's say you purchase a BMW convertible, which costs the same as this leg. Say you want to put the top down. But in order to do that, you have to drive to the shop, talk to the mechanic, take off your pants, and then he, with his key fob, puts the top down. It is still sunny out. Are you happy?

(Weise, 2019)

The poem ends with a request for autonomy and understanding. The speaker's wish to customise her prosthetic leg's settings indicates her need for sovereignty and mastery over her own body. The comparison to adjusting a car's convertible top serves as an illustration of the ridiculousness of the existing system, which necessitates laborious and invasive procedures for even minor alterations. With its conversational approach and striking imagery, the poem calls on readers to think differently about how they view disability and to feel the difficulties that handicapped people have in claiming their humanity and autonomy. "Imaginary Interview" presents a harsh, bleak portrayal of disability, identity, and agency.

Jillian Weise is a very precise follower of media news, and she exploits a horrendous act of killing a daughter who appears to have developed bone cancer and lung cancer. And because of cancer, which was eating verily the daughter's body, the lower part of her limb was amputated. Weise utilises this event and wrote an elegy entitled "Elegy for Zahra Baker." Historically speaking, in October 2010, Zahra Baker, a ten-year-old girl from Hickory, Catawba County, North Carolina, went missing. Baker, a cancer "survivor" with an artificial leg and hearing aids, was not only a child but also a stepmother, making the case suitable for the public's attention. As the case progressed, horrific and intricate new details about Baker's background, including a fictitious ransom note, accusations of long-term child abuse, and an apparently unrelated fire the morning Baker went missing, added to the case's already dramatic attention from the mainstream media. In late October, detectives discovered Baker's prosthetic leg and shortly thereafter, scattered bone

bits were strewn throughout the countryside. Baker's biological father and stepmother were apprehended separately on other offences, namely, involving fraudulent checks. Subsequently, law enforcement officials formally accused her stepmother of obstructing justice (Nance, 2020).

"Elegy for Zahra Baker" is a narrative that describes the initial stages of the case and the emotional responses of a speaker towards them. In the poem, Weise not only recounts different aspects of the research about the missing daughter but also examines the way disabled bodies are seen by the public, especially as formed by the media. Weise specifically highlights the media attention given to the case to express worry about the different ways in which damaged and disabled bodies are forcefully exposed to others, causing their personal bodies to become public in two main ways: through journalism and the creation of narratives of 'true crime' on the internet. She achieves disability discourse by utilising a unique kind of poetry that combines elements of both lyricism and prose. This form incorporates journalistic narrative descriptions with elliptical lyricism and brings disability to the forefront. Weise critically examines the manner in which we absorb disabled bodies, especially concentrating on how media portrayals of crime fuel an excessive preoccupation with bodies, ultimately presenting a sensationalised depiction of disability (Nance, 2020).

Interestingly enough, Weise is successful in illustrating the dismembered body through the form of the poem. In this elegy, Weise considers the fragmented composition of Baker's body, as well as the crippled body throughout history, which forms a disjointed collection of individual parts. Weise's lyrical form disrupts and yet remains cohesive, challenging the linear narratives presented by the media. This highlights the inability of the mainstream culture to properly recognise the complex nature of the crippled body. The elegy offers a structure that allows poets with disabilities to express themselves about the body and use unpleasant feelings to analyse and challenge current societal standards without relying on stories of spiritual or physical recovery. Weise organises "Elegy for Zahra Baker" into concise paragraphs separated by significant gaps, integrating information about the case alongside biographical tales, dialogues, and vignettes from the speaker's perspective. According to Weise's "Notes," the poem's spatial arrangement mirrors its subject matter, which is the case of Zahra Baker, whose remains were discovered across and around Caldwell County, North Carolina, in 2010. The poem's form emulates the act of scattering, presenting a text that requires readers to gather and piece together several tales and topics, transitioning between Baker's narrative and that of the speaker.

CONCLUSION

In short, Weise advocates the rights of disabled people who are suffering from marginalisation, dehumanisation, and exploitation. What makes Weise unique is that she adds a double layer of suffering by being a woman. She presents female disabled individuals who suffer first because of being disabled and second because of being a woman. Weise introduces a woman with a prosthetic leg who changes her limb as any other machine that needs to be repaired from time to time. Weise calls herself a "Cyborg" who refuses to be subdued or listen to abled-bodied words. She emphasises the sense of violence committed against people with disability, and this is apparently shown in her poem "Attack List." Weise attempts to raise the consciousness of people toward people with disability and change preconceived thoughts into some sort of solidarity.

As such, Weise emphasises the social aspect of disability. She treats disability not as a disease but as a social format. She believes that people with disability would not have felt their disability without some socially dehumanising factor that keeps stressing people with disability. Those people are probably best banned from pleasures of life, such as marriage or sexual life. Weise uses the tool of body disfigurement and prosthetic leg as an embodiment of disability. She shows, through her poetic character, how it is necessary to change her leg every then and while, like other machines, and this is evidently depicted in "Imaginary Interview." Weise promises, at least from this point of view, to develop disability poetics that value non-normative expertise, style, language, and intellect, as well as alterity. Instead of trying to hide behind words, she attempts to employ them to highlight diversity and uplift a voice that is marginalised in the face of ableist views that are prevalent today. Poetry of disability undoubtedly exhibits a range of emotions, including balance and imbalance, health and illness, evident infirmity and concealed power. Through these oppositions, poetry emphasising disabilities challenges conventional wisdom and the generally accepted notion of normalcy.

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