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Disability, Human Rights and the limits of Humanitarianism, edited by Michael Gill and Cathy J. Schund-Vials, Surrey and Burlington, Ashgate, 2014, 252 pp., £58.50 (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-4724-2091-6

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This powerful collection of transdisciplinary and transnational essays begins with a comprehensive introduction (pgs. 1-14) which sketches out for its reader the significance of disabled people's protestations to austerity across the globe. By detailing activist efforts in the UK, Greece, Madrid, South Korea, Bolivia, and Afghanistan, as editors Gill and Schund-Vials situate disabled people's voices as central right from the beginning of this volume. In short, the volume both engages with and critiques "human rights" and humanitarianism. Without doubt, the book more than meets this aim, and it does so with a broad reach. For example, its well-organised chapters touch upon poverty; media; representation; humanitarian emergencies; protest and activism; education; HIV/AIDS; LBGTTQIA rights; violence; organ trafficking/markets; law and globalisation - to name just a few. An asset of the book is its global focus, emphasising that, as a disability studies community, we're moving away (albeit slowly) from a dominant Western disability studies and towards a more interesting and ethical terrain. Chapters focus on, for example, disability in humanitarian emergencies in India (Hiranandani, ch. 6); HIV/AIDS and socio-economic rights in South Africa (Apon Strehlau, ch. 11); and many chapters draw upon international and global discourses, economies, and markets in their analyses. Thus, I really enjoyed this collection, and would like to use this review to sketch out why.

From the beginning, Mark Sherry's chapter (ch. 1), *The Promise of Human Rights for Disabled People and the Reality of Neoliberalism*, is a grounding first chapter. I enjoy the way Sherry writes: always without pretention, and always with plenty of passion. In just the first few pages readers unfamiliar with the realities of many disabled people's lives are given a striking awakening as to the (often cruel) conditions that materialise for disabled people in neoliberal times. Developing this analysis, in chapter 3 Armineh Soorenia intricately weaves together the politics of representation and rhetoric with the reality of disabled women's lives. She uses hate crime to identify the exacerbation of discrimination against disabled women's human rights. For example, quoting a contributor to a recent Guardian Comment is Free article Soorenia embodies for her reader the lived realities of negative representation upon disabled women's rights to feel safe and secure in their own communities: 'On days when the media runs anti-disabled stories, it's safest to stay indoors' (Gleneg 2012, unpaginated in Soorenia 2014). Taking the reader delicately through the (seemingly rampant) negative representations of disability and disabled people which have flourished in recent times as a right wing British press licks the boots of the (now tired) Coalition austerity rhetoric, Soorenia then layers over a (harrowing) analysis of hate crime. In foregrounding representation, she offers an important context for her reader, subtly showing that this context is necessary - a precursor - for what we have come to know as "hate crime" to emerge. For example, to understand (if even possible) the act of a person (Anthony Anderson) urinating over a disabled woman (Christine Lakinski) as she lay dying, all the while encouraging a friend to film it, one first has to understand the cultures of hate which lie beneath such a torturous act. Soorenia sketches out the depth and breadth of the materialisation of cultures of hate: from "individual" acts of torture to institutional violence: in this case, the UK's Crown Prosecution Service, despite filmed evidence, did not pursue criminal charges. Thus, Soorenia explicitly shows how public policy, austerity, legal systems, disability and domestic violence organisations, and negative imagery and rhetoric combine to reveal rights discourses - particularly those which protect from abuse and violence - are largely ineffective and relatively powerless in the face of the increasing vulnerability and precarity of disabled people in the current UK context.

Moving forward, one thing I relish about this book is its explicit engagement with that which we have come to know as "human". Inevitably, it's necessary to refer to the construct of the human - as the foundational subject upon which "human" rights are built - to articulate why and how some humans have more access to protection through human rights than others. Contributions to this book helpfully fortify others' interrogations of the (Humanist) human and imagined alternatives, for example, the dishuman (see Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2014; Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014; Goodley, Runswick-Cole and Liddiard, f.c; see also dishuman.com). Two particular chapters in the

book offer some meaty theoretical richness here - that of Titchkosky (ch. 7) and Erevelles (ch.13). For example, Titchkosky's rigorous chapter, in her words, 'examines the divisions and distinctions human rights discourses makes between person, disability, and impairment as a way to explore the (dis)associations that still happen everyday between people and the category of the 'human'' (pg. 119). This analysis leads her to ask some pertinent critical questions (pg. 132) with which all disability studies scholars might fruitfully engage, whether our primary inquiry rests with questioning the 'human' or not. Erevelles' chapter (ch.13) thoughtfully engages in what she calls a 'political anatomy of the body' to critique and resist burgeoning celebrations of the posthuman as always-transgressive. Erevelles' usual style means that this is articulated in a way that is as faithful (to historical materialism) as it is penetrating. For example, speaking of (impaired) enslaved bodies, Erevelles (pg. 225) poignantly asks: 'It is possible to praise the fragility, malleability, and instability of such bodily boundaries borne out of so much violence as either transgressive or transformative?' Later in the chapter, she draws upon Scheper-Hughes' work on the transnational commodification of organs and Ahmed's affective economies to locate these "markets" in materialist contexts which serve to uncover - as she argues - that 'posthuman transgressions unwittingly echo neoliberal logic where bodies are free to assemble/disassemble (becoming disabled) to form affective (partial/temporary) relationships that celebrate flexibility, desire, and freedom unmediated by the political economy of transnational capitalism' (pg. 232). Important contributions such as this are critically grounding in the context of the 'posthuman turn' and require us to pause for a moment and take caution (Braidotti 2013).

Lastly, one of my favourite chapters is that of Eunjung Kim (ch. 8) who takes her reader through the complexities of the politics of spectral vulnerability. For reasons of space, I draw attention only to two powerful cases upon which Kim draws to build her arguments. The first, *The Girl Store*, an online "humanitarian" donation site which 'pleads with customers to pretend to "buy a girl" before traffickers do' (pg. 141). I urge readers to view the site (<http://www.the-girl-store.org>) while reading Kim's analysis¹: 'the campaign casts Indian girls on display as already trafficked and presents alluring images of them as waiting for visitors to buy them back' (pg.147); a form of "humanitarian trafficking" (Friedner in Kim 2014: 147). The second is Kim's analysis of a Korean protest in which 80 disabled protesters crawled across a busy city bridge - taking 7 hours in total - to fight the State's lack of care service provision for disabled people. In her powerful analysis, Kim articulates the efficacy of this particular spectral protest as rooted in protesters' performances of; claims for; and embodiment of vulnerability in the collectivity of their action: 'In their willingness to perform crawling and to make visible the hidden daily struggles and the deaths, the activists defy the privatisation and futurity of vulnerability. By radically embodying vulnerability here and now, the crawlers ironically become no longer pitiable but instead evidence against the presume of self-sufficiency and self-care' (pg. 152).

In sum, I highly recommend this collection. Its chapters offer breadth and depth, engaging with "disability" and "human rights" in fresh and, often, provocative ways. The editors' desire to resist 'a teleological narrative of progress in order to dwell upon the challenges and potentialities contained in discourses and praxes of human rights and humanitarianism' (pg. 3) is more than realised: the collection makes space for critical debate of what it means to have access to "rights" as currently constructed in neoliberal capitalist economies. Above this, I enjoyed every single chapter - what more could one want from a book than that?

References

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¹ Ensure you watch the site intro.