

## **Review of DisAppearing: Encounters in Disability Studies (Book Review)**

HANNAM-SWAIN, Stephanie <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2988-261X>>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<https://shura.shu.ac.uk/34928/>

---

This document is the Published Version [VoR]

### **Citation:**

HANNAM-SWAIN, Stephanie (2023). Review of DisAppearing: Encounters in Disability Studies (Book Review). Canadian Journal of Disability Studies, 12 (2), 203-205. [Article]

---

### **Copyright and re-use policy**

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

CANADIAN JOURNAL OF

# Disability Studies

Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association · Association Canadienne des Études sur l'Incapacité

*Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*

**Published by the Canadian Disability Studies Association  
Association canadienne d'études sur le handicap**

**Hosted by The University of Waterloo**

[www.cjds.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.cjds.uwaterloo.ca)

**Titchkosky, T., Cagulada, E., & DeWelles, M. (2022) (Eds.). *DisAppearing: Encounters in Disability Studies*. Ontario: Canadian Scholars ISBN: 9781773383163**

Stephanie Hannam-Swain

Senior Lecturer, Sheffield Hallam University

[s.r.hannam-swain@shu.ac.uk](mailto:s.r.hannam-swain@shu.ac.uk)

There is a growing body of literature aimed at exploring the cultural aspects of disability through a disability studies lens. *DisAppearing: Encounters in Disability Studies*, brings together twenty-three pieces of work from disability scholars, activists and artists, which demonstrate how the “...complex universe of disability often disappears from view” (p1). The creative works encourage critical thinking around the dominant framings of disability, how it is experienced, observed and narrated, within a variety of contexts.

The book is useful for students and instructors alike, with a wide variety of different modes of storytelling from poem, prose and podcast transcript used to explore the dis/appearing nature of disability, through a wide range of experiences with different impairments. The books organisation makes it easy to navigate for students and for instructors looking for supporting literature for their modules on disability studies courses. The book is arranged in five sections, themed around stories concerning: *Disappearing disability: demonstrations in theory and practice, disappearing embodiment, disappearing drama, disappearing departures, diagnosis and death* and finally *Disappearing dreams*. Each of those sections are introduced by the editors who draw the reader’s attention to how disability appears, disappears and then reappears in unexpected ways. Each introduction also ends with some ‘guiding questions’ which helps the reader to think about disability and different ways of being, in relation to their own understandings and experiences. Helpfully

there is also an alternative contents page which reorganises the works into types of encounters such as: *Accessibility and barriers, art and drama, bodies and embodiment, class and capitalism, diagnosis, education, everyday life, history, identity, intimacy/family, language, liminality, medicine, mental health/psy complex, policing/law/social control, racism, sense and sensibility/sense making, technology, university and youth*. Additionally, each chapter starts by listing the key terms relevant to the contents of that specific contribution. This combined with the alternative contents page helps students and tutors to easily select relevant content.

Alongside such a wide range of experiences explored in different modes of storytelling, the book also features extracts from other critical areas of study such as queer studies to aid intersectional understandings of the experiences being discussed and to offer provocations from disability studies. Although disability is not always explicit in these boxes, it is present nonetheless and are used to explore cultural tensions seen with the dis/appearance of disability. These are great to be read alongside the main text or to dip in and out of to provide a wider context and deeper understandings.

In the first section: *Disappearing Disability: Demonstrations in theory and practice* the collection of works explores “historical depictions of exclusion, to personal narrative, and to Black Lives Matter political protest to better understand the appearance and disappearance of disability” (p. 15). As a disabled academic this chapter resonated with me and my experiences of how being provided ‘reasonable adjustments’ which are designed in part to make disability disappear but often in practice leads to more barriers for the disabled person. Part 2: *Disappearing Disembodiment* tackles the “ways in which the reality of our bodily experience is mediated by culture” (p. 67). This is explored through the stories of people with a myriad of conditions, that are not often considered within the subject. Part 3: *Disappearing Drama* connects the work of disability studies to that of performance studies to explore the

“dramas of the appearance and disappearances of disability in scenes of everyday life” (p. 119). Part 4: *Disappearing departures, diagnosis and death* explores experiences of the acquisition of labels and how “they are used in our lives as disabled and/or ill people have much to do with how diagnosis is tied to the dis/appearance of disability” (p. 159). These chapters tackle difficult topics such as medical assisted dying, alongside experiences of rehabilitation services, being diagnosed as deaf or ‘mad’, and the tensions between those seeking adult diagnosis of autism and those around them. These narratives once again highlight the gulf between how many who do not need to experience these things think they do and should work, how they impact the person going through them and what the end point should look like, compared to how people going through it actually experience these services and processes and the consequences of these experiences. Finally, part 5: *Disappearing Dreams* is a collection of work that “nurture the possibilities of interpretation, imagination, narrative, and hope – all the stuff of dreams” to explore “the provocation between disability and dreams” (p. 225).

This collection of works is a welcome, useful, and fascinating contribution to the explorations of the cultural aspects of disability from a disability studies perspective. The thoughtful way in which it has been put together and the reader is helped to navigate the topics on offer and directed to think more deeply and intersectionally is a massive strength. The different modes of narrative offer something more stimulating and immersive than traditional academic essays, which should keep students curious and engaged.