

between language and subjectivity in a manner that importantly disrupts heteronormativity.

Most compelling about this study is the way Burwell builds her argument, beginning with a difficult theoretical question and answering it methodically and through rigorous theoretical investigations and literary readings. Debates within postmodern theory on the uses of utopia and debates within feminist theory on subjectivity are addressed as well. *Notes on Nowhere* is a rewarding but difficult read.

Ultimately, I found myself wishing both authors had found a middle ground. There is no question that I learned from both books and that each will find a grateful audience. However, for my taste, the first does not ask rigorous enough questions and finds its answers too easily, while the second makes both its questions and its answers unnecessarily difficult to understand. |

*Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity.* By Simi Linton. New York: New York University Press, 1998.

*Framed: Interrogating Disability in the Media.* Edited by Ann Pointon with Chris Davies. London: British Film Institute, 1997.

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**G**iven that almost everyone will become either temporarily or permanently disabled at some point in life, it is surprising that, until recently, disability has been of little theoretical interest to scholars in the humanities and social sciences. Instead, the study of disability typically has been relegated to applied fields such as health care, special education, and rehabilitation. Unlike the medicalized, particularistic approaches of the applied disciplines, disability studies is an emergent, interdisciplinary field that conceives of the disabled body as the product of broad aesthetic, political, and historical forces. *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity*, by Simi Linton, and *Framed: Interrogating Disability in the Media*, edited by Ann Pointon with Chris Davies, contribute to the conversation about disability emerging from the intersection of humanities, social sciences, and applied fields. These works are inspired by the new possibilities for expanding the understanding of disability and by frustration that increasing scholarly attention has not yet brought with it any noticeable changes in the configurations of academic disciplines, curricula, or popular representations.

Linton's *Claiming Disability* is a clearly articulated, powerful argument for a more comprehensive incorporation of disability studies across the curriculum. Linton aims, in part, to elaborate the inadequacies of current social categories, disciplinary formations, and vocabularies for an enlightened understanding of disability. An early chapter titled "Reassigning Meaning" explores how linguistic conventions produce social meaning. Even the apparently slight difference between "people with disabilities" and "disabled people," Linton explains, can distinguish between "maintaining disability as a secondary characteristic" and making "*disabled* . . . a marker of the identity that the individual and group wish to highlight and call attention to" (13). Linton adopts a historically and culturally comparative approach to unsettle dominant narratives about disability, which have privileged Europe and America at the expense of other national perspectives, ignored variants such as race and gender among disabled populations, and neglected to incorporate the voices of the disabled themselves. Later chapters focus more exclusively on current educational practices in the United States. Within primary and secondary education, Linton criticizes both the process of "mainstreaming," in which the least disabled children are assimilated into nondisabled classrooms, and special education, which segregates nondisabled students from their disabled peers. Likewise, college curricula have relegated disability to the medical or applied fields. Despite a firm commitment to multiculturalism, social sciences and humanities have excluded disability from reconfigurations of canons and curricula. Arguing that disability studies shares much in common with and has a good deal to contribute to multiculturalism, Linton writes, "Whichever shape these new domains take, it is an affront that disability studies is dismissed out of hand" (92).

The anger evident in Linton's criticism of current disciplinary and social formations is balanced by her pragmatic account of how and why it is crucial to incorporate disability studies more effectively into the university. Current college curricula reinforce negative attitudes toward disability by banishing it to the helping professions. This omission may be redressed by bringing disability issues into the liberal arts to develop "a broad-based epistemology of inclusion" (81). *Claiming Disability* ends with a section called "Applications" that vividly illustrates the potential conflicts that may arise around issues of disability in a number of professions, the inadequate training that students in those fields now receive, and the ways students' understandings might be expanded by a more comprehensive inclusion of disability studies into college curricula.

Linton remains ambivalent, however, about the role that the nondisabled are to take in this reconfiguration. Her study vacillates between a

demand that everyone recognize the broad-ranging importance of disability studies and a rhetoric of insiders and outsiders, which asserts the inability of “outsiders” to understand the experiences of the disabled. Disability studies theorists have been reluctant to discuss the pain and limitations that may accompany “the issue of impairment itself,” a matter that “we talk about . . . among ourselves” but that may be more difficult for “outside critics” to comprehend (138). Disability studies, as Linton rightly acknowledges, still desperately needs the contributions of disabled persons who have too long experienced discrimination and social marginality; nonetheless, it is also important to move beyond the focus on identity announced in the title of this study to gain the incorporation into the disciplines that characterizes more established fields such as gender and ethnic studies.

While *Claiming Disability* often extends beyond issues of identity to a broad-based critique of institutional formations and their impact on many aspects of life in the United States, few of the essays in *Framed: Interrogating Disability in the Media* are able to make this leap. This collection contains a large number of essays, and one of the problems of navigating it is that there are too many short pieces, many of them by the same authors. The least interesting essays in *Framed* are concentrated in the first two sections, those on the representation of disability in cinema and television. There are a few exceptions, such as interviews with the writer and producer of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and a reprinted selection from Jenny Morris’s *Pride against Prejudice*; however, too many of these contributions are thinly footnoted, simplistic isolations of good and bad portrayals, with little acknowledgment of the more nuanced theories of representation and audience reception developed by scholars of media studies. These pieces may be of little interest to scholars familiar with recent work in film theory. In addition, many of the essays on television focus on British shows that are unfamiliar to readers from outside the United Kingdom.

What is most valuable about this collection is that, in keeping with Linton’s call for better representation, it incorporates the voices of many disabled persons working as actors, producers, directors, and activists. These essays represent a diverse, and frequently contradictory, array of perspectives attentive to the intersection of disability with race, class, and gender. In a culture where it is difficult for disabled persons to find any kind of employment, these authors offer valuable perspectives on the particular difficulties of gaining entrance into media-oriented careers. On a more positive note, authors also describe programs that have opened up opportunities for disabled persons to take an active role in the planning, production, and distribution of media. As a result, the essays in the second half of

*Framed* make a more significant and fresher contribution than those in the first two sections. As with *Claiming Disability*, almost all of the authors represented in this collection are themselves disabled, a point made by biographical statements at the top of each essay. The importance of claiming disability by and for those who identify as disabled is made abundantly clear by the end of these two volumes; however, whether this interdisciplinary field will successfully move beyond the limitations of a discourse of identity has yet to be determined. ■

*Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery.* By Elizabeth Haiken. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

*Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* By Susan Bordo. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

**Camilla Griggers, Carlow College**

**T**he value of the technological ability to reconstruct the contemporary body is a complex cultural and feminist issue. Every day in the United States, women make the fine distinctions that determine whether it is the industry that chooses bodies and identities for them or they for themselves. Susan Bordo's *Twilight Zones: The Hidden Life of Cultural Images from Plato to O.J.* provides a critical study of the cultural articulation of such values and bodies. Guiding readers through various critiques of bourgeois individualism, Bordo questions what beliefs in a culture help women want to make the choices that they make. Elizabeth Haiken's *Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery* traces the roots of cosmetic surgery to reconstructive surgery born in the aftermath of World War I, when many soldiers suffered horrific facial wounds. Both books should be on the reading list for any women's studies or gender studies course that addresses the cultural construction of beauty and the techno-body in consumer culture.

The story of cosmetic surgery's humble origins is not pretty. Haiken fastidiously reviews the development of the profession as a medical response to the damaged bodies of modern warfare. The trenches were brutal to soldiers who, because of antibiotics and anesthesia, were capable of surviving both the trauma of battle and the trauma of reconstructive surgery. As a cultural historian, Haiken is careful to keep the medical history of the profession contextualized within a broad cultural history, high-