


NAVIGATING THE SPECTRUM: EXPLORING DISABILITY REPRESENTATION THROUGH EL DEAFO

Nighat Falgaroo ¹✉ , Dr Khursheed Ahmad Qazi ²

¹ Research Scholars, Department of English, North Campus, University of Kashmir, India

² Associate Professor & Coordinator, PG Department of English, North Campus, University of Kashmir



Corresponding Author

Nighat Falgaroo,
nighatm146@gmail.com

DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i4.2024.1813](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i4.2024.1813)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Copyright: © 2024 The Author(s). This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

With the license CC-BY, authors retain the copyright, allowing anyone to download, reuse, re-print, modify, distribute, and/or copy their contribution. The work must be properly attributed to its author.



ABSTRACT

El Deafo, written by Cece Bell, is an illustrated visual narrative that is both visually captivating and depressed, offering readers a rare glimpse towards the experiences of the hard of being heard. The perceptive autobiographical fiction begins with a four-year-old Cece experiencing meningitis, which causes her sense of hearing to be impaired. With the help of her reliable hearing support, the Phonic Ear, Cece navigates a universe that is designed with the hearing impaired in mind. Her quest is filled with hilarity and empathy as she overcomes typical challenges. Cece gains the priceless potential to hear her professors' instructions even when they are far away owing to the Phonic Ear, but it also causes her to feel alone and empowered. Her ostentatious technology at school makes her stand eliminated which inspires Cece to imagine herself as the superhero El Deafo. Because of her newfound strength despite various interpersonal challenges, the story can explore topics such as self-acceptance, the desire for relationships, and embracing oneself for who they are instead of just their condition. El Deafo deftly combines each of these subjects within an imaginative narrative that engages with obstacles faced when growing as an adult with a disability and appreciates victories. The use of the graphic novel format enhances the narrative by presenting Cece's viewpoint on the world at large and her inner thoughts through creative visual components. Bell gives readers a full sense of immersion by using language bubbles to depict the complexities of communication, spanning jumbled words to misinterpreted meanings. This pioneering masterpiece praised for its faithful depiction and approachable storytelling style, is a moving relic of resiliency and creativity. El Deafo does more than just educate its viewers about the lives of deaf humanity; it resonance with everyone because of its genuine portrayal of the human desire for relationships and the path towards recognizing one's uniqueness.

Keywords: Graphic Novel, Visual Narrative, Disability Study, Self-Acceptance & Individuality

1. INTRODUCTION

The graphic novel is a medium that employs the visual (image) and literal (verbal) in a literary text. It is a medium that has been terminated for a long period as a minor art. And the comics were banned reasoning that the medium seduce the innocent mind. However, by the period of 1980s comics holds their popularity and the fate of visual illustration takes a fresh turn. Writers and artists employ aesthetic, social, cultural and literary features in a multimodal format to enhance visual literacy. The challenges and complexities being imposed in the narratological process of representation, made it stand out for the reader's engagement. However, graphic novels are a skillfully effective form of storytelling that blends verbal and

visual art in the field of literature. The phrase graphic novel is credited to Richard Kyle in his comic fanzine called *Capa Alpha* in the 1960s. Unlike conventional forms of storytelling, graphic novels employ a visual language that transcends linguistic obstruction, allowing discourse and the release of emotions directly through the power of imagery. Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* highlights the importance of visual narratives and visual culture as a unique form of reading experience. He discusses how the interaction between the two mediums creates a unique discourse that engages readers emotionally and intellectually. He emphasized that visual communication in comics or graphic novels helps in meaning-making while writing involves the reader with abstract symbols and understanding the writing process requires time and knowledge. He says "Pictures are received information. We need no formal education to get the message. The message is instantaneous. Writing is perceived information. It takes specialized knowledge to decode the abstract symbols of language" (49). With the visual aids employed in a narrative graphic writing employs in deconstructing complex concepts by making the concept more digestible and understandable. The panel progression of an image creates a visual flow that helps the readers to receive the information. H.S. Ching and Soon Fook Fong opine that "graphic novels offer a means for representing complex materials in ways that reduce the cognitive demand of reading dense text while portraying sophisticated concepts" (56).

In his influential book, *The Indian Graphic Novel: Nation, History and Critique* Pramod Nayar believes that visual illustration is an essential medium to contribute to socio-cultural practices. He opines "How do we create questions, vocabularies, and concepts that sufficiently capture the complexity of forces, technologies, and struggles operating in the midst of numerous struggles over, and transitions among different visions and formations of possible modernities and alternatives to modernity" (P. 8). He views that the graphic novel which is entirely an emerging medium with its representational modes of visual and verbal communication and diversified genres embraces and creates various questions (about modernity) and vocabularies. The various genres in the graphic medium allow the reader to adopt critical literacy by engaging with both powerful narratives of image and text. These narratives help the reader go beyond traditional literary forms, challenging the conventional medium. (ibid. Pp. 8-9).

Research also reveals that humans are visual creatures and visual depictions such as images, gestures, facial expressions and nonverbal cues evoke emotions and stimulate creativity which verbal elements cannot. W.J.T. Mitchell in *Picture Theory* talks about a significant shift in intellectual and academic discourse, which turns into a moment when the visual, iconic and pictorial elements dominate the other medium thereby challenging the conventional nature of storytelling and knowledge. He calls this shift "the pictorial turn" which involves the reassessment of the position of the image, its relation to language and its impact on readership (11). In the "Pictorial Turn" he states:

Whatever the pictorial turn is, then, it should be clear that it is not a return to naive mimesis, copy or correspondence theories of representation, or a renewed metaphysics of pictorial "presence": it is rather a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of a picture as a complex interplay between visuality, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality. (ibid. 16)

The picture becomes a complex shift that goes beyond language and sign reaching towards the validation of image as a complex interplay between diverse areas of knowledge, visual expression, media platforms, societal structures, discourse etc. Purgar in WJT Mitchell's *Image Theory: Living Pictures* asserts

Mitchell's idea that images are inevitable and play two essential types of relationships that exist in the world: intersubjective and interobjective. In the first scene, images evoke an "emotionally charged response" by triggering the interactive communication between sender and receiver while in the second case, images create a representational bond among objects as well as between the images and objects they illustrate (1). The picture or image becomes a dominant force in the literature that deserves a better scholarship and Margaret Dikovitskaya is correct in saying that "the scholarship that rejects the primacy of art with other discursive practices and yet focuses on the sensuous and semiotic peculiarity of the visual can no longer be called art history- it deserves the names of visual studies" (49). But Mitchell prefers the term "Visual Culture" instead of "Visual studies" as he was interested in the formation of vision among readers, he says:

The name "Visual Studies" seemed to me too vague, since it could mean anything at all to do with vision, while "Visual Culture" ... suggests something more like an anthropological concept of vision as artifactual, conventional, and artificial—just like languages, in fact, which we call "natural languages", in the same breath we admit that they are constructed systems on the borderlines between nature and culture. By calling the field visual culture, I was trying to call attention to vision as itself prior to consideration of works of art or images, and to foreground the dialectics of what Donna Haraway calls "nature/culture" in the formation of the visual field. Vision itself is a cultural construction (qtd. in Margaret's Visual Culture (pp. 56-57).

A graphic novel as a multimodal form of storytelling provides a platform for inherent connection allowing a space for discussing the meaning including bodies and mind or an embodied form of expression. In a similar vein, Hilary Chute calls this phenomenon a "haptic form" that demands "tactility, a physical intimacy with the reader in the act of cognition and visual scrutiny". However, the ability to illustrate a discourse on disability in graphic format provides a space to portray "different temporalities" by placing pressure on linearity and traditional notions of narrative sequence and sequential progression. The graphic novel has the potential to powerfully address both the historical and life narratives. Hence, "If comics is about mapping, it is also about bodies—about locating them in space and time". The interoperability of graphic novels having verbal and visual modalities depends upon refined coordination of words using panels, gutters, emanata, different types of balloons and word expression (Foss 1)

2. REPRESENTATION OF DISABILITY IN EL DEAFO

Norms play an important role in fabricating our personality and consciousness. We often endeavor to harmonize with what is called as normal or conversely try to depart from behavioral norms significantly. We test our intelligence, for the wellbeing of the human condition we check cholesterol levels, and physical attributes like weight and height are checked to be within the aura of normalcy. In the same way, children have to go through various levels like testing and evaluation to get their placement in an institution. Every aspect of contemporary life is consciously or unconsciously affected by normative assessment only to get accepted by society. Lennard J. Davis in *The Disability Studies Reader* put forward his argument not in the construction of disabilities but rather in the "construction of normalcy" because he expresses that the issue lies not in the disability, it is "the way that normalcy is constructed to create the problem of the disabled person". He defined the word normal as "constituting, conforming to, not deviating or different from, the common type or standard, regular, usual" (1). In his other essay titled

“Why Disability Studies Matter”, he argues that most people do not know the historical concept of disability and “they see disability as an individual tragedy” rather than a product of “political oppression and the struggle to fight that oppression” (2). The idea is not to emphasize with disabled person but to change the very concept of disability by refashioning the socio-cultural perception, its thinking structure and way of dealing with the disabled person (qtd. In *Introducing Disability Studies* P.3). In the same vein, Raghava Reddy expresses that “the term disability here does not refer to the biological condition located within the individual, but to the act of repudiation of ability by the society. Thus, ‘dis’ connotes a particular social arrangement that signifies the act of exclusion perpetrated by the society on the individual” (289). Research in disability studies reveals the issues that people face in the representation of abilities. Longmore codified into two phases of academic exploration. Both process actualizes from the idea of the “medical model” Which understands disability as a physical impairment inherited by an individual demanding medical treatment. In this structure, this abnormality is viewed as a normal illness that is experienced by all individuals. By extension, Longmore agrees that disability activists virtually substituted the “medical model”. In connection with socio-cultural paradigms via media and demonstration. These activists call for disability identification which is culturally important and requires protection in a society under the law. He opines that “for the vast majority of people with disabilities ... discrimination poses a greater barrier to overcome than any physical impairment” (143-144). It is the construction of society that pressurizes disabled people to demand their disability rights and “turns an impairment into a negative by creating barriers to access” (*Bending Over Backwards* 12).

Lennard in his book *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism, and Other Difficult Positions* discusses about the two phases of disability concerning politics and academia. In the first wave, the main objective of defining identity comes in opposition to societal norms particularly by oppression. So the identity of race, sex or hearing impairment is “normalized” by the tyrannical regime. Laudatory terms like “Black is Beautiful”, “Gay Pride”, and “Deaf Power” were seen as reclaiming the earlier derogatory remarks. It also encompasses collaborating, agreeing on shared political objectives, promoting fundamental freedoms and action against marginalization. In the second phase, the younger cohort of the same phase reformulates or narrates their own identity. They hold a stronger self-individuality, admitting diversity within a group and diligence to reconceptualize their identity in a more complex way. There is an internal conflict in this phase rather than unity. (Pp.10-11). In the graphic novel *El Deafo* by Cece Bell, the protagonist Cece seems to belong to both the waves of disability identity as she is portrayed as a complex figure through a verbal and visual medium. Bell introduces us to Cece visually on the first page where her picture is zoomed in, Cece with a bunny face and long ears wearing a big rectangular box with straps and a phone-like earpiece. *El Deafo* shows Cece’s perceptions and sentiments as normal simultaneously demonstrating how hearing individuals usually struggle to entirely comprehend or appreciate them, either purposefully or accidentally. Cece is given a rich emotional world, which is presented employing techniques distinctive of visual novels (Smith, Wendy and Janine 77).

El Deafo (2014), is a graphic novel written with anthropomorphic bunnies and illustrated by Cece Bell. *El Deafo* distinguishes itself not only as a sign of endorsement of the graphic novel format but also as an expression of an innovative approach to the representation of disability in literature. In an interview with the *Horn Book Magazine*, Cece Bell states:

As the only deaf kid in my elementary school, I felt very different and isolated from everyone else. Having to wear my awkward hearing aid intensified that feeling. To metaphorically show the magnitude of this, I made all the characters bunnies...What are bunnies known for? Big ears; excellent hearing. In the book, my bunny ears are just as big as everyone else's — but they don't work the same. Plus, I've got those funny-looking cords. Embarrassing! It wasn't easy being a broken-eared bunny. And thankfully, I don't feel like that now (n.p).

The novel depicts the life of a young girl named Cece who lost her hearing at the age of four due to meningitis (El Deafo 3). Earlier she had a very happy and regular" life like a normal kid. She enjoys TV with her big brother Ashley and Big sister Sarah (1). Life becomes different for her because "[she] can't hear" (12). When she is introduced to a hearing aid, it becomes a character in Cece's life because the aid helps Cece build her personality. Though she is different from other normal children Cece is very optimistic about her hearing impairment and when she visits her friend Emma her differentness doesn't matter (23). Because of her hearing impairment, she was Cece was unable to talk. Her mother took her to sign language teaching school where she enjoyed the environment very well because "everyone is here just like [her]" (28). While quoting Nancy Miller and Catherine Sammons (1999), Ronald J. Berger and Loren E. Wilbers share the opinion that people are susceptible to recognizing individuals who have unique appearances. They contend that in fact, the mind of humans has been wired to look everywhere and identify deviations from what they call expected average or regularity.

Everybody reacts to differences. In the whole universe of differences, some attract us, some surprise or frighten us, and some aren't important to us at all. Our reactions to differences are sometimes complex and confusing. We often want to be open-minded and feel comfortable about other people's differences but find that some unfamiliar differences make us feel tense and judgmental instead. We are caught off guard when someone with an unexpected difference enters the room, and we may feel awkward as we try to appear unsurprised. When we see an unsettling difference, it can cause anxiety, uncertainty, and even a wish to avoid the other person. (qtd in *Introducing Disability Studies* 7-8)

Both belief in the notion that rather than being exposed to or accustomed to new experiences or different socio-cultural norms, we should instruct ourselves to surmount these different reactions and broaden our comfort zones regarding disabilities since we belong to the same planet. Cece wants to be involved in a "Deaf Culture" (Berger and Loren 27) where there is no resistance to the socially constructed notion of normality as she feels safe in that environment and "everything is still so new, and so different, for all of us. Most of the time we are lost, drifting along on our planets. But we are together in the same universe, at least" (33).

3. CECE'S DESIRE TO ENTER NORMAL SOCIETY

In *El Deafo*, Cece's impairment and the accompanying hearing aid become fundamental aspects of who she is. She feels overshadowed by the normally paralyzing difficulties of establishing social connections in a foreign setting. Tobin Siebers in *Disability Theory* represented a critical opinion on how political and social forces change the very concept of disability and identity by differentiating between weak and strong social construction, the former group "victimize individual" who were disabled while the latter emphasizes "linguistic model" suggesting representation as a primary force because the language shape the understanding of bodies and identities (55). At the beginning of Cece's acquaintance

with a hearing aid, her first social meeting was with her friend Emma. Cece only heard words like “I THIG YOO LOO GOO!” or “AH ZEDD, AH THIG YOO LOO GOOOO!” which in actuality Emma is paying a compliment on her “different” look. In reply to her, Cece only says some nonsense words like “EH SOUNZ LAH YUR UNNAH WAWAH!”. Bell shows the difficulty that Cece faces while understanding the articulated words illustrated through a talk like in buddy diving (24). Cece’s initial quest is to find a friend which is a far more difficult task for her because she cannot hear and her friends cannot connect. In the novel, we are introduced to Laura who is dominating and her only redeeming quality is that she ignores Cece’s hearing aid (medicalization) or what Michel Foucault called it “biopower”, a force that operates through the regulation and normalization of human subjects (cited by Siebers 55) by extension a “social Constructionism” (ibid. 54). Laura is portrait as an unsupportive partner who continuously bossing Cece all over as Laura is “privileging performativity over corporeality” favoring her able body to disabled body (57). Lennard Davis in *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* argues on harsh realities of abled society:

The body is seen as a site of *jouissance*, a native ground of pleasure, the scene of an excess that defies reason, that takes dominant culture and its rigid, power-laden vision of the body to task.... Observations of chimpanzees reveal that they fly in terror from a decapitated chimp; dogs, by contrast, will just sniff at the remains of a fellow dog. That image of the screaming chimpanzee facing the mutilated corpse is the image of the critic of *jouissance* contemplating the paraplegic, the disfigured, the mutilated, the deaf, the blind. Rather than face this ragged image, the critic turns to the fluids of sexuality, the gloss of lubrication, the glossary of the body as text, the heteroglossia of the intertext, the glossolalia of the schizophrenic. But almost never the body of the differently abled. (1995, 5).

Cece’s hearing impaired becomes a nightmare for her life. In a single instance, Laura necessitates that Cece spend the night alongside her to which Cece fails to comply since she is sick and feels like the target of Laura’s tyrannical nature. Cece stands calmly, contemplating, but silently, while Laura persists in her bullying. Laura’s bullying nature forces Cece to question whether she wants to spend any more nights with Laura. She is completely “tired of being pushed around” and in the very next panel, Cece imagines herself as a superpower El Deafo claiming now “it is time to push back” (57). The next pages of panels describe Cece imagination balloons showing how Cece plans to attack “super bossypants” with her dog called as “Hound of Horror” to terrorize her. However, when Cece comes out of her reality, she’s been asked again by Laura to spend the night to which she replies affirmatively. When she entered third grade Cece prayed to God “Dear God, I am ready for a new friend this year. Please could you work it so that Laura and I are in different classes? Thank you, Amen”. She is then introduced to Ginny who shares the same likings and enjoys her company but the problem lies in her way of talking towards Cece, she does not appreciate the way she talks about Cece. Ginny speaks too loud and slow to irritate, “CEE-CEE. DO YOU WANT MYYY PEEA-NUT BUTT-ER SAND-WICH?” Or “CEE-CEE IS MY DEAF FRIEND. SHE IS ACT-U-A-LLY ONE OF MY BEST-EST FRIENDS!” (67). Cece’s alter-ego El Deafo wanted to destroy the record that Ginny is trying to make Cece understand. But Cece in a fit of anger told “not to talk to [her] so loud and so slow! as [she] can’t stand it!” and in the next panel she was afraid and incredulous towards her last part of the action (70-71). Cece faces the pain or guilt of her body impairment. Judith Butler sees this pain “regulated by prohibition” are the “forcible and regularized effects of regularity power” shaping individual lives and bodies according to dominant societal ideals (64). Cece’s struggle and pain of “social repression” is very real and tries hard to understand and

practice lip reading on TV where she finds association with the characters on television “because the folks on it are there for [her] whenever [she] want them—and they don’t care if [she] can hear them or not!” (79). Cece in her fourth grade meets Martha, who is junior to her and starts liking her because “SHE DOESN’T SHOUT AT [HER], OR MOVE HER MOUTH ALL FUNNY, OR TRY TO SIGN AT [HER]. SHE’S NOT BOSSY, EITHER!” (123). Martha Claytor is the person who “transformed into the most glorious Superhero of all, the True Friend.” (130).

4. CECE BECOMING EL DEAFO

Disability is always an opportunity for new abilities and offers “new possibilities of pleasure” (Disability Theory 62). Cece got soothed by the joy of conceiving a body differently from the norm. Cece got a “Phonic Ear” when admitted to a new school after moving to the new big city (38). With the help of a microphone attached to her teacher, Cece can hear everything that Mrs Lufton says and wherever “she is in the entire school building”. She understands and hears all that is discussed in the teacher’s lounge or when she uses the bathroom (41- 42). Cece compares herself to a superhero character in Batman saying “I have amazing abilities unknown to anyone just like Bruce Wayne” (43). Considering Donna Haraway’s famous theory of Cyborg as a hybrid of human and machine interaction (5). Siebers argues that Haraway “embraces hybridization to defeat the social conformity and to awaken new possibilities for women empowerment. She represents the cyborgs as world-changing fiction for women and a resource for escaping the myths of progress and organic history” (Disability Theory 63). Cece on her becoming El Deafo centres on Rosi Braidotti idea of metamorphoses as an empowering agency to the muted female subject where “the entire process of becoming-subject is the will to know, the desire to say, the desire to speak; it is a founding, primary, vital, necessary and therefore original desire to become” (52). With the technology, she turns herself into a superpower and hears everything that no one else can hear (44). With El Deafo, Cece fantasizes about an aggressive nature towards her social zone whomever she gets into contact with. In a birthday party of Ginny, several other friends like Carrie, Ellen, and Missy spend time watching TV and making fun of her, trying to do her hair and makeup with whom she is not comfortable leading to Cece leaving the party and feeling exhausted and metamorphoses on her becoming El Deafo where she is being “tied up by a band of pajama-wearing Super Villain’s!” and torture her but by calling her alter ego, she faces all courageously and asserts her voice. Cece got her in fourth grade and she prefers to make acquaintance with friends “who don’t know [her]” (103). After meeting Bonnie, Cece felt insecure when she tried to talk to her in sign language and everyone in the classroom stared at her to which Cece actually wanted to transform into El Deafo and wanted to shout that “[she] DO NOT KNOW THESE MYSTERIOUS HAND SIGNALS, STRANGER! BUT [SHE] DO HAVE A GREAT POWER! [SHE] CAN READ [THE] LIPS!” (105). In one incident Cece shows her frustration towards her mother, who registers her in sign-language courses. Despite her protest against going to learn sign- language her arguments were ignored. Week after week, she experienced discomfort among the attendees who weren't deaf. Bell creatively uses various illustrations to show how Cece felt suffocated by depicting her scowling, crossing her arms, terms like “Argh!” accompanied by questioning “HOW WILL I EVER GET OUT OF THIS?” (111). And Cece’s mother encouraged Cece to use sign language at home as well but Cece doesn't like and her alter ego came to her rescue without regard to social conventions she kicks “...and unfurls her torpedo-like wrath onto her own mother!”. Instantly her inner reaction, “DID I REALLY DO THAT?” (114) is depicted and she apologizes to her mother before reverting back to

her subservient self. Her protest paid off and she never went back to class. Cece is empowered to alter her circumstances by El Deafo's presence in her daily activities. Cece possesses another opportunity to express herself to her companion, Mike, in one of the closing panels of the novel. During the final semester, both get the chance to perform on stage as their fellow students chant (198-201) for the programme. By now Cece has acquired a "phonic ear" to amplify her instructor's speech. Mrs. Sinklemann neglected to switch off her microphone, so Cece could hear her educator using the restroom while she was waiting. Cece bursts into fits of laughter, thinking Mike might get amused equally. She wonders "Should I tell him?" because she has never discussed this topic with anyone. And Cece was not even certain how to start talking to him as she wished to be superhuman. In reply, El Deafo remarks "You don't need superpowers to speak" (200). Cece gained self-assurance after receiving that artistic push, tells Mike what she heard, and the two of them chuckle. She then gets invited to Mike's residence by him following school. With El Deafo's hands resting on his lower body, El Deafo is shown in the last panel stating, "This just gets better and better!" over Cece's left arm. (202). By the end of the novel Cece celebrates her self-identity and no longer views her hearing instrument as an obligation. Rather accepts it as a unique attribute of who she is and showcases her enhanced social confidence. She confidently accepts her newly discovered capacity for interpersonal connection. El Deafo, her heroic alter persona epitomizes Cece's inner strength and sense of empowerment.

5. CONCLUSION

Bell in her novel resists the process of categorization and "tokenism" that aligns with the socio-cultural constructed nature. (Foss 2). Bell employing the medium of visual and verbal narration engages the reader in a manner that goes against the representation of marginalized persons with disabilities, ending stereotypes and stigmas. Cece Bell's graphic novel *El Deafo* depicts disability in a subtle and captivating way, offering readers a realistic and insightful glimpse into the life of a little girl negotiating the obstacles and accomplishments associated with a hearing impairment. Cece Bell's alter-ego, El Deafo, depicts the struggle to achieve autonomy and acceptability while coping with both the social and emotional components of impairment. The illustrations effectively represent Cece's adventures with her Phonic Ear, a powerful hearing aid that makes her appear like a superhero while also emphasizing her individuality. This paradox encapsulates the core of her journey: balancing the longing for the ordinary with the sense of power provided by her hearing device. Bell's narratives do not shy away from the hardships that people with impairments encounter. She addresses frequent issues such as social estrangement, misconceptions, and arrogance from others. These instances, however, are matched with sequences of developing oneself, companionship, and self-confidence development. Bell tackles prejudices by depicting Cece as a genuine figure who is both sympathetic and powerful, fostering an increased awareness of people with limitations' lived experiences.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None .

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

- Baker, Deirdre. "Cece Bell on El Deafo", Interview with Cece Bell, *The Horn Book Magazine*.
- Berger, Ronald J. and Loren E. Wilbers. *Introducing Disability Studies*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2021.
- Braidotti, R. *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialistic Theory of Becoming*. Polity Press, 2002.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Ching, H.S. and Soon Fook Foong. "Effects of multimedia-based graphic novel presentation on critical thinking among students of different learning approaches" *Turkish Online Journal of Technology*. Vol.13, No. 4, pp.56-66, 2013.
- Chute, Hillary. "Comics Form and Narrating Lives". *Profession*, pp. 107-117, 2011.
- Davis, Lennard J. *The Disability Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2016.
- . *Bending Over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism, and Other Difficult Positions*, New York University Press, 2002.
- . "Why Disability Studies Matters" *Inside Higher Ed* (February 21) www.insidehighered.com
- . *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. Verso, 1995.
- Dikovitskaya, Margaret. *Visual culture: The study of the visual after the cultural turn*. MIT Press, 2005.
- Foss, Chris, Jonathan Gray, and Zach Whalen, eds. *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Narratives*. Springer, 2016.
- Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the late twentieth century". *Manifestly Haraway*, University of Minnesota Press, 2016, pp. 3-90.
- Longmore, Paul K. "The second phase: From Disability Rights to Disability Culture". *Disability Rag & Resource*, Vol.16 issue 5,1995, Pp. 4-11.
- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993.
- Nayar, Pramod K. *The Indian Graphic Novel: Nation, History and Critique*. Routledge, 2016.
- Mitchell, W.J. T. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Purgar, Krešimir, ed. *WJT Mitchell's Image Theory: Living Pictures*. Taylor & Francis, 2017.
- Reddy, C. Raghava. "From Impairment to Disability and Beyond: Critical Explorations in Disability Studies". *Sociological Bulletin*,60.2, 2011, Pp. 287-306.
- Siebers, Tobin. *Disability Theory*. University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Smith-D'Arezzo, Wendy, and Janine Holc. "Reframing Disability through Graphic Novels for Girls: Alternative bodies in Cece Bell's El Deafo." *Girlhood Studies* 9.1, pp. 72-87, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2016.090106>