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This book forms part of the 'Key Concerns in Media Studies’ series edited by Andrew Crisell and is aimed primarily at students and teachers of the media, although it will also have appeal to academic readers and disability activists and organisations. The authors were aiming to fill a gap for a general textbook on disability and the media by way of introduction to significant theories and concepts. They certainly cover much ground in a short volume and offer tantalizing glimpses into the power and reach of the media and its inevitable shortcomings. The book covers definitions of disability as well as some understandings of disability theory and addresses access, participation, representation, production and consumption using a wealth of relevant and recent examples.

The initial chapters of this book explore definitions of disability and challenge the reader to interrogate the assumptions of commonly used classifications and to explore the more nuanced meanings of what disability means. A case study of Miley Cyrus ‘twerking with dwarves’ (13) is used to illustrate a range of responses to the representation of disability in the media. Chapter Two offers a brief overview of disability studies, and both the medical and social models are referenced as a way to explore the social and cultural underpinnings of disability. Seminal texts by Zola (1989), Barnes (1992) and Watson, Roulstone and Thomas (2012) are cited as central to these debates and worthy of further study for those who want to deepen their understanding. Interestingly, this chapter does manage to take us beyond the binaries of the medical and social models, of positive and stereotyped representations into cultural disability studies and the ways in which culture and language can both perpetuate the ‘otherness’ of (dis)ability as well as offering sites of empowerment.

Chapter Three looks at the ways in which the media and disability relate to each other. The initial example of the film The King’s Speech illustrates the power of the media to orchestrate conformity to the medium – to moderate a stutter - in order for the voice to ‘fit’ the conventions of radio. Ellis and Goggin go on to argue that the rapid development of the media and digital media has brought new challenges to some groups in the way that radio brought exclusion for deaf people and television brought challenges for the blind. The concept of access to, and participation in, the media are further explored through the advent of audio description to enable greater access to television for blind or visually impaired people.

A case study of the representation of disability in the news is offered in Chapter Four by considering the different ‘frames’ employed by news producers to detail the content of a news story, often portraying disabled people as deviant, disadvantaged or dependent. Ellis and Goggin also identify more progressive approaches such as the cultural pluralist model that allow for more positive framings, albeit still through the anchoring of certain meanings. The case study of the London Paralympics is helpful here in
illustrating both a welcome focus on disabled lives and achievements, and a
less welcome dominant discourse of the 'supercrip' model of beating the odds
(although the under-representation of athletes with learning disabilities is not
acknowledged here). The rarity of incidental characters played by disabled
actors is brought to our attention by the example of *Breaking Bad*, which is
singled out for breaking ground as the character’s disability becomes less
salient than the character himself in the cult television series. A less
progressive example is given in the TV series ‘Glee’ in which a non-disabled
actor plays a character in a wheelchair dreaming of a cure. However, signs of
progress and change are identified in comedy series such as *My Gimpy Life*
and *The Last Leg* where disability culture is emerging and re-appropriating
power by owning the jokes about disability.

Ellis and Goggin finally turn towards media ownership and the means of
production as a less researched area where disabled people are completely
under-represented. They argue that without the pervasive employment of
disabled people, representations of disability are likely to be narrow, little
understood and marginalized in mainstream media. While the industry is
extremely competitive, relying heavily on short-term, temporary or freelance
contracts, there have been some recent developments areas such as
community television, radio and new media which are helping to pave the way
for people to develop skills and move into more mainstream media positions.
The democratization seen through the proliferation of social media such as
blogging, tweeting and forum discussions by disabled people is challenging
stereotypes and making previously unrepresented voices more frequently
heard. In conclusion to the book, the authors coherently summarize their
arguments and identify challenges to disability and the media in relation to
accessibility, representation, consumption, production and employment.

*While Disability and the Media* tries to be global in scope, it perhaps falls short
in trying to do too much. The chapter on television, notably one of the
shortest, can only scratch the surface of the images and programming
experienced there. Advertising is not even attempted. A rich array of
examples is identified for discussion but the representation of those with
intellectual disabilities is explored less exhaustively. Ellis and Goggin
demonstrate how far the media still has to go in relation to disability and that
both the news and popular television offer very limited narratives and frames
through which we come to understand versions of disability. The frustration
that the authors feel is palpable as they surmise that the media have been
‘spectacularly crap’ (117; original emphasis) in their slowness to respond to
the employment, representation, participation and consumption of disabled
people. I would readily recommend *Disability and the Media* as an excellent
introduction to some of the key issues in disability and the media for those
seeking to join the debate.

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