

Performing the Stare in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

Sagarika Chattopadhyay^{a*} and Amarjeet Nayak^b

^a*Indian Institute of Technology, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India;* ^b*Indian Institute of Technology. Corresponding Author- Email: shagor.23@gmail.com*

This article intends to explore the materiality of disability through the notions of staring and bodies, as existing in the case of disability. The dynamic interactions that flow back and forth between the starrer and the staree are inverted as the scales of who is staring and who is stared at are occasionally found to be at crossroads with the colonial or masculine gaze. This problematizes the stare and its valorization within the field of disability as well as its valence with other kinds of gazes. This article shows how the 'disabled' person does not depend upon the able in conferring meaning upon itself in a society saturated with assumptions of ableism and that claims to own the power over the other in exercising the stare, demanding a story, and using language to assert itself. It raises questions around what disability is about and its notional creation in an able society. A slip often occurs from notional disablism to a notional ableism, with both categories being the subjects of a cultural construction. And this slip indicates the liminal space that disabled subjects often occupy while performing acts in their everyday life. The setting for this article is the powerful novel of *Animal's People* and its intrepid hero Animal whose life is explored in a search of some answers to the questions raised here.

Keywords: Disability; Stare; Colonial Gaze; Colonialism; Performance

Introducing the Plot

The article begins with a brief description of the plot before launching into a disability narrative surrounding the text. This description is important as it answers the question 'What happened to you?' a question that according to Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2000: 334) is inherent in any disability narrative compelling an answer. The novel *Animal's People* is about a triumph of human spirit despite physical impairment and extremely straitened circumstances affecting most persons in the novel. Animal, a nineteen year old boy with a twisted spine who walks on all fours, resides in a hovel in the Nutcracker basti, is the protagonist in the text. The narrative is set against the backdrop of the ominous Bhopal Gas tragedy and the locale of Khaufpur that flanks the abandoned factory. Scores of people are ailing with debilitating health problems and environmental hazards such as drinking poisoned water, twenty years after the explosion. The 'Kampani' that is the Union Carbide has not

appeared in the Khaufpur courts, has not offered treatment to the ailing, and nor has it extended compensation to the survivors of the tragedy. Against court hearings and the patient and heroic efforts of activists like Zafar, Nisha, Farouq and the various people of Khaufpur, unfolds the story of Animal who was born a few days before the tragedy. Born non-disabled, his spine begins to twist when he was six and eventually he is so bent that he has to walk using his hands and feet. Foulmouthed, given to sudden bouts of intense sexual arousal, pick-pocketing, and engaged in odd street scams, Animal literally named after the Hindi word 'Jaanvar', is endearingly human, brutally honest and the faintest trace of self-pity for his condition goes against his sense of dignity.

The first two pages of the novel evoke an intense hate in the protagonist for everything that walks on two legs: 'In my mad times when voices were shouting inside my head I'd be filled with rage against all things that go or even stand on two legs' (Sinha, 2008: 2). The protagonist's list of envy includes everything from women balancing pots on their heads to ladders and bicycles, everything that stands on twos. The novel begins with the lines 'I used to be human once' (2008: 1) and graduates to 'I no longer want to be human' (1) which the protagonist stresses throughout the novel while nurturing a secret wish to walk like a human again, wishing to be cured of his disability. The notion of disability in the text is seen as oscillating between the binaries of human and non-human and, hope and despair that makes the condition of disability not a static one but 'fluid' and 'labile' (Berube, 2005: 570). This comprehension complicates how disability is understood in the novel. Is disability about physical deformity? Is disability about the loss of loved ones in the horrific gas tragedy? Is disability a motivation in one who witnesses it in the other? Who after all is the subject of disability? Does disability end somewhere or does it exist endlessly? The 'Nutcracker' or the slum in Khaufpur that harbors several victims afflicted by the gas leak are disabled not only physically but socially in being unable to access a decent living or sustained healthcare. Mothers are unable to feed their own children owing to infected breast milk, women die of cancer, and Animal is crippled for life. But outside their shared physical disability they are members of social disability. Michael Davidson rightly points out to the category of the unrecognized that fall into the term disability and how the term extends itself to ideals of 'social equality and access' (2008: xiv). Though this article does not directly explore the social politics of access, it does question and remark upon the ontology of disability through the dynamics of staring and gaze in society. The narrative answers some of these questions while it showcases disability in and through several of its characters irrespective of the presence or absence of physical deformities. Garland-Thomson highlights how 'Staring is...the ritual social enactment of exclusion from an imagined community of the fully human' (2000: 335).

The article begins with a general introduction about the field of disability and its relationship with areas like the postcolonial. It then goes on to explore specifically the world of the able

and the disabled through the trope of 'seeing' in its many avatars within and outside the field of disability.

Disability and the Postcolonial

This article argues that the narrative of *Animal's People* is not a narrative of prosthesis (Mitchell et al. 2006) that depends on disability, only to build a literary metaphor representing a condition such as the postcolonial, but rather incisively establishes the materiality of disability itself. According to Clare Barker (2011) in her book *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability*, postcolonial fictions are replete with the trope of disabled children as characters since they are shown to embody 'both the postcolonial nation state's potential for radical difference and its supposed fragility' (2). The danger in such a representation is that either the figurative representation of disability overtakes its material ontology, or masks disability in the material or social sense by completely ignoring it. If the character of Animal is looked upon as the metaphorical symbol of the reeling Indian nation in a neocolonial era, Animal's disability constantly seeks to deify a rather disabling neocolonialism and reify a form of disability that redefines the normativity of the able in society. Certain tropes like staring and the body are used in this article to study how they perform as counter narratives to the alleged theses by theorists who undermine disability narratives' capability to represent what Barker refers to as 'disabled characters as embodied agents' (3). This article also tries to view disability through the notion of lived experience in the life of Animal in the novel *Animal's People*. The lived experience helps to position disability in a specific cultural context instead of generalizing disability as a homogenized experience in a purely Eurocentric world. This premise is drawn from Sharon Snyder's and David Mitchell's (2006: 7) book *Cultural Locations of Disability* in which the authors suggest that 'the definition of disability must incorporate both the inner and outer reaches of culture and experience as a combination of profoundly social and biological forces'. The argument that Baker and Stuart Murray (2010) draw from this statement is that culture and experience are 'the promise of a productive model allowing for the cultural difference of postcolonial disability to find its expression. They further argue that the notion of cultural location as a specific condition that undergrids disability as a specific experience has not been subject to much exploration. It is with this intention that this article tries to closely read in *Animal's People* the narrative of Animal's life, not only from the point of view of the onlooker who stares at the protagonist, but also the protagonist who is looking at himself and staring back at the onlooker.

Positioning the Stare

The stare according to Garland-Thomson (2009:3) gets instantiated in a moment of witnessing the unfamiliar, 'working to recognize what seems illegible' followed by an inquiry that demands to know the illegible. She uses the neologisms of the 'starer', one who stares, and the 'staree', one who is stared at to make distinct the participants in the stare. In this interaction however the staree is as much privileged in informing and showing the starer 'something new' (2009: 7). The colonial gaze on the other hand valorizes the empire's gaze cast on its colonial subject or the 'other' thereby fixing the subject within tight bounds of an institution ordered by the 'White Man' (Said, 1995: 227) upon which the rules of empire are applied. It is interesting to note that behind both the stare and the colonial gaze lies a preoccupation to 'order what seems unruly' (Garland-Thomson, 2009: 3). The colonial gaze seeks to understand the other in only affirming through the other, the legitimacy of its presence and the ordering of the unruly other, whereas the field of disability invites the staree to tell its story. It offers through the platform of art and performance an opportunity to stare uninhibitedly at physical disability and 'disfigured bodies' in order to understand them, 'to draw close to their strangeness and see something of ourselves waiting there' (2009: 82).

There are, though, points of departure within the colonial paradigm which as Homi Bhabha suggests, function to weaken the discipline of the colonial gaze and upset its legitimacy. He calls this the 'the gaze of otherness' (2004: 126) arising from the mimic subject who is not quite the authentic representation or the othered self of the White man and yet unable to stand on its own. The mimic subject, may not be invisible but presents itself through resisting signification by the empire as it is created 'inter dicta' (2004:128) within a colonial discourse that seeks to appropriate the colonial subject. This position allows the other to look back at the empire deauthorising its legitimacy simultaneously making space for a new kind of discourse. While both the colonial gaze and the stare invoke violence, one could argue that the stare within disability at least mandates a story from the 'staree' wherein the staree is more effective in his/her ability to dissipate this violence. On the other hand, in colonial discourse, the other tells its story by force, reinscribing the culturally and racially coded representations of the 'Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic' (Bhabha, 2004: 128). This point can be clarified further by comparing Fanon's (2008) experience of being 'looked at' with that presented by Garland-Thomson, who states that: 'A survey of disability performance art suggests that such performances are platforms for profoundly liberating assertions and representations of the self in which the artist controls the terms of the encounter' (2000: 335). On the contrary, for Fanon, the racial experience of being stared at by a white child not only creates a visceral impact but makes him into an object, not just of the gaze of a child but that of history:

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by toms...intellectual deficiency...On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off... and made myself an object (2008: 84-85).

The gaze that Fanon describes, does not enquire, but states his situation that is, passes a verdict on him. A platform like that of the disability artist Mary Duffy, an Irishwoman born without arms who appears before US viewers, engages their stare, and ‘controls the terms of the encounter’ (Garland-Thomson, 2000:335) would only aggravate the stare for a black subject than diffuse it. Therefore the grounds of a stare within disability may be construed as emancipatory when compared to the colonial or racial stare.

A second point of departure for the stare within the field of disability is its valence with the masculine gaze. Manderson and Peake (2005: 234) state that ‘disability is to describe disabled people as sexually ambiguous’, laying on them the constant pressure to re-enact their gender. Theoretically the experience of gender for a woman is not much different than the experience of disability, as socially women are seen living through the body and thus accustomed to being the subject of the masculine gaze. But, as previously stated, the platform of performance through art and disability artists, invites the stare of the audience to be able to engage and enunciate an understanding of the stare and also to turn the gaze back on the audience itself. For the disabled male, though, the gaze upon him is a new sensation and the body as a signifier is an uncomfortable experience. Men are found to seek constant affirmation of their masculinity by engaging in activities like sports to re-enact their gender, to be able to feel once again agency of their body. The male body performs by ‘doing’ or “constituting the identity it is purported to be” (Butler, 1990:34). But one could argue that the disabled male may also redeem himself by diverting the gaze from himself, and exercise the male gaze on the female by objectifying her. The valence between the disability stare of the female and the masculine gaze of the male may be situational, and variously exhibit the power play between the two.

The ‘Disability Stare’ or the ‘Colonial Gaze’

The colonial gaze fixes the colonized in the position of the other and expects it to behave in accordance with the expectations of the colonizer. Drawing on Lacan (1998), his idea of the gaze entails a gap between the seer and the seen, each laying value on the other and expecting the other to fulfill their respective roles. In the section titled ‘Anamorphosis’ of Lacan’s *Seminar XI*, Lacan renders ‘the gaze’ an object. He explains the object as something that generates a fantasy, ‘the object on which depends the phantasy from which the subject is

suspended in an essential vacillation' (83). The article 'The Gaze and Postcolonial Studies' explains the gaze as an object that is relational between the seer and the seen: 'It means that what the seer perceives as "the seen" is something other than what is seen, and what 'the seen' sees back is something other than the seer' (Texas Theory, n.d.). Interpreted in postcolonial terms, there seems to be an entrenched conditionality in the gaze directed by the empire on its subjects, wherein the gaze is returned, but is situated far from fulfilling the colonial desire which it devalorises¹. Given this displacement of the colonial gaze when it is returned, the objection that still remains implicit in the postcolonial discourse, is that it touts the colonial episteme of the West as normal and the Rest as deviant (Erricson, 2005: 54), that is the object still remains a respondent to colonial desire and is not considered an embodied agent. The following lines show how the colonial episteme is forced upon Animal and how he resents it: 'You were sitting there gazing at me in a ghurr-ghurr kind of way, as if your eyes were buttons and mine were button holes' (Sinha, 2008: 4). The colonial gaze implied in these lines suggest a postcolonial reading of the character of Animal; the jarnalis or foreign journalist, represents the West, a man who wants to elicit the story of that night 'ous raat' (2008: 5) from Animal. The 'buttons' represent the eyes of the West and 'button holes' the empty sockets of the East, signifying the vision of the West bringing into visual presence the image of the East. Further, Animal is to become a spectacle for the many eyes of the West: 'He says thousands of other people are looking through his eyes' (2008: 7). The Jarnalis wants from Animal the narration of a story that the eyes of the West will be able to appropriate into an essentialised response for their comprehension, a feigned understanding of Animal and his world. But Animal doubts that: 'What am I to tell these eyes?... What can I say that they will understand?' (2008:7) One could argue that the disability 'stare' functions more effectively in reversing the dynamics between able bodied and disabled by engaging in an encounter between the two: 'If I see the eye the gaze disappears' (Lacan, 1998: 84). The Lacanian gaze explains how in the case of disability, when the staree meets the eye or the starrer, it diffuses the intensity of the stare and simultaneously promotes in the starrer, a knowledge about itself. If one were to consider the example of the 'buttonhole' as a signification of emptiness, an impasse faced by the neocolonial subject² to figure himself out, 'thousand eyes staring at me...their curiosity feels like acid on my back' (2008: 7), in the current moment Animal's disability returns the gaze and lifts himself out of his constrained position by insisting on telling his story in his own words, 'this boy says that if he talks to the eyes the book must contain only his story and nothing else'(2008: 9). In other words, as Garland-Thomson (2009: 7) expresses, 'To be a staree is to show a starrer something new...' Disability narrative triumphs in expressing itself, over the postcolonial subject's forced rhetoric, by compelling the colonial or the normative West to read the disabled narrative in its own words and free from deeply ingrained historical and cultural codes of representation (see also Bhabha, 2012). Animal's narrative also forces a dislocation of the Western reader from its position of the colonizer to an audience that is compelled to understand Animal's

disability, outside the affectations of predetermined cultural codes which is also a necessary imperative in the material representation of disability than its prosthetic function as postcolonial metaphor.

Moving from the comparisons between the postcolonial gaze and the disability stare, it will be interesting to note how the disability stare is problematised within itself. A suitable example that demonstrates the ableism of Animal's condition occurs when Animal meets Zafar, a social activist who works for the uplift of the gas tragedy victims. Zafar calls Animal 'especially abled (Sinha, 2008: 23) which confers upon Animal an ability that does not ignore his disability but augments the uniqueness of his condition. Theoretically, ableism according to Fiona Kumari Campbell (2008: 5) is: 'a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then, is cast as a diminished state of being human'. But in the instance being stated in the text, such a view is being subverted.

'I am an animal, I can't do much.' ...
'You've the gift of gab.'
'An animal must use its mouth, no other tool does it have.'
'How does it see?'
'You can do that,' says he. 'How does it find food?'
'Smells it out.'
'We need a good sniffer.' (2008: 26)

In the conversation that ensues between Animal and Zafar, the former becomes the official James Bond of the Zafar group, whose task is to spy on any unusual activity happening in the bastis (slums) perpetrated by the government officials of the municipality. Animal's appointment to such an important task reflects what Garland-Thomson addresses: 'We seldom even consider the advantages of blindness, such as being able to navigate without artificial light or engaging fully with other senses such as touch and smell' (2009:26). Animal's disabilities do not push him to the peripheries of normal or being ableist, but the landscape is enlarged in accommodating him and what he can achieve. On the contrary, when Nisha, a member of Zafar's group and his lover, meets Animal for the first time, she fails to recognize his disability and considers him normal: 'She never seemed to notice that I was crippled nor pretend I wasn't. She was the only person that treated me as completely normal' (Sinha, 2008: 22). There is implicit in these lines a tendency by Nisha to rationalize Animal's disability. By rationalizing one alludes to Max Weber's ideation to rationalize the excess of information, processes and products owing to industrialization and trying to fit them into recognizable categories. Rationalizing in the current context means ironing out peculiarities and categorizing them under 'the normal'. Nisha shows throughout the text a parental

concern for Animal. Though she does not treat him differently because he is disabled, given the neocolonial setting of the text, Nisha may be seen as the extension of the colonial parent who treats Animal as a child, but one who may not achieve maturity. This necessitates her to play the role of parent, and Animal the subordinated child, for one does not find in their interactions an instance where both individuals participate as equally 'abled' within or outside the disability framework. This condition hearkens to Julia Emberley's study of aboriginal children in her book *Defamiliarising the Aboriginal* in which the aboriginal state is held as unevolved, thus legitimizing their colonial dependency. One might also consider Nisha's gaze to be the disciplinarian gaze of subordination that is encased in the norms of ableism and refuses to engage in an open stare with Animal, and enter his disability's domain. But Animal reverses the disciplinarian gaze by performing the male gaze at Nisha's bare body and in that objectifying her by doing what comes most naturally to him, that is constituting the maleness his gender purports. Masculinity and ableism are therefore strangely entangled depending on the context in which the stare occurs.

The presumption that the way Animal stares back maintains the equilibrium between the starrer and the staree is problematised. The passivity associated with the staree is lodged on the starrer when Animal stares the masculine or gendered gaze at the nude bodies of Elli Barber, the American doctor who visits Khaufpur with the intention of setting up a clinic to treat those affected by the tragedy and Nisha, the activist from Chicken Claw who also works for the uplift of people affected by the tragedy. The supposed effeminacy posited on Animal owing to his disability is overtaken by exercising the masculine gaze on Elli and Nisha as that happens to be one of the significant ways in which Animal counters the ableism of both these women. When Animal sees Elli for the first time and senses her staring at him, he thinks: 'You go't angry because when you looked at her you thought of sex, when she looked at you she thought cripple' (Sinha 2008: 72). Animal watches Elli taking a bath and has a full vision of her naked body. He also climbs the Frangipani tree to watch Nisha undress. This seems unlike the disability performer Duffy described by Garland-Thomson, who deliberately exposes her body to invite the stare of the audience, stages an encounter with the able bodied audience, affecting the artiste's control of the terms of the encounter in a way that the male gaze is emasculated: 'The perception of disability transforms the male gaze into the stare, thus altering the sexual dynamic of looking' (Sandahl et al. 2005: 34). On the other hand, in the text, Animal is the disabled male who views the exposed bodies of Nisha and Elli, and in doing so exercises the male gaze on the women, rather than inviting the disability stare to himself, and thus establishing the proffered equilibrium between the starrer and the staree. The disability stare is therefore devalorised and what ensues is the 'sexual division of labour in which men are invested with the power to look while women function primarily as image or object of sight' (Columpar, 2002: 27). What is questionable is the disability status of the stare, in opposition to the stare of the masculine gaze that is equated with the ethnographic and the colonial gaze in 'consolidating a relationship between power and visibility' (2002:

26)³. This seems to be influenced by the gender of the starrer and the staree within the field of disability itself. None of these relations may be construed as linear or unidirectional but situational and with shifting valences: ‘This was the first time I caught myself thinking, if only things were different, if only I could walk upright, it might be my praises she (Nisha) sang instead of Zafar’s’ (Sinha, 2008: 36). Animal’s desire to be normal is inspired by his desire for Nisha but it is also the emasculation of his disability that gives him a unique perspective of Anjali the whore. Animal’s voyeur is strangely overturned when he visits a brothel on the eve of Holi and spends the night with Anjali. Anjali is known to Animal since childhood, they do not share a physical relationship except for a conversation and Animal’s touching description of a woman’s body. Animal’s dreams of himself being straight and free from his disability of a twisted spine bespeaking of a hidden desire to be normal. According to Ian Hacking the term normal ‘stands indifferently for what is typical...but it also stands for what has been, good health, and what shall be our chosen identity’ (Hacking, 1990: 169). Thus, the stare, in particular that is directed at the nude body of a woman, works toward making Animal an able bodied man and allows him to fantasize his wholeness against the bodies of the women he admires. Animal’s status as a staree is no longer a passive one, but instead becomes the active gaze of a starrer. The normalization that Animal seeks at the specific moments when he wants to be the love interest of the women in his life, resorts to shifting the disability stare to the male gaze in order to become able. Animal’s narrative though, functions to render his able readers disabled by making them the subject of investigation.

Somewhere, the assertion of the reader as the eyes watching Animal, gives one the assured feeling of being a part of the able society: ‘...the disabled body summons the stare, and the stare mandates the story’ (Garland-Thomson, 2000: 335). Strangely, in mandating the story, the reader or the ‘eyes’ that Animal constantly refers to, become the eyes of Animal himself. And in doing so, the stare directed at both Nisha and Elli, is actually a stare directed at themselves, that is the reader. At the instance when Animal is looking at the nude body of Elli, he requests the reader not to abandon him:

Eyes, I don’t know if you are a man or a woman. I’m thinking the things I am telling are not suited to a woman’s ears, but if a person leaves things unsaid so as to avoid looking bad, it’s a lie...Carry on reading it’s your outlook, there’s worse to come, don’t go crying later ‘Animal’s a horrible person, full of filth,’ think I don’t know it already? Eyes if you are a woman I ask you not to leave me now, in this world my best people have always been women, such as Jara, Ma Franci, Nisha (Sinha, 2008: 79).

The telling of the incident not only mandates Animal’s story but makes the starrer or the reader a participant in that story. The reader is trapped in his/her own act of

seeing, as the reader transforms into the subject that is being stared at. Animal's narration shifts the dynamics of narrating, wherein the able becomes the subject of enquiry not only of the staree but of its own self and the disabled able, in not only narrating its story but demanding one from its audience, the reader, the journalist or Elli. This reversal is perhaps to affect a plausible unknowability about the subject that was until now used to objectifying the other but instead gets objectified by the other.

Performance and the Disabled Body

Performance and disability, according to Sandahl and Auslander (2005: 9), involve 'deployment of bodies in space' as the disabled body's experiences relate to space differently from a normative body. In this section, the article moves towards a disability performance of the body that functions outside Edward Said's position whereby 'the violence of the act of representing (hence reducing) others, almost always involves violence of some sort to the subject of representation' (Vishwanathan, 2005: 40). Though the narration begins with a hint of a violated representation and reduction of the other, it is quickly turned around when Animal insists on telling his life story in his words, and the text does not shy away from detailing an account of Animal's disabled corporeality. The first interesting instance is the pitting of the normative colonial superior body against that of the disabled neocolonial and culturally limited body of Animal's subject. The neocolonial is embodied in the influence of American imperialism in the Bhopal tragedy, and also as Viveinne Jabri (2013) explains the continuity of the postcolonial self in neocolonial times.

The interesting pun on the West centric outlook of 'seeing' in the narrative of Animal, is the play with the character of 'Namispond Jamispond' (Sinha, 2008: 26), a pun on the word James Bond. Animal tells Nisha: 'I am your Jamispond, jeera-jeera-seven' (2008: 194). Animal has been given the task of Jamisponding in the neighbourhood to gather information against the movements of the Kampani or the government in relation to the advancement in the legal proceedings of the Bhopal Gas tragedy. The image of a James Bond in a Tuxedo, speeding in Ferraris and surrounded by beautiful women is completely inverted by the image of Animal on all fours sporting a bare torso, kakadu shorts and surrounded by his dog Jara, the French speaking nun Ma Franci, and the demure and affectionate Nisha. The contrast in the modus operandi and the appearance of the two characters in their British and Indian avatar are starkly apart. While Bond sees through sophisticated machinery and gizmos, the transactions between his enemies and the bodies of women, Animal uses his bare body to hide under the table or climb trees and to see and carry out his acts of spying. One may question if the humour inherent in the differences of the two portrayals diminishes the charisma of the way we the reader see the victories and successes of James Bond or sharpens the contrast between a highly able bodied and fit British spy and a severely deformed Animal

from the text with his body and sharp intelligence as his only ammunitions. The credibility of perceptions of an able body that is associated with constructions of metaphors of success, joy, happiness etc are suspect in the usage of a language, which conveniently elides a disabled individual's perceptions of the states of happiness, joy or success. The metaphor creation places the stare in the liminal space between disability and the masculine gaze. The acute objectification of the female body performed by the masculine gaze and the emasculation of male sexuality within disability come midway and assume an aesthetics that looks at the female in a different way and experience sexuality through also a certain aesthetics. Amy Vidali in the article 'Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor' comments on how the acquisition of metaphors are different for the able and disabled bodies:

But if an able body (or something close) is needed to acquire metaphor, then disabled people are relegated to a second-class existence where they acquire bodily metaphors from able bodied people. While it is reasonable to assume that able bodied people profoundly influence metaphors through their physical and cultural experiences, I am dissatisfied with an approach to metaphor that assumes that the building blocks of language are formed by able bodies and are transferred to those with disabilities by contagious contact. People with disabilities, and their bodily experiences, also inform how metaphors are created and used (2010: 39).

According to Vidali, a disability approach to metaphor must engage the full range of disability and resist the desire to 'police' or remove disability metaphors (2010: 42). This seems to be an unconscious motivation of a language ordered by an able-bodied society, which is disabled as it attempts to recognize the presence or the performance of the disabled individual. For Vidali, metaphors must employ a diverse vocabulary and artistically create and historically reinterpret metaphors of disability (2010: 42). For instance when Vidali critiques George Lakoff and Mark Johnsen's (2003: 16) explication of how bodies influence metaphor acquisition by providing the example of happy is up and sad is down, they suggest that '[d]rooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state' (Lakoff et al. 2003: 15). Vidali finds this implication for disabled people problematic and questions if 'a person who may 'droop' throughout her life not learn the metaphor *happy is up* because her body is quite literally never 'up'? (2010: 37, italics in original). This example has a serious bearing in the case of Animal for whom the world is viewed from the level of 'whole another world...below the waist' (Sinha, 2008: 2). He goes on to say: 'The world of humans is meant to be viewed from the eye level. Your eyes. Lift my head I am staring into someone's crotch' (2008: 2). These lines seem to confer with Lakoff and Johnsen's suggestion that metaphors are acquired through an able bodied experience. While Animal experiences people from the odours emanating from their bodies, Animal's line of vision is also given to aesthetics when he visualises a naked woman's body: 'Dark it's, the outer parts looks like the swelled lips of a large cowrie, within it's more like a canna lily...'

(2008: 243). Lenore Manderson and Susan Peake (2005) argue that disabled men seek to recover their apparent loss of masculinity by resorting to activities like disabled sports. Culturally, disability is seen to have an emasculating effect on male sexuality, arousing comparisons between the female body and the effeminacy of disabled male bodies. Animal's body performance may be hypermasculine in its sexual orientation, but he is able to respond to Anjali (the prostitute), another woman disabled in the social sense, by viewing her in a way that cannot be considered objectification of the female in the conventional sense. Animal's knowing takes the uncommon route of knowing from seeing that does not happen at the eye level but the level of the crotch bestowing him an aesthetics of the stare that lies between his disability and masculine gaze.

Conclusion

This article attempts to position the disability stare from differing perspectives emerging out of conflicts and interactions between theories such as that on the postcolonial gaze and the stare or the masculine gaze and the stare. While Animal as the disabled subject acquires agency by stretching the landscape of the normative, he falls prey to being the empty other when viewed through the colonial lens. Likewise a dichotomy exists in the shifting dynamics of the stare, when the masculine gaze of the male audience on a disabled female is converted into a stare altering the sexual dynamic of looking, even though the converse does not appear to be true when a disabled male is stared at by a female. The latter situation aggravates the male sense of disability resulting in returning the stare by a masculine gaze specifically in Animal's case. In the studied text, the masculine gaze appears to be one of the ways of compensating for one's disability. It may be prudent to state that none of these positions may be considered absolute or are prolifically subject to change given the meditations on other dimensions of disability itself like disability in the social sense. A detailed study on this notion of social disability and physical disability might throw new light on ways of altering gendered motivations within the field of disability.

Given the motivation of this article to depict the differential valences between staring in the case of disability, and different kinds of gaze, it acknowledges the array of problems in the field of disability that are not attended to here, including the gendered motivations of the disability stare and its effects in an ableist society or a postcolonial world. The article is also unable to answer the secret longings of the protagonist to be non-disabled which could be a shared desire of many who are physically disabled. Unlike Mary Duffy who allows people to stare at her nude body before she begins telling how her body is right for her (Garland-Thomson, 2000: 337), Duffy's embodiment of agency given her disability contends strongly with the desire in disabled men to re-enact their masculinity. While this paper does establish

variable connections between the many shades of staring that are sometimes valorised and at other times overpowered in its interface by other forms of gazes, the stare and the gaze both sketch the experiences of Animal in the material assertion of his disability.

Notes

1. See Bhabha (2012).
2. See Vivienne Jabri's (2013) *The Postcolonial Subject* to understand the dominating presence of postcolonial theory and practice in the neocolonial era. The terms have not been used as substitutes but with the understanding that postcolonial ideologies exist in and through the neocolonial era and subjectivity: 'Where the liberal self is constituted being in possession of global reach, engaged in the government of others, the other of the liberated self, located largely in the postcolonial world, is somehow reinscribed in terms of the dichotomy of modernity and tradition, civilization and barbarism, freedom and unfreedom'(3). Also see Huggan (1997).
3. See Columpar (2002) to understand the common motivation between the ethnographic, colonial and male gaze.

References

- Barker, C. (2011). *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability: Exceptional Children, Metaphor and Materiality*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barker, C. and Murray, S. (2010). Disabling Postcolonialism: Global Disability Cultures and Democratic Criticism. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* [Online], 4 (3). Available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jlc/summary/v004/4.3.barker.html> [Accessed 24 December 2012]
- Berube, M. (2005). Disability and Narrative. *PMLA* [Online], 120(2). Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486186> [Accessed 24 December 2012]
- Bhabha, H. (2012). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge
- Campbell, F. K. (2008). Exploring Internalised Ableism using Critical Race Theory. *Disability and Society*, 23(2), 151-162.

- Cassuto, L. (2010). Disabilities Studies 2.0. *American Literary History*, 22 (1), 218-231.
- Columpar, C. (2002). The Gaze as Theoretical Touchstone: The Intersection of Film Studies, Feminist Theory and Postcolonial Study. *Women's Studies Quarterly* [Online], Volume 30, No. ½ Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40004635> [Accessed 11 November 2013]
- Davidson, M. (2011). *Concerto of the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Emberley, J. (2007). *Defamiliarising the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonising in Canada*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Eriksson B. M. (2005). *The Paternalism of Partnership: A Postcolonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- Garland -Thomson, R. (2005). Dares to Stares: Disabled Women Performance Artistes and the Dynamics of Staring. In C.Sandahl and P. Auslander (eds.) *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* (pp 30-41). Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Garland-Thomson, R. (2000) Staring Back: Self Representation of Disabled Performance Artists. *American Quarterly* [Online], Volume 52, No.2 Available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/aq/summary/v052/52.2thomson.html> [Accessed 24 December 2012]
- Garland -Thomson, R. (2009). *Staring The Way We Look*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hacking, I. (1990). *The Taming of Chance: Ideas in Context*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Huggan, G. (1997). The Neocolonialism of Postcolonialism: A Cautionary Note. *Links and Letters* [Online], Volume 4. Available at <http://ddd.uab.es/pub/lal/11337397n4p19.pdf> [Accessed 11 November 2013]
- Jabri, V. (2013). *The Postcolonial Subject: Claiming politics/governing others in late modernity*. New York: Routledge.
- Lacan, J.(1998). Of the Gaze as Objet Petit a In J. A. Miller. (ed.) . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (pp. 67-105).

New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Lakoff, G and Mark J. (2003). *Metaphors We Live By*. London: The University of Chicago Press.

Manderson, L. and Susan P.(2005). Men in Motion: Disability and Performance of Masculinity In C. Sandahl and P. Auslander (eds.). *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*.(pp 230-242). Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Mitchell, D. T. and Snyder, S.L. (2006). Narrative Prosthesis and Materiality of Metaphor In L. J. David (ed). *The Disability Studies Reader* (pp. 205-216). New York: Routledge.

Said, E. (1995). *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin Books.

Said, E. (2005). In the Shadow of the West. In G. Vishwanathan (ed.). *Power Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward Said* (pp. 39-52). London. Bloomsbury.

Sandahl, C. and Auslander. P. (2005). Introduction: Disability Studies in Commotion with Performance Studies In C. Sandahl and P. Auslander (eds.) *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*. (pp xv-xviii). Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Sinha, I. (2008). *Animal's People*. London: Pocket Books.

Snyder, S. L. and Mitchell, D.T. (2006). *Cultural Locations of Disability*. Chicago and London : U of Chicago Press.

Texas Theory Wiki. The Gaze and Postcolonial Studies. Available at <http://wikis.la.utexas.edu/theory/page/gaze-and-postcolonial-studies> [Accessed 12 November 2013]

Vidali, A. (2010) Seeing What We Know: Disability and Theories of Metaphor. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* [Online], 4(1). Available at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jlc/summary/v004/4.1.vidali.html> [Accessed 31 December 2012].