



Disability as a Plot Device in Nicola Griffith's "So Lucky": An Analytical Study

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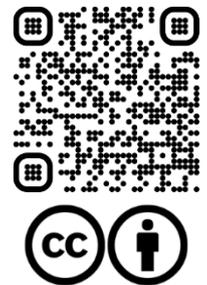
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Abstract— Gender and disability are two intersecting identities with significant consequences for one's social experiences and possibilities. Individuals who identify as both female and disabled encounter particular obstacles that other categories do not. Disabled women encounter several challenges in their day to day lives that are frequently disregarded and neglected in society. These difficulties might vary from physical obstacles and restrictions to harassment and cultural shame. Despite decades of struggle to build a secure place for themselves in society, they are still regarded as outcasts or aliens. Disabled characters are often portrayed as negative characters in many works of literature. Their disability is used to create piteousness or fear among the audience. The prevalent assumption was that as these individuals were not dynamic participants in society, they had to rely on welfare or charity organizations. This paper attempts to analyze how the protagonist, Mara's life got disrupted in Nicola Griffith's *So Lucky*, after she is diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and how her approach to life, partnerships, and even her livelihood are all affected. Her mobility is immensely hindered by the growth of her multiple sclerosis, she feels invisible and disconnected in society. The narrative is a particular case of representation as well as expression. It is the combined effort of writers, scholars, activists, academicians, and many brave voices that have made possible a discussion about seeing, understanding, and embracing difference. Nevertheless, this young and still-growing field of gender and disability research requires more attention from scholars of diverse origins.

Keywords— Disability, Abuse, Popular Fiction, LGBTQIA, Feminist criticism, Marginalization.



I. INTRODUCTION

"There is no greater disability in society than the inability to see a person as more."

Robert M. Hensel

Disability studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses on the experiences of people with disabilities. This field emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the social and political struggles of people with disabilities who demanded that their voices be heard and their rights respected. Disability studies draw on a range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, history, and literature, to examine the social, cultural, and political dimensions of disability.

Before the twentieth century, society viewed people with disabilities as unwell, imperfect, and abnormal. These people were regarded as figures of terror and sympathy for many years. The prevalent assumption was that because these individuals were not active participants in society, they had to rely on welfare or charity organizations. For centuries disabled people have been considered outcasts. Even so, a disabled male is often considered more valuable than a disabled female. Women have historically been devalued by society.

In Nicola Griffith's "So Lucky", the protagonist, Mara is diagnosed with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis. Her world is shattered as she is treated differently because of her disability and her beloved wife leaves her. She recalls an incident of the past in which two men injured

her badly. She says, "I was beaten by two men and I learned the story that most women already knew: that men beat women for no other reason than they could because they were raised on the story that women are weak. We were taught we are weak." Her experience highlights the pervasiveness of ableism and the appalling exploitation and neglect of the chronically ill and disabled in our society.

The chances of women from disadvantaged communities being empowered are destroyed by distorted rhetoric dressed in respectable language.

II. DISABILITY AS A PLOT DEVICE

Disabled or deformed characters have been infused into stories from the dawn of writing, whether oral or recorded, myths or fantasies, folk or fiction. Deaf, dumb, blind, or lame characters have appeared in the story to serve various objectives, as and when the authors of such stories desired. But, unless the novel is a biography, such disabled individuals have always played second place to the able-bodied protagonists.

In literature, exterior abnormality is frequently used to indicate interior mental issues. This "twisted mind in twisted body" is a well-known literary trope for conveying evil and menacing. The author does this by emphasizing the character's deformities to the point of caricature, turning it into a type character. In these legends, physical beauty is associated with inner virtue, whereas infirmity is associated with wickedness. The fight between normalcy and deformity is portrayed as the archetypal conflict between good and evil, with the wicked handicapped characters hellbent on eliminating the good characters and finally being exterminated themselves. In literature, such handicapped and deformed archetypes abound, whether Eastern or Western, Indian or European.

Nicola Griffith is a specially-abled queer author, which makes her work "So Lucky" more meaningful because she has dealt with the issues that a disabled individual encounters. A narrative about disability and how it defines – and restructures – people's lives. The story opens with Rose, Mara Tagarelli's longtime girlfriend, abandoning her for another woman. As Mara seeks solace from one of her old friends, Aiyana, their friendship becomes sexual. Nevertheless, Aiyana's profession requires her to travel to New Zealand, leaving Mara alone when she finds she has multiple sclerosis. Mara is forced to resign as executive director of a multimillion-dollar AIDS nonprofit when the sickness and the side effects of medication therapy take their toll. As she is forced to resign, we can understand that people don't believe that disabled individuals can do something big. Her time in that environment offers her the tools she needs to advocate for herself and other people with

MS, but her failing body threatens Mara's sense of identity. Readers only view Mara as bitter and unpleasant because of her genuine and honest reaction to her sickness. When used effectively, disability can add depth and complexity to a character and provide insight into how the character interacts with the world around them. However, it is important to ensure that the portrayal of disability is respectful and accurate, and that it is not simply used as a cheap plot device or a way to generate sympathy for the character. Furthermore, it is important to remember that disability is not a monolithic experience and that there are many different types of disabilities that can impact individuals in unique ways. As such, it is important to approach the portrayal of disability with sensitivity and nuance, and to avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes or tropes. Ultimately, the use of disability as a plot device can be a powerful tool for exploring complex themes and characters, but it must be done in a way that is respectful, accurate, and mindful of the diversity of experiences within the disabled community.

III. SOCIO-FEMINIST APPROACH IN THE NOVEL

Rannveig Traustadottir's "Disability and Gender: Introduction to the Special Issue", discusses the diversity of disabled people based on gender, sexuality, socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, and so on. The book tries to change perspectives by investigating how gender and disability interact to create experiences for the disabled in society. Basically, these studies consider disability and gender (as well as race, socioeconomic class, age, and sexuality) as interconnected categories of experience that influence all elements of human reality concurrently structuring people's lives.

In Griffith's story, *So Lucky*, we witness Mara being beaten up by a few men just because she is a female, and males regard women as weak and helpless. The narrative has three degrees of marginalization: first, she is a female, second, she is a lesbian, and third, she is disabled.

Because of their disability and gender, disabled ladies frequently endure many degrees of discrimination. This intersectionality can lead to compounded discrimination and exclusion, making it difficult for them to fully participate in society. Here are some examples of the levels of marginalization that disabled females may face:

- 3.1 **Physical and Emotional Hurdles:** Disabled women may face physical and mental barriers that limit their capacity to engage in daily activities such as using public transit or obtaining work. They may also face societal discrimination and stigma, which can contribute to feelings of isolation and alienation.

- 3.2 **Access to Healthcare:** Because of their handicap or gender, disabled ladies may have limited access to healthcare. They may struggle to locate healthcare practitioners who understand their specific requirements, or they may experience financial constraints that prohibit them from receiving critical medical treatments and services.
- 3.3 **Underrepresented in Society, Politics, and other facets of public life:** Disabled women are typically demeaned and neglected in many sectors. This lack of representation has the potential to propagate prejudices and support the notion that handicapped women are not respected members of society.
- 3.4 **Sexual and Gender-based Violence:** Because of their fragility and reliance on others for care, disabled females are more likely to be victims of sexual and gender-based abuse. They may also face obstacles in reporting and obtaining support services, which can increase the trauma of these events.
- 3.5 **Economic Exclusion:** Because of their handicap or gender, disabled females may experience economic marginalization. They may struggle to obtain work or access educational opportunities, which can lead to financial insecurity and poverty. Overall, the confluence of disability and gender can result in several degrees of marginalization for handicapped females, emphasizing the importance of addressing the issues women confront while also working towards making a more inclusive and equitable society.

Another research titled "*Social Exclusion of Women With Disabilities In Sivagangai District: A Gender Analysis*" by Gomathi A. talks about the issues faced by females with a disability. In one of her topics, she talks about women with disability and employment. She mentions how disabled females are discriminated against in society, they don't get well-paid jobs, and though the scenario of employment is bad for disabled people, it is worst for females with disabilities.

These researchers have pioneered an entirely new and crucial area of scholarship which was almost non-existent until now. The contemporary discourse demonstrates focused efforts to initiate a discussion about gender and disability politics in the way language is utilized by those in power as a weapon for oppression and the continued dominance of marginalized people.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study of gender and disability is a growing field in the twenty-first century. Even though several laws and acts have been made for the protection and well-being of women, children, and people with disabilities, they are

still not given the same priority in society, and particularly disabled women must deal with all forms of prejudice. Disability is much more than a medical complication. The late twentieth-century disability rights movement gave rise to the field of disability studies. Disability is a topic that researchers are devoted to researching on a social, political, and cultural level. It is crucial to view disability as an essential component of human variety rather than a problem or a tragedy.

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