

Miles, M. 2008-07. "Glimpses of Disability in the Literature and Cultures of East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East & Africa. A modern and historical bibliography, with some annotation." Internet publication URLs: [www.independentliving.org/docs7/miles200807.html](http://www.independentliving.org/docs7/miles200807.html) and [www.independentliving.org/docs7/miles200807.pdf](http://www.independentliving.org/docs7/miles200807.pdf)

This annotated bibliography lists a selection of 130 novels, short stories, biographies, autobiographies, materials from philosophy, anthropology and folklore, and literary criticism, in which disability, deafness or mental disorders play some significant part, from East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Africa, available mostly in English or French.

## **GLIMPSES OF DISABILITY IN THE LITERATURE AND CULTURES OF EAST ASIA, SOUTH ASIA, THE MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA. A modern and historical bibliography, with some annotation.**

Compiled and annotated by M. Miles, July 2008.  
[m99miles@hotmail.com](mailto:m99miles@hotmail.com)

### **CONTENTS**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. EAST ASIA**
- 3. SOUTH ASIA**
- 4. MIDDLE EAST**
- 5. AFRICA**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This bibliography lists c. 130 novels, short stories, biographies, autobiographies, materials from philosophy, anthropology and folklore, and literary criticism, in which disability, deafness or mental disorders play some significant part, from regions shown in the title, available mostly in English or French.

An American colleague informed me, around 2003, that disability was now fully owned by English Literature. It took me some time to digest the idea, as I had worked in various kinds of Asian and African disability service delivery and research for 25 years, without consciously taken any notice of Eng. Lit. Eventually I understood that the message might simply be that 'disability' and its textual representation were now recognised as a legitimate object or field for literary study. Further time passed before I realised that the news might have significance for my own work -- it dawned on me that people who are interested in Literature tend to read quite a lot. They are habitual readers; and in that respect they differ from people in disability service delivery and development, who are mostly not great readers. There might be something good in this.

For about 25 years I have been trying to generate wider interest in the 'disability world' of Asia, the

Middle East and Africa, which runs with concepts and cultures significantly different from those of North America and Western Europe. I have suggested that those differences should be taken more seriously into account during the export of 'western' disability-related strategies, methods and technologies, and their import to the non-western world. These rather obvious suggestions have never been opposed; yet they continue to be largely ignored. One likely reason is that people having practical involvement in disability-related fields, especially in countries with weaker economies, seldom have time to step back and review cultural considerations, or to seek the means to enter a different conceptual world, which might involve them in a lot of reading and perhaps even a radical review of their professional skills and practice. So would people with an interest in disability, and an ingrained habit of reading literature (which over some centuries has been a gateway to foreign cultures) be more inclined to take an interest in these issues? I don't know – but at least some would be interested to read textual representations of disability in different civilisations!

Several earlier web bibliographies [1] have listed c. 4000 items on 'social, medical, and educational responses' to disability in regions of Asia, the Middle East and Africa, [2] and among them some of the more 'literary' responses sit isolated in odd corners. The present bibliography brings together about 130 such items, including some new ones and some extended annotations, in which the 'literary representations' of disability have perhaps more similarities or commonalities of imagination and construction. The collection might appeal to a new readership, parallel to that which has surfaced in the past two decades focusing on disability as represented in modern 'English Literature' (mainly North American and British in geography, and of very varied culture and ethnicity).

### **Post-breakfast lit.**

Novels, folk stories, philosopher's tales, autobiographies, topped up with a lick of lit-crit, might look like a dog's breakfast even in a single region, let alone the old and new civilisations stretching from Cape Town via Istanbul to Tokyo. Yet those who voluntarily poke their noses into this dish are likely to have a keen sense for following trails and sniffing out something tasty to tickle their palate, or that of their colleagues and students. As for literary theory, there may be some happy hunting grounds here of the post-colonial, post-modern, or simply 'lost in the post-', but such creatures are not this compiler's game. The annotations (which have accumulated through 15 years, and are far from uniform in nature) mostly give no more than a brief indication of the disability content, country and era, where these are not already obvious in the title. Many of the listed items are translations, and may thus have shifted subtly from their cultural origins, and will no doubt travel further as they are chewed and analysed by people in distant places. Those whose interest is aroused in any particular item will usually find a fuller background and context on the web, if they cannot immediately find a copy of the material itself.

There is undoubtedly some bias in selection and omission. The most obvious is that the world's primary literature should appear in its original languages, only a few of which are English and French; and a much smaller selection of which ever gets translated to either of those European languages. Among translations that see print, perhaps the great majority quickly dwindle to a few dusty copies in library stacks. Much of the world's literary representation of disability probably still awaits discovery and examination by students proficient in any of 100 other languages having a significant literature

with a modest local readership. Meanwhile, the world that runs on the major international languages should bear in mind that it is seeing a skewed and imperfect sample of what humankind has thought and written about disability. There is more to come. The present small bibliography, with admitted flaws and problems, gives no more than glimpses of concealed riches.

(Yet at least some of the present users, being accustomed to reading, might be interested to rummage around in the treasure chest!)

## Notes

[1] These larger bibliographies may be found at the CIRRIE website, <http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/bibliography/> [scroll down]; and in the Independent Living Institute library at <http://www.independentliving.org> (see Author list: M. Miles)

[2] To avoid duplication, material from Egypt has been presented within the Middle East section, though it could equally well have appeared under Africa. (There is no intention here, to take any position in the 'Black Athena' debate! It was merely a case of trying to balance up the different regional sections).

**KINDLY NOTE: Some accents and diacritical marks have been omitted, when transcribing names and words in a dozen Asian languages, which cannot properly be represented on screen without downloading additional fonts.**

## 2. EAST ASIA

ARIYOSHI, Sawako (1972) *The Twilight Years*, translated by M Tahara (1984) from the Japanese original. New York: Kodansha International.

The focus of this novel is on a middle aged woman, Akiko, in full time legal clerical work while also being expected to undertake the traditional wife's domestic duties. The care of her elderly, sick and increasingly senile father-in-law, Shigezo, takes up increasing time and energy. [Conflicts between traditional and modern expectations of Japanese women have increased further during the 35 years since this book appeared.]

CHANG, Duk-Soon, SUH, Dai-suk, & CHO, Heui-Woong (1970) *The Folk Treasury of Korea. Sources in Myth, Legend and Folktale*. Translated by Tae-sung Kim. Seoul: Society of Korean Oral Literature (Seoul National University).

Folk tales suggest traditional attitudes towards people with disabilities or differences. 'The Old Man with a Wen' had a goitre which "swung like a gourd on its vine", so that people mocked him. He tricked some goblins into buying it (pp. 254-257). 'The Half Man' was "born deformed. He was only half in all the parts of his body, except in his two legs", and his brother and father thought he should die. Nevertheless he grew up very strong, and won a wife from a wealthy family (258-265).

CHING, Lucy (1980) *One of the Lucky Ones*. Hong Kong: Gulliver. 293 pp.

Autobiography of a blind woman, from early childhood in 1940s southern China, to training in Hong Kong and USA, and then adult life and work in Hong Kong. Many 'traditional' attitudes and expectations from earlier centuries were experienced by Miss Ching between 1940 and 1980.

CHUANG-TZU. [ZHUANGZI] *The Seven Inner Chapters and other writings from the book Chuang-tzu*. Translated by AC Graham, 1981. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Sharp philosophical writings, edited and shaped between the 4th to 2nd centuries BC, expressing "the side of Chinese civilisation which is spontaneous, intuitive, private, unconventional, the rival of Confucianism, which represents the moralistic, the official, the respectable" (p. 3, in Graham's Introduction). Disabled people figure in the Seven Inner Chapters (pp. 46-47, 64, 73-81); some are portrayed as being 'advanced on the Way' (perhaps more advanced than Confucius, who showed his inability to perceive the man beyond the disability, pp. 78-79). Disability also figures in 'Other writings' (pp. 138, 200-201), and in the translator's many remarks and explanations (e.g. pp. 4, 17, 24). In Graham's reconstruction of displaced fragments, Chuang-tzu (Zhuangzi) may have sketched the first 'social model' of disability (pp. 80-81). He pictured water finding its own level, taking the shape or filling the contours of whatever land or vessel it meets; then seemed to suggest that a powerful spirit might similarly assume a deformed human shape - the deformities arising from the misshapen and defective society in which the powerful spirit has taken birth.

ENDO, Shusaku (1959) *Wonderful Fool*, translation and introduction by F Mathy (1974). London: Penguin.

The major Japanese novelist Endo created a clumsy fool of a foreigner as the leading character of this book. Gaston, a stupid-looking Frenchman, is physically huge but timorous and afflicted with the disability of loving and trusting people. He ambles ludicrously through the neat and superficial lives of an ordinary Japanese family, then wanders off through the backstreets and low life of Yokohama. With the simpleton manners of a large, friendly dog, or holy fool, Gaston astonishes, infuriates, attracts or disgusts people he meets. Beaten by some, cherished by others, he becomes a mirror in which people may notice the moral emptiness of their souls. The author Endo is also darkly reflected here, a Japanese convert to Roman Catholicism, attempting to depict the radical strangeness of the Christ figure amidst the 'moral swamp' of Japan in the 1950s.

FRANCIS, Sing-Chen Lydia (2002) "What Confucius wouldn't talk about:" The grotesque body and literati identities in Yuan Mei's *Zi buyu*. *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 24: 129-160. Late in life, Yuan Mei (1716-1798), wrote this work and a sequel, about 'shocking' and censor-displeasing topics that Confucius (and Philosophically Correct people ever since) avoided, though the disability side had been fair game for the Daoist Zhuangzi (see above, Chuang Tzu). Prominent among the transgressive 'anomalies' were physically grotesque or deformed people. Fictive examples include a beggar with elephantiasis of the scrotum, crawling along the side of the road, inadvertently dividing passers-by into those who felt disgust, and those who had learnt to be (or to simulate being) dispassionate observers; also of "Professor Crooked Mouth", a village teacher who (supposedly) acquired his nickname after officiously arguing with a foul-mouthed ghost who had not read the right legal tomes; and further, a moral tale (or early magical realism) of a younger scholar assuming the burden of getting an elderly scholar's unpublished work into print and settling his debts, which deteriorates into another creepy ghost story. A final ghost tale is more amusing than scary. (The second half of the article wallows in the "sexed body as grotesque", soft porn and literary responses on such topics, of which Confucius would also probably have taken a dim view).

GOLAY, Jacqueline (1973) Pathos and farce: Zato plays of the Kyogen repertoire, *Monumenta Nipponica* 28: 139-149.

Examines in detail the tragical-comical portrayal of blind people, and others' reactions to them, in several Kyogen plays, with some remarks on blindness in Japanese history. (See below, Kenny; Scholz-Cionca).

GROEMER, Gerald (1999) *The Spirit of Tsugaru. Blind musicians, Tsugaru-jamisen, and the folk music of Northern Japan. With the autobiography of Takahashi Chikuzan*. Warren, Mich.: Harmonie

Park Press. 321 pp.

The opening chapter (pp. 3-19) sketches the history of blind musicians in Japan through more than a thousand years. Early legends suggest that blind itinerant musicians had a repertoire of sacred and secular texts for chanting while playing the *biwa* (a kind of lute). They earned their living by transmitting folklore, news, and fragments of Buddhist and Shinto teaching. Over many centuries there were periodic government efforts to control blind people. The religious element of their role seems slowly to have diminished. More detail is given of the particular Tsugaru-jamisen style, of which the best known exponent was the blind musician Takahashi Chikuzan (1910-1998), whose autobiography is included. That story illustrates many of the hardships that continued from earlier ages into the 20th century, the expanded opportunities offered (to some) by the modern recording industry, through which a local genre of music became nationally popular, and some of the problems inherent in the commodification of folk tradition for commercial purposes.

HAH KEUN-CHAN (1957), translated by WS Choi, 'Ill-Fated Father and Son'. *Korea Journal* (1 August 1972), pp. 7-12. [See also G Albrecht et al (eds) *Encyclopedia of Disability*, volume V: 426-428.]

Gloomy tale of a Korean father disabled during one period of war and a son disabled during a later war.

HANADA, Syuncho [1998] *Ebisu Mandara*. 54 pp. (Japanese and English texts). Japan Council on Disability website: <http://www.jdnet.gr.jp/Ebisu/index.en.html>

History of disabled people in Japan, from the mythological Hiruko to the present (and future), with many graphic illustrations. Brief biographies of notable Japanese disabled people, with some discussion of the occupations traditionally assigned to disabled people. Suggests that the disabled and rejected Hiruko was 'rehabilitated' in popular imagination as the god Ebisu. Text by a well-known writer, himself disabled, translated by various hands.

HUNG, Chang-tai (1993) Reeducating a blind storyteller: Han Qixiang and the Chinese Communist storytelling campaign. *Modern China* 19: 395-426.

Some traditional media were employed by the Chinese Communist Party for disseminating politically correct doctrine to the masses. In 1945 one of the organisers, Lin Shan, met the blind man Han Qixiang, who was a professional storyteller aged about 30. Han ticked all the right boxes: "he was an illiterate, impoverished peasant (thus socially and economically oppressed), physically handicapped (thus unfortunate and deprived), and extremely talented in his craft (thus potentially a convincing advocate of Communist ideals)" (p. 395). Soon, Han was "converted into a popular singer of socialism." [Further useful points may have been that blind storytellers needed to be tough, as their itinerant life was difficult and poorly rewarded; and they should be capable of telling lies to the public in a convincing manner -- many blind people worked as fortune tellers, to eke out a living (p. 402).] The article provides useful background on this important popular medium. Its practitioners did not slot into the Party machine without some painful adjustments. Tension continued to be felt between the "individual creativity" of the artist, and the "doctrinal rigidity" required by the employer (418). Han "hailed the socialist revolution" with heartfelt enthusiasm (420); yet he was obliged to give up a part of his professional freedom, to sing from the approved text.

KATO SHOSHUN (1998) "A lineage of dullards". Zen master Toju Reiso and his associates. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 25 (1/2) 151-165.

<http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/publications/jjrs/pdf/515.pdf>

A major tradition within Buddhism seems to put emphasis on achieving mastery by mental concentration and training the mind. Such a process might disadvantage those people with weaker intellectual endowment. An alternative practice is shown here in the Rinzai Zen tradition. Against all expectation, a slow-witted student persevered to spiritual enlightenment without ever reaching intellectual heights, in the difficult early Meiji period when Buddhist institutions were under attack.

KEIGO SEKI (1966) Types of Japanese Folktales. *Asian Folklore Studies* 25: 1-220.

Some Japanese folk tales include characters with impairments and disabilities, some of a typical kind, others not so. A wife (who is actually a frog) is crippled and wounded while visiting her natural home, when her husband (who has his suspicions) throws stones into the pond (p. 75). Story of a magic mallet with which rice and grain can be obtained; but when a neighbour tries the trick, calling repeatedly for *kome* (rice) and *kura* (granary), all he gets is a lot of little blind men (*ko-mekura*) (pp. 94-95). A woman prays to find a husband and is told to marry a cripple living under a bridge; but fortune smiles and they become rich (pp. 96-97). A stepmother hates her step-daughter, and has the girl's hands cut off (pp. 113-114). A blind man figures in an unlikely series of deceptions involving a straw bag (pp. 136-137). Three men rescue a girl drowning: one shows where she sank; a blind man gets her out of the water; a doctor revives her. Each wishes to marry the girl. The ruler overhears the saying "a man should go through fire or water for his lover"; he awards the girl to the blind man (p. 140). Two blind men walk together. A sighted man hits one blind man's head. That one thinks the other blind man hit him, and they quarrel. The sighted man cries "He took out a knife". Then the blind men stop quarrelling (p. 150). Two stories about three men, having different impairments, who craftily try to conceal their problem (p. 178). An improbable tale about eyes popping out and being replaced back to front, enabling their owner to become a physician (because he can see inside people). A neighbour tries the same trick, with adverse results (p. 182). An old couple avoid giving a delicacy to a blind minstrel (*zato*) staying with them; but the blind man tricks them and gets the delicacy anyway (p. 182). A robber has dull ears and fails to hear what his fellow robber says. The latter makes his voice so loud that he wakes the people in the house they are robbing (p. 187). A blind man and a deaf man, hitting each other in a quarrel, cure each other's disability (p. 187). Various stories are told of fools, blunderers and numskulls (pp. 173-205). [Some of these tales sound remarkable predictive of the activities and apparent mental processes of modern governments.]

KENNY, Don (Compiler & translator) (1989) *The Kyogen Book. An anthology of Japanese classical comedies*. Tokyo: The Japan Times.

Translated text of 30 Kyogen comedies, from 257 in the classical repertoire dating back some 700 years. Three of the 30 directly concern disability and attitudes. "The Moon-Viewing Blindman" and "Sight Gained and Lost" depict blind men in ludicrous situations. In "Rubble River" two travellers, each trying to conceal his own physical disability, gleefully expose the other's defect to mockery. Many of the other plays portray universal human follies.

KIM, Eunjung (2007) Cultural rehabilitation: Hansen's disease, gender and disability in Korea. *Wagadu. A journal of transnational women's and gender studies* vol. 4 (Summer 2007).

<http://web.cortland.edu/wagadu/Volume%204/Articles4.html>

Detailed analysis of the way in which leprosy and its management have been depicted in some Korean non-medical literature from the 1930s onward, and in a recent film, with background of missionary and colonial responses to leprosy (based on secondary sources). Court cases in 21st century Japan and Korea have brought into public focus the human rights of leprosy-disabled people, and their neglect during the past century, with some apparent reconstruction of the earlier medical and management history and policy debates to fit current politically correct sentiments. Eunjung Kim briefly mentions references from the 15th and 16th centuries, in the *Annals of the Choson Dynasty*, to prejudicial beliefs and practices in those times about Korean people having leprosy.

KIM, Tongni (1975) The Rock [translated by K O'Rourke]. *Korea Journal* 15 (11) 52-56.

[Not seen. Short story, first published in Korean in 1936, concerned with homeless people such as 'cripples, beggars and lepers', the fears of some that they are liable to be eliminated by the colonial 'hygiene police', the hopes of others that this cannot happen, against a background of discriminatory public attitudes and family efforts to conceal their members having leprosy. Discussed in previous item, Eunjung Kim, 2007.]

KOHRMAN, Matthew (2005) *Bodies of Difference: experiences of disability and institutional advocacy in the making of modern China*. Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press. xvii + 285 pp.

Based on anthropological fieldwork in the 1990s, Kohrman examines the changing meanings, concepts and experiences of disability in the recent history of the People's Republic of China, building on the 'biomythography' of China's best-known disabled person, Deng Pufang, son of Deng Xiaoping (pp. 1-7; 31-56), and the lives and voices of other disabled Chinese men and women. In a period of rapid, almost chaotic modernisation the focus is largely urban, but Kohrman provides some ethnographic observation of disabled people living in great poverty in rural areas. Under Chairman Mao, the old kin-based mutual support system had been replaced by communal production teams, basic health clinics that provided practically free services to local populations, and official encouragement of an ethos of voluntary neighbourly service. As national economic policies changed, the free health services crumbled and the communal ethos was increasingly replaced by competitive individualism, while the old kinship obligations had practically disappeared. Urban disabled people began to develop 'identity' groupings to campaign for formal assistance and to benefit from informal mutual support; but this was hardly feasible for the relatively isolated rural disabled, who could find themselves stranded in serious poverty, benefitting from neither the traditional family or communal resources, nor their (temporary) ideological replacement. Kohrman perceives an uneasiness about the "growing field of unmet moral responsibility", much beyond the needs of disabled people (pp. 211-212). However, he emphasises the huge complexity and variety of practices across the vast nation, different parts of which are crawling, walking, or racing into barely imaginable futures.

KYE YONG MUK (1975) Adada the Idiot [translated by ME Clippinger]. *Korea Journal* (April) 45-53, 67.

First published in Korean in 1935, this is a short, moral tale of the difficult life of a mute woman. Reviled by her own family, Adada's dedicated work as a wife and daughter-in-law regenerated the family into which she had been married. Yet with growing prosperity, her husband turned against her, and finally Adada was replaced by a more 'suitable' wife, and was driven out. The pattern, of material greed and ambition defeating the humble and devoted efforts of the 'idiot', threatened to repeat itself later.

KYEONG-HEE Choi (2001) Impaired body as colonial trope: Kang Kyong'ae's "Underground Village". *Public Culture* 13 (3) 431-458.

Modern Korean literature is "conspicuously populated by physically anomalous characters", some of which are reviewed briefly (pp. 431-432). The author discusses in greater detail a literary picture of the casual violence and humiliations practised on disabled people, in parallel with the humiliations of the Korean nation under Japanese colonial rule, exploring some of the moral and ethical challenges to humanity.

LAW, Jane M (1992) Religious authority and ritual puppetry. The case of *Dokumbo Denki*. *Monumenta Nipponica* 47 (1) 77-97.

The article begins with the rediscovery of a set of puppets, one being of Ebisu; and some 17th century texts, among which was a scroll titled *Dokumbo Denki*, which "tells the story of the Leech Child [Hiruko], his priest caretaker Dokumbo, and the priest's apprentice Hyakudayu". These items are set in their context, the ritual performances by itinerant puppeteers based on the Japanese island Awaji, having some affiliation with the major Ebisu Shrine complex in Nishinomiya. An account is given of the Ebisu legend and his portrayal as a deity having "an assortment of liminal attributes - obesity, amorphous blob-shaped body, hermaphroditism, leglessness, drunkenness ... and according to popular belief, he is the adult form of the Leech Child of the creation accounts". The Kojiki and Nihongi legends are extended beyond the point where the Leech Child Hiruko was pushed out to sea on his little craft, giving some detail of how he fared, and after some years was picked up by a fisherman.

(The article discusses this strand of ‘folk religion’ and efforts by its practitioners to acquire recognition and religious authority, in some conflict with the shrine authorities.)

LEE DUHYUN (recorder) & LEE MEEWON (translator) (1985) The mask-dance play of Kasan village (Kasan ogwangdae). *Asian Theatre Journal* 2 (2) 139-171.

A history of the wide-spread folk tradition of mask-dance drama is sketched, and the specific Kasan play is given in translation. The cast of 34 people appears, including four Lepers and a Chief Leper; Odingi, a hemiplegic fool; and a blind soothsayer. In Episode 3, the Lepers, who are differentiated by specific deformities, perform the “Dance of the Deformed”, followed by a session of hunting lice on their bodies, then they settle down to a gambling session. Odingi enters and begs from them, but is rejected. He fetches a policeman, who kicks the lepers and eventually arrests them (pp. 147-151). The various episodes and slapstick business come with a humour rude enough to entertain villagers having no great delicacy of sentiment, and with plentiful beating of traditional targets and the occasional spray of urine at the spectators. Endnote 2 suggests that “the leper episode is unique to the mask-theatre of the southeastern part of Korea”, and must be “a modern version of the old deformity motif” (p. 170).

[LIEH-TZU.] *The Book of Lieh-tzu. A classic of Tao*, translated by AC Graham (1960 / 1990). New York: Columbia UP.

In 1990 Angus Graham updated his introductory remarks (pp. xi-xix, 1-13), with a new generation of scholarly thinking on Daoist philosophy and the Lieh-tzu, from the 3rd or 4th century CE. Some passages directly give instances of disabled people (e.g. 44-45; 72-73; 162-164; 168-169) whose unusual abilities, or experience (e.g. of being castrated or losing their sight) added a new dimension to philosophical discussion and belief. Elsewhere it was an ageing, poor, ragged, drunken or troubled person, or a slave or dreamer (e.g. 27; 32-33; 38; 39-43; 68-71; 162) that was despised, ridiculed or endangered like the cripples or blind, and who then turned out to have embraced ‘The Way’ that produced startling capacities which their despisers envied but could hardly emulate; or who underwent some other turn of their life suggesting that we do not know if the dream is in our own head, or we are a character in someone else’s dream. [Thus (p. 3), ‘bodily impairment’ in oneself or another is an incidental construction, a superficial circumstance, part of the ebb and flow of life, of no ultimate significance.]

MATISOFF S (1978) *The Legend of Semimaru, blind musician of Japan*. New York: Columbia UP. xi + 290 pp.

This revised doctoral thesis follows development of the Semimaru legend over many centuries, giving insights into the history of Asian people’s concepts and portrayals of blindness. Main references to historical blindness are on pp. 19-22, 28-31, 39-46, interwoven with the development of musical instruments and heroic literature used by blind mendicant friars (*biwa hoshi*), and linked with Indian legends of blind prince Kunala. Literature underlying the legends is introduced critically (pp. 55-79). The remainder of the book gives detailed review and translated excerpts from dramatic representations (pp. 79-272). Bibliography (pp. 273-279) is mostly of works in Japanese. Matisoff attributes the ambivalence of social attitudes toward blind people to a combination of early (and still current) beliefs in the blind person’s ability to communicate with the gods, and Buddhist views of disability as retribution for misdeeds (p. 20).

NAGAI, Akiko (2002, February) A lesson on “seeing” from a blind priest. *Toyota Foundation Occasional Report*, No. 32, pp. 7-9.

[http://www.toyotafound.or.jp/01profile/pdf/or\\_no32.pdf](http://www.toyotafound.or.jp/01profile/pdf/or_no32.pdf)

As part of her historical studies on blind people employed in religious activities in Kyushu, Japan and South Korea, Nagai arranged to interview a blind priest R\_\_\_, from the Korean Society of Divination Art of the Blind, Chonju city, Cholla Pukdo Province, during his morning walk. The ‘interview’ became instead a lesson in seeing and living, from dawn until late night, as Nagai was permitted to



follow him through the day, the blind man striding confidently ahead along the mental map he had built during 25 years, with pauses to allow Nagai and her research assistant to catch up. The employment of all the senses to navigate and read the world has been described by people blind from birth or losing sight in infancy; but R\_\_\_ was 21, working in civil engineering, when he lost his sight through being beaten by a gang. He learnt to reconstruct his life and cognitive faculties as an adult. At Seongbul Temple, near Chonju, R\_\_\_ learnt the traditional religious practices in which blind people used to engage, recitation of scripture, Zhou divination, and fortune-telling, from another blind priest. He also learnt Braille, and pursued his studies of Buddhist scriptures by this means.

OË, Kenzaburo (1969) *A Personal Matter*, translated by J Nathan. New York: Grove: Weidenfeld. This novel describes the moral and ethical dilemmas confronting an immature young Japanese man who learns that his newborn son has a severe impairment. The fictional experiences parallel those of the Nobel prize recipient Oë, as told in later works. The ‘tragedy’ of the baby is also viewed against the ongoing disaster for survivors of the Hiroshima bombing.

OUWEHAND, Cornelis (1964) *Namazu-e and their Themes. An interpretative approach to some aspects of Japanese folk religion*. Leiden: Brill. xvi + 272 + plates. Inter alia, discusses Japanese folklorist debates on the often puzzling relationships, substitutions, oppositions, among various deities and beings depicted with dwarfish, ugly or deformed appearance (e.g. Ebisu, Sukunhikona, Hiruko, the Kappa, tricksters, monkeys etc), who are considered sometimes destructive, sometimes benevolent. See pp. 82-96, 133-149, 162-171, 203-207, 222-227, and index.

RAESIDE, James (2003) This death in life: leprosy in Mishima Yukio’s *Raio no terasu* and beyond. *Japan Forum* 15 (1) 99-123.

The drama “Terrace of the Leper King” (1969), by the Japanese writer Mishima Yukio (pen-name of Hiraoka Kimitake, 1925-1970), is loosely based on the life of the Cambodian King Jayavarman VII (in the late 12th and early 13th century), his construction of a great Buddhist temple at Angkor Wat, and his supposed concurrent development of leprosy. Raeside pursues different strands of significance, e.g. the ‘Leper King’; leprosy as a metaphor of varied meaning; the religious background in Jayavarman’s time, and religious archetypes in other times; themes of disability, decay and paradoxical hermeneutics in Mishima’s major works, and influences on his thinking; uneasy relations between Japan and its Asian neighbours; and some perceived corruption within the ‘body politic’ of Japan.

SCHOLZ-CIONCA, Stanca (1992) What happened to the Zato Kyogen? Paradigm shifts in the evolution of Blind Man plays. *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde ostasiens*, No. 152: 39-58.

Suggests that the early Japanese Zato plays involved frank ridicule of blind men, upon whom “coarse pranks” and farcical tricks were practised to amuse the sighted audience (as in comparable medieval European drama). Later interpreters could not stomach this “uninhibited derision”, so they introduced moralising elements.

‘SEI SHONAGON’ [c. 986-1000] *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*, translated by I Morris (1967 / 1971). London: Penguin.

Intimate description of daily life, etiquette, poetry and trivia at the imperial court in Japan’s great Heian culture, in the late first millennium CE. Includes some reference to deities, priests and religious practice, with illness being the work of evil spirits, which a skilled Buddhist priest should be able to exorcise by transfer from the afflicted person to a medium [chapters 13; 171; 182] (pp. 26; 41-42; 253-254; 260-261, notes pp. 280; 374). Two Buddhist nuns are mentioned, who come separately to beg from the court ladies [ch. 56] (pp. 99-102, 104, notes pp. 311-313). The first is described with Shonagon’s witty contempt for anything not neat and pleasing to her fastidious gaze. This nun, ‘Hitachi no Suke’, an old woman in filthy clothes, begs vigorously and jokes coarsely until she

obtains food, then a robe. For this she performs a ceremonial dance of thanks (which would be the normal response of a person of rank receiving a gift, but by a beggar would count as impertinent mimicking, p. 312). To the ladies' disgust, 'Hitachi' returns regularly to beg. The second nun is "a cripple... but with a naturally elegant manner". For Shonagon, elegance trumps the impairment; the ladies are "truly sorry" for the crippled beggar, and she obtains a fine robe. 'Hitachi' arrives and is annoyed to see this rival leaving. After a sulking absence, Hitachi returns and vents her annoyance in a poem of contempt for the crippled nun. [Cf Younghak, below, with reversed parallels in Korea, a thousand years later.]

SYLE, Edward W (1847-1858) Extracts from the Journal of the Rev. E.W. Syle. *Spirit of Missions*, 12 (1847): 353; 13 (1848): 186; 14 (1849): 343-345; 15 (1850): 185-86, 357, 426-27; 16 (1851): 22-23, 75, 82, 134-35; 17 (1852): 57, 204, 305-306, 450-51; 18 (1853): 56, 82; 206; 22 (1857): 35, 278; 386-87, 440-41; 23 (1858) 196-97, 338-39, 484.

Extracts from Syle's journal, written at Shanghai, appeared periodically over several years in the American Episcopalian mission journal. He often referred to people with disabilities, and recorded the start (4 Nov. 1856) and early years of his school/workshop for blind people. On 24 March 1852, [17: 305], he noted an elderly blind Chinese, a writer in the official Grain Dept for 42 years, who then lost his sight. Being now "a man half living and half dead", the old man explained, "I have no way of getting my living. If I had been an old servant in a merchant's house he would have fed me in my blindness and old age; but the mandarins are always changing about, and know nothing more of the men that serve them than that they do their work and get their wages."

Four days later, he noted that "a dumb woman was brought in by a young man who was accustomed to converse with her, and through him I learned that she wanted alms. The manner in which he communicated with her was curious in the highest degree. I observed that he always *spoke* what he wanted her to understand, at the same time using dumb-show of the most wonderfully brief and significant character. I am sure I never saw anything so concise in the instruction of deaf-mutes at home; yet she seemed to understand him perfectly. True, he did not attempt anything abstruse. When he did, at my suggestion, inquire what she worshipped, she said, and repeatedly insisted on it, that she *worshipped nothing at all.*" [At the time, 'dumb' was commonly used for 'deaf and dumb'. Syle, whose own son was deaf, would hardly have been impressed by the event if the woman had actually been able to hear the words that were spoken as well as signed. Some forms of sign language were undoubtedly practised in China between deaf people, and with hearing interpreters, for many centuries; but eyewitness accounts are rare.] The items elaborated here by no means exhaust Syle's journal contributions relevant to disability and to education).

SZUMA CHIEN. [Sima Qian.] *Selections from 'Records of the Historian'*, translated by Yang Hsien-yi & Gladys Yang (1979) Peking: Foreign Languages Press. vi + 461 pp.

Parts of China's first great work of systematic history, written c. 100 BC. Amidst reports of power struggles and treachery are a few striking tales of disabled people. In the middle of the third century BC, a commoner who was lame lived near the nobleman Chao Sheng, Lord Pingyuan. One of Pingyuan's concubines saw this lame [old] man, and "laughed heartily" at him [or at his gait]. The lame man complained of the disgrace, demanding the lady's death. Lord Pingyuan "consented with a smile"; but afterwards ridiculed the idea of killing the lovely lady "because of one laugh!" As a consequence, "within a year or so, more than half of his protégés and retainers had left one after the other." Pingyuan enquired into the departures, since he did not think he had treated those gentlemen with discourtesy. One of them gave the reason: by failing to satisfy the lame man, Pingyuan had prized female charms and despised worthy men. Lord Pingyuan then had the lady's head cut off, "and himself presented it with apologies to the lame man. After that his protégés gradually returned" (p. 128). [This resolution appears rather stark, but the story is translated without commentary or socio-ethical context. Pingyuan's first reading of the situation might make better sense if he had required his concubine to apologise and offer a gift in compensation. His dismissal of the insult, and false assurance to the lame man, seemed dishonourable to courtiers, and reduced his credibility. Even so,

some face-saving diplomacy might have been attempted with the lame man, short of removing the lady's head.] Other disability references include the saying, in the early 2nd century BC, that 'a wise man who keeps silent is less use than a deaf mute who can make gestures' (p. 282); the attempted revenge by a talented musician who was blinded by the King of Chin (pp. 400-401); and the sharp wit of dwarf Chan at court (408-409).

TAE HUNG HA (1970) *Maxims and Proverbs of Old Korea*. Seoul: Yonsei UP. 315 pp. Among 1,106 maxims and proverbs, at least 25 involve disability, often metaphorically and with a pejorative sense, indexed under e.g. Blind (7), Deformed (2), Dumb (4), Ear (deaf), Epileptic, Eye (dim), Harelip, Limb (cripple), Mad, Nonsense, Spectacles, Stupidity, Thief (dumb), Woman (mad) (2). There are also various mostly pessimistic maxims about begging, babies and children, poverty, ugliness, and mothers-in-law.

WANG PING (2000) *Aching for Beauty. Footbinding in China*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. pp. xiv + 265.

The author trawls through a thousand years of literary evidence depicting a Chinese practice widely regarded (by westerners) as physical and psychological child torture leading to life-long disability. She reconstructs it, through the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), as a marker of female culture, erotic power and intimate communication, not least in order to rationalise the secret self-inflicted footbinding in her own childhood in response to family taunts about her feet.

WERNER, Edward TC (1995) *Ancient Tales & Folklore of China*. London: Senate. (First published by Harrap, 1922).

Disability and deformity in Chinese folklore, e.g. the dwarfish Creator (p. 76); the Deaf-Heaven and Dumb-Earth (82, 109-110); dwarfs at court (169-170); the writer rejected for ugliness (250); one of the Eight Immortals as a lame beggar [Li Tieguai] (289-290); dwarfs, giants, headless and armless people (386-390).

WHALEN LAI (1995) Unmasking the filial sage-king Shun: Oedipus at Anyang. *History of Religions* 35 (2) 163-184.

The author presents some attempted deconstructions of the story of Shun and his father[-in-law], the Blind Man, from the legendary reigns of the three Wise Kings, noting odd points that Mencius and Confucius contributed in the transmission, and the supposed motives of different philosophical schools in changing or promoting the legend. Shun is contrasted with Oedipus, in the received interpretation of the story. He exercised admirable filial piety, despite strong provocation from the Blind Man. However, different accounts appear in the 'Bamboo Annals' [*Zhushu jinian*, a chronicle from deep antiquity to the end of the 4th century BC.] It is suggested that the previous sage-king, Yao, and the Blind Man, were one person, and Shun seized power from this person. Parts of other myths and legends, or geopolitical struggles, may have been involved in the differing accounts. Whalen Lai traces some threads in recent hermeneutics of Chinese legends, but is sceptical of any actual comparison with Oedipus.

YI NAM-HO, U CHANJE, YI KWANGHO, & KIM MIHYON [2001] *Twentieth-Century Korean Literature*, translated by Youngju Ryu, edited by Brother Anthony. 92 pp.

<http://hompi.sogang.ac.kr/anthony/20CKoreanLit.pdf>

This short book introduces and discusses the main literary work of a wide range of Korean authors during the difficult century that saw Korea battle its way into the modern world. Mention of disability occurs throughout, but some of the references are to ways in which humankind is deformed and damaged by rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, with brutal exploitation of workers and destruction of the rural ethic of interdependence (pp. 10, 20-22, 50-54, 66, 71). Some writing more specifically titled with disability, e.g. Yi Ch'ongjun (1966) "An Imbecile and an Idiot", still concerns the "disfigured inner life of an entire generation of young people living in a time of national division"

(p. 45), which prevents some of them from developing into maturity in their vocation. A further work by Yu Ch'ongjun (1976) "This Paradise of Yours", explored power and relationship in a remote leper colony (p. 46). Cho Sehui produced "A Little Ball Launched by a Dwarf" as an allegory of urban corruption and diminishment of the human individual in the 1970s, but the story does portray a family headed by a dwarf (117 cm, 32 kg) who eventually becomes the 'ball launched' at the moon, as he throws himself to his death from a factory chimney (p. 53). Im Ch'or-u weaves threads of "madness, stillbirth, disappearance, disability, heat etc" through his stories set in the 1980s, "to create a stultifying atmosphere of distorted reality", reflecting the undercurrents of violence in Korean history and society (p. 72).

YOUNGHAK, Hyun (1985) The cripple's dance and Minjung theology. *Ching Feng* 28 (1) 30-35. The Korean Christian theologian Younghak notes his changing perception of crippled beggars. He first saw them as a boy, and enjoyed watching their begging song and dance, which was also an event for mimicking and teasing. He tells the story of a talented dancer, Ms Kong Ok-Jin, who performed a 'cripple's dance'. She grew up in a very poor family, her brother was deaf, and she had learnt to communicate with gesture and mime. She worked as a maid for a Korean dancer, and later worked in a troupe of singers and dancers. Her speciality was to depict "both the pain and the joy of the poor, powerless, estranged and uneducated people as she experienced in her personal life and observed in others." Once, going home after a performance, she was beaten by a group of crippled beggars, who felt that her art made fun of their plight. Later, she ran a small restaurant, and used to invite crippled beggars, give them food and drink, and "dance with them in order to learn the minutest details of their body movements." By close attention, entering into the beggars' world, Ok-Jin finally learnt how to make an audience feel the reality of pain and misery in the dance of the crippled beggars or lepers, and also the spark of joy with which they claimed their common humanity and challenged 'normal' people. Her performance finally became acceptable to the beggars.

ZHOU XUN (2002) The discourse of disability in modern China. *Patterns of Prejudice* 36 (1) 104-112.

The paper visits a few representations of disability in historical literature, with Confucian reference, then broadly sketches movements in public thinking in 20th century China. After 1911, "Confucian knowledge rapidly lost its authority", and Republican China (or at least, some educated elements in that period) was "characterized by an intense faith in the power of 'science', regarded as a holistic, unified, ultimate and universal truth" (p. 106). Eugenic thinking increasingly appealed to politicians and intellectuals from the 1920s onward, with condemnation of the poorer classes who supposedly were weakening the nation by generating defective, deviant and inferior children. This "class-biased eugenics" was formally rejected under Chairman Mao. By the late 1970s, the government was making some efforts to address "the issue of scarce economic resources for families with disabled individuals", and to improve conditions for disabled people. Nevertheless, in 1995 "a eugenics law was officially adopted in China", apparently with the aim of controlling impairments attributable to genetic defects. The rhetoric of "financial burden on the nation" is also current. [Other sources, e.g. Kohrman, above, suggest that a much wider range and balance of viewpoints can be found across the vast nation.]

ZHUANGZI. *Zhuangzi Speaks. The music of nature*, adapted and illustrated by Tsai Chih Chung, translated by Brian Bruya, afterword by Donald J Munro. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP. xi + 143 pp. See CHUANG TSU (above). This startling presentation of the life and philosophy of Zhuangzi, by Taiwanese cartoonist Tsai Chih Chung, offers a graphic rendering (with lettered storyline in English, and also Chinese text) of many stories, word-pictures and debates recounted by the Daoist philosopher and school, including those with disabled characters. An 'Afterword' by Donald Munro (pp. 127-141) introduces Zhuangzi (369? - 286? BC) and his thought, as "a man who broke a lot of the rules and was irreverent toward all the rest", [and who, presumably, would have been greatly tickled by the idea of his universalization in cartoon strip.]

### 3. SOUTH ASIA

AUNG, Maung Htin (1976) *Folk Tales of Burma*. [Delhi]: Sterling. 112 pp.

“How Master Thumb defeated the sun” tells of a lad who was dwarf-sized because of the sun’s curse (pp. 27-31) He tricked an ogre with the help of some unlikely companions, then enlisted the sympathy of the rain to defeat the sun. “The Four Deaf Men” tells of a herdsman, a toddy-climber, a farmer, and a village headman, all being deaf. They misunderstand each other’s gestures, leading to a series of incidents (62-64). Typical of folk tales involving disabilities, they suggest the combination of mockery and rough sympathy with which disabled or deaf people have often been treated.

BALASUNDARAM P (2005) *Sunny’s Story*. Delhi: ISPCK. isbn 8172148275 pp. ix + 131.

After 30 years running an education and resource centre in a poor area of Delhi for children with mental retardation and their families, and participating in national and international advocacy in this field, Pramila Balasundaram has crafted a novel based on real events, precipitated by the disappearance of one family’s son. The husband and wife wait late at night, with mounting panic, and the mother recalls the time 20 years earlier when she first heard that her baby has Down’s syndrome. What has become of Sunny, of the sunny temperament and trusting nature, in a world where the weak and simple are often brutally oppressed and abused? The story unfolds with a mixture of reconstruction and imagination, from fragments that Sunny could tell later of his life with the ‘platform people’ at Jullundur railway station, and at the docks at Calcutta, mingled with the family’s recollection of incidents from his life with them. Somehow, on his long and haphazard travels, Sunny’s simplicity had sent a signal to the kind of people who could respond in a gruffly protective way, despite common sense telling them to ignore him as just another among a million destitute wanderers. Sunny stood out as one of the innocents who might be “a gift from the Gods” (p. 116), sent to remind people of the need to open their hearts toward their unknown little brother.

BISGAARD, Daniel J (1994) *Social Conscience in Sanskrit Literature*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. xxix + 141 pp.

Some 20th century Indian critics have charged ‘Sanskrit literature’ with originating in, and being sycophantic toward, the narrow, effete, and socially oppressive world of the royal court and the temple, showing almost total indifference to the real life, poverty and misery of the masses of ordinary people upon whom court and religion were parasitic. While the charge has considerable justification, Bisgaard provides detailed illustration, from medieval times onward (with extensive quotation of transliterated Sanskrit and his own translation to English) of a continuing thread of dissent and ‘social conscience’ in Sanskrit literature, amounting at times to a savagely ironic critique of the folly, greed and hypocrisy of rulers, state officials, petty clerks, religious practitioners, bogus healers and others who prey upon the credulity of ordinary folk. Disability is incidental to the catalogue of oppression, but the activities of dunces, half-wits, and blockheaded religious novices are a regular feature of the general cacophony (pp. 80-82, 106-109). Sometimes the rustic crowd saves a religious teacher from the idiocies of his followers, as when one of the latter sees a bazaar carpenter “straightening bamboo by soaking it in oil and bending it over a fire”. The disciple thinks “the same process might with benefit be applied to the crippled body of his ailing *guru*”, and proceeds to do so. The shrieks of the guru alert the crowd, which exerts itself to stop this ‘therapy’ (81). The uselessness and “mannered artificiality” of poets, compared to “slobbering infants ... boring men with their prattle” (119, 120), is countered by some brisk, if slightly sexist, retaliation on literary critics, “Those who stop to worry over the grammatical authority of a word at the moment of savouring the meaning of a verse [are like] those who, when pulling off a woman’s undergarment, stop to worry about its price” (122).

BOWEN, John CE (1982) *Plain Tales of the Afghan Border*. London: Springwood.  
Folk tale on the unusual wisdom of the 'Blind Man of Taxila', pp. 73-77.

CHELLAPPA CS, and PITCHAMURTHI N (1963) in: K Swaminathan, Periswami Thooran & MR Perumanal Mudaliar (eds) *The Plough and the Stars. Stories from Tamilnad*. London: Asia Publishing House.

Chellappa's "The Lame Child" (pp. 44-50) and Pitchamurthi's "The Blind Girl" (pp. 139-143) are rather typical of the disabled short story genre. Chellappa illustrates the desperate efforts of lame six-year-old Gnanam to discover some way to be included in the neighbourhood children's hide-and-seek games, against their fear of his 'ugly' and 'dangerous' feet. One girl briefly risks some involvement. Others follow, with continuing doubts. Gnanam rejoices to find a 'stationary' role that he can play, and which the others are happy for him to take; but disaster soon follows. Pitchamurthi has a more subtle, negotiatory play between a house owner, a tenant, and a disabled child. The house owner wishes to relieve himself of the care of the twelve-year-old orphan blind girl (whom he had inadvertently acquired through the death of a former tenant), by sending her to an orphanage; or if that failed, to a Christian missionary, though the latter idea was unpalatable. The tenant is trying to give notice of quitting his room. Neither listens to what the other is saying. The blind girl approaches unnoticed, and apologises for being a nuisance and burden. Two men connected with the orphanage turn up, and written notes are exchanged, signed and witnessed, for handover of the girl. She hears her fate being sealed, learns that her two skirts and one torn blouse have been packed, and that she must leave immediately with a stranger from North India. Does he speak Tamil? "Not likely." At last, she bends to pick up her little bundle, and two tears are seen hitting the floor. A moment of illumination. The men unexpectedly discover that they have hearts. Their plans suddenly unravel.

[A critical review of the whole collection of 26 stories, by K Zvelebil (1973) *The Smile of Murugan. On Tamil literature of South India*, Leiden: Brill, rates Pi[t]chamurthi's contribution as one of only three or four that have consistent merit in terms of theme, plot, characterization and style (pp. 293-295). Chellappa wins high praise for his contribution to establishing "solid literary criticism" in the Tamil scene, as well as acting as publisher for important work by other writers (pp. 288-289.)

COHEN, Lawrence (1998) *No Aging in India. Alzheimer's, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*. Berkeley: University of California Press. xxv + 367 pp.

This is a rambling, contrapuntal account of a western medical anthropologist studying the older and 'ageing' body, mind and person in Indian (and some western) situations of everyday life and in archives. 'Disability' is not in the index; yet the book is concerned with perceptions and discourses of impairment and difference in mind, body and relationship, by people in families, communities and societies that have been shifting continuously throughout the lives of people who are now old. Societies are moving from a state where life was dominated by religious belief and practice, toward one of increasing secularisation where religious archetypes continue to be pervasive but have ceded ground to other rising forces. Family composition and logic are changing, with much reduced living space in urban households and the shifting balance of domestic power as traditional female care roles give place to female wage-earning capacity. The inputs (and costs) of western and ayurvedic medical and psychiatric professionals, to the treatment, care or reconstruction of ageing, are also observed sceptically.

DAS, Veena & ADDLAKHA, Renu (2001/2007) Disability and domestic citizenship: voice, gender, and the making of the subject. *Public Culture*, 13 (3), pp. 511-531. Reprinted in B Ingstad & SR Whyte (eds) (2007) *Disability in Local and Global Worlds*, 128-148. Berkeley: University of California Press.

In a discussion of facial disfigurement (pp. 512-521 / reprint pp. 129-138), the history is given of a young woman, Mandira, whose marriage took place privately, and was followed by rumours that her suitor had been bewitched by 'dangerous magical rites' so that he failed to notice her disfigurement.

Five years later the husband died, and (reportedly) some relatives felt that Mandira and her parents had been suitably punished for their 'trickery'. Yet a cousin's wife understood the matter differently: rather than the religious practitioner having "cast a veil over the husband's capacity to see and judge, as alleged by others -- perhaps he had *lifted* a veil and allowed Mandira's husband to see her *as she truly was*, penetrating the surface appearance, as it were" (p. 518 / p. 135) One of the authors remarks, "This was the one occasion on which I found a complex citation of cosmological ideas about beauty and ugliness that mediated the way in which the social norms were articulated. Hindu mythology and iconography are replete with examples in which the capacity to behold beauty truly, to overcome feelings of repulsion and terror at the sight of that which is ugly and terrifying, is the sign of the true devotee." [In that remark, 'replete' might be slightly overstated; but there is undoubtedly a persistent strand of teaching on this theme.]

DAS GUPTA, TC (1933, 1937) Dayaram's Sarada-Mangal. *Journal of the Department of Letters, University of Calcutta* 23: 1-30; 29: 31-81. [The two parts give an introduction and the full text in Bengali with English translation.]

From Bengal, perhaps of the 17th century, Das Gupta recounts the lengthy and informative *Sarada Mangal* of Dayaram Das, written in honour of the goddess of learning, Saraswati. It is full of detail of ordinary as well as exceptional education. A possible early case of Attention Deficit Disorder ("when he was only five he was so restless that he never would sit quietly in the royal court for a few minutes") resulted in a prince seeming incapable of learning even the alphabet during twelve years of individual tuition, though encouraged by liberal applications of the cane to his body. The lad later took revenge by destroying a valuable parcel of books, since he "contemplated that these books were the cause of his life-long misery and felt greatly relieved" (by throwing them in the river). A financial audit then revealed that he had failed to pay his school fees in a previous life. The prince gets a job as a school janitor, engages in a little extra-curricular bondage and spanking with Saraswati, then takes off upcountry with five schoolgirls who want to see life before being tied down to boring marriages. This transgressive educational situation is eventually resolved without anyone going to jail.

DESAI, Anita (1980) *Clear Light of Day*. London: Heinemann. London: Penguin. v + 183 pp. The novel is set in 'Old' Delhi in the mid-to-late 1970s (p. 35), with frequent recall of the childhood years of the main characters, from c. 1935 to 1947. A minor but persistent character named Baba, apparently having significant developmental delay in infancy (p. 103), and a substantial lack of energy and savoir-faire in childhood and adult life, is lightly sketched via the thoughts and observations of his sisters, and also in the author's narration, as Baba hardly seems able to speak for himself (p. 106). Baba is portrayed as having always needed (or been perceived by his sisters to need) special care, a responsibility assumed by 'Aunt Mira', then inherited by his older sister Bimla. It is hard to know quite what the author had in mind for Baba. In the novel's structure, his presence serves to tie down Bimla and explain her lack of travel and 'progress' in life. He also bolsters the contrast between 'responsible, bossy, mission school head-girl' Bimla, who remains rooted in decaying Old Delhi, and her shy, bossed-about, despondent, younger sister Tara, who left home at the first opportunity, becoming the naive child-wife of a polished young diplomat. Baba's insubstantial, shadowy nature and apparent absence of decisiveness, energy or action (pp. 40-41, 103, et passim), and his hypersensitivity toward painful experiences, whether his own or those of another man or animal beaten in the street (14-16), might also seem to contrast with the hearty selfishness of the 'normal' adults, whether the parents who were preoccupied with playing bridge and hardly seemed to notice their children, or Bimla who ignores neighbours' protests about her dog barking through the night, or Raja, the elder brother who climbs socially and cultivates his own self-importance.

Yet Baba is also portrayed as indifferent to the vast irritation he causes by endless high-volume playing of the same old gramophone records, and obsessive spraying out and gathering up of his handful of pebbles. Within his limited roles, he appears strongly manipulative of the others. Once only in the novel, Baba shows real determination, scooping up for himself the gramophone (pp. 72-76) abandoned by wealthy Muslim neighbours in their flight from mob violence in the run-up to

Partition in 1947 (p. 28). Some awareness is shown that Baba's impaired abilities were partly constructed and enhanced by his sisters' impulses to boss, 'baby', or bully him (pp. 10, 12-13, 66, 161, 163-165). The 'retarded' identity was further emphasised by neighbourhood rumour (p. 123). When 'Aunt' Mira, herself a pathetic figure married at 12, widowed at 15 and punished by years of thankless servitude in her in-laws' household, was summoned to take charge of little Baba, the author has her promptly teaching him "games no one else had tried to play with him, thinking him too hopelessly backward", going on to a range of other small skills (105-106). The idle 'uselessness' of Baba is only an extreme case of the idleness and uselessness of many of the middle-class characters, e.g. the grey, earlier generation at the club, playing their little hand of outdated cards while the nation hurried toward the communal massacres of Partition; and for the 1970s, the neighbouring father describing his sons: "fat, lazy slobs, drinking whisky" (p. 32).

Retrieving fragments of Baba scattered through the book, his character has elements of credibility, but does not quite hang together. The lack of clarity about his cognitive status and odd behaviour could merely reflect the weakness of public information and awareness of mental retardation and behavioural abnormalities in India from the 1930s to the 1970s: none of the novel's characters could be expected to offer informed comments on his condition, or understand his potential for learning. Yet those points make it improbable that Aunt Mira, having minimal education and no experience of raising her own child, should enter the household and promptly start training little Baba in a sequence of fine movement skills. It is also unlikely that Desai, in 1980, meant to portray 'autism', as some reviewers seem to assume. Any such portrayal in 1980 would more likely have underlined features of 'classic' autism, and perhaps thrown in a 'refrigerator mother' (one of the western hypotheses of the 1960s) rather than a household where the parents' indifference to their children was counter-balanced by an ayah and other servants and siblings offering care. The snatch of the gramophone is also curious: hints of the siblings' respective ages suggest that Baba might have been 7 to 9 years old at this time, which would match his 'staggering' under the contraption's weight. Could this slightly-built, backward and inept young lad credibly be supposed to have known what the old HMV gramophone actually was, or imagine himself making it work - or lift and carry it away with the heavy old records stacked on top? (Some of the description of the older Baba's behaviour is more carefully crafted, and might be drawn from Desai's personal observations).

DESSIGANE R, Pattabiramin PZ & Filliozat J (1960) *La legende des jeux de Siva à Madurai, d'après les textes et les peintures*. 2 volumes. Pondichéry: Institut Français d'Indologie.

This French version of the Tamil *Tiruvilaiyatarpuranam* describes the 64 'games' of Shiva in volume I, based on a 16th century text, with paintings in volume II. In Section 57 (I: pp. 88-92) the story appears of how Shiva was enraged when his wife Minakshi failed to pay full attention to his learned lecture on the Vedas, so he condemned her to rebirth in a fisher caste. Quite understandably, their two sons Subrahmanya (Murukan) and Ganesha reacted by throwing Shiva's books into the sea. Shiva promptly cursed Subrahmanya to become "fils d'un marchand et qu'il serait muet" (p. 89) [This would mean that he was mute, but not necessarily deaf.] Later Shiva set about rehabilitating his family. Section 55: 1-14 (vol. I: pp. 85-86) tells of a talent contest among poets, who ask Shiva to be the judge, but instead he recommends that the merchant's remarkable son (i.e. Subrahmanya, or Murukan) should perform the task of literary arbiter. The poets ask how such a judge can give his verdict, since he is mute. "Le Dieu danseur leur dit que le fils du marchand hocherait la tête en signe d'approbation" (p. 86). The contest then goes ahead with the dumb boy judge giving his verdict by nods and signs [thus presumably sparing the audience the boredom of listening to a lengthy discourse on comparative poetic worthiness, with a personal history of the judge's own remarkable achievements, before the announcement of the winner and getting down to some serious drinking.]

DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY. *Buddhist Legends. Translated from the original Pali text of the Dhammapada Commentary*, by Eugene W Burlingame, 1921, 3 volumes, Harvard University Press; reprinted 1969, London: Luzac.

Homiletic tales of the former lives of the Buddha, mingling with oral traditions of the teachings of



Gautama Buddha, spread slowly across South Asia, eventually with formal explication and commentary being developed. The Dhammapada Commentary was compiled probably in the 5th century CE, related also to the JATAKA (see below). Many stories involve people with disabilities; e.g. people with learning difficulties appear in: Volume I, pp. 40-41, 155, 162, 271-272, 302-311; II: 115-118, 140-144 (folly of teaching a simpleton), 185, 254, 302-303; III: 157-159, 206. Disability results from past-life sin (including mocking a disabled person, I: 292); but disabled people sometimes appear in a positive light: I: 156-157, 281-282; 292; 302-304.

FERRO-LUZZI, Gabriella Eichinger (1996) *The Smell of the Earth. Rajanarayanan's literary description of Tamil village life*. Supplemento n. 86 agli ANNALI - vol.56 (1996), fasc. 1. Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale. vi + 89 pp. + plates.

The modern Tamil author Rajanarayanan conveys both crudeness and nuances of personal relationships in his native rural area, among which there are some descriptions of people with social or physical disabilities, deafness, or gender ambiguity, and responses to their condition. The mild and severe cruelties of ordinary life appear, sometimes relieved by unexpected decency and kindness (pp. 37-42, 68, 70, 78).

*JATAKA, or Stories of the Buddha's former births* (1895-1907). EB Cowell (editor), translated by R Chalmers, WHD Rouse, HT Francis, RA Neil, EB Cowell. Cambridge University Press. 6 volumes, 2,057 pp. Reprint 1993 in two volumes, Delhi: Low Price.

Probably dating from the 3rd century BC. Among many tales casually mentioning disability, two Jataka relate to special education. Nangalisa-Jataka (No. 123. volume I: 271-272) tells of efforts to teach a slow-learner using activity methods and a practical curriculum. However, the efforts fail: "This dullard will never learn". In Muga-Pakkha-Jataka, (No. 538 volume VI: 1-19), the Bodhisatta appears as a baby prince. Horrified by the harshness of the king, he pretends to be a deaf and dumb cripple. Nurses and courtiers are not convinced, so they try various tests based on child development norms and audiological principles. They watch him closely while causing a conch to be blown suddenly under his bed. They shine lights on him suddenly in the night, but by mental concentration the prince keeps still. They tempt him with milk, fruit or toys and try to surprise him with animals, according to the ages at which children normally responded to such stimuli. (These assessment practices were recorded more than 2,000 years ago). Finally they decide the case is hopeless, and the boy is taken to the woods to be disposed of; but that too does not turn out as expected.

See further examples of disabilities and related material in No.s 1, Apannaka-J. (blockhead eaten by goblins); 41, Losaka-J (street child, abandoned, begging, forever starving); 80, Bhimasena-J (Bodhisatta as crooked dwarf); 107 Salittaka-J (cripple on a little cart, expert at stone throwing); 171, Kalyana-Dhamma-J (misunderstanding through hearing loss); 184, Giridanta-J (lame horse-trainer, limping horse); 193, Culla-Paduma-J (maimed robber); 202 Keli-Sila-J (wanton cruelty to the elderly); 221, Kasava-J (city charitable organisation); 232, Vina-Thuna-J (silly girl elopes with hunchback); 346, Kesava-J (alms with love better than alms given to acquire status); 424, Aditta-J (alms to the deserving or undeserving poor?); 499, Sivi-J (beneficent king gives away his eyes); 519, Sambula-J (wife caring for leprosy-stricken prince); 531, Kusa-J (long story in which hunchback maid plays important part). Jataka No. 516, (vol. V: 38-41), seems to draw a very early picture of advanced leprosy, listing whiteness of limbs and head, a marred and bent frame, weakened hand, suppurating sores with a terrible smell, and people driving away this "leper" with sticks and stones.

KUNZANG CHODEN (1993) *Folktales of Bhutan*. Bangkok: White Lotus.

The living tradition of these moral tales, some of which are known in many countries, blends everyday life with the world of gods, spirits, animals, monsters and magic. Disability, folly and deformities are casually woven in, as in the stories of the old blind couple who catch a hungry boy, who in turn finds their eyes for them and turns his enemy into a cretin (pp. 21-26); the blind man, the hunchback and the princess with three breasts (68-71); the dull-witted older brother and his clever younger brother (83-87); the Silly Leopard (89-92); the goat's tail that gains half a kingdom but

everything in it has some small defect (109-114); the Ghost with the Water Goiter (115-119); the intelligent Lame Monkey (125-131), the parents who devise a successful behaviour modification scheme for their idle, apathetic son (133-135); the Za spirits who protect the Buddhist teachings and can cause or cure paralysis (102, 196-97).

*The MAHABHARATA of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa. Translated into English prose from the original Sanskrit text.* 4 volumes, translated by KM Ganguly (1883-1896). Reprinted 1993, from the 1970 edition. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

India's vast compendium of ancient knowledge and legend (some 2.5 million words in this translation) is built around the battles of two families with competing claims to the throne. A major figure is Dhritarashtra who became king after his brother Pandu died; but his legitimacy is disputed because he is blind from birth. Reference is made to Dhritarashtra's blindness in various ways. He claims it as one reason why he could not prevent the dispute between his sons and nephews. Trying to placate Pandu's sons after their defeat in the first gambling match, he appeals to them with the fact that he is "old and blind". He complains to his driver that, because he is blind and unable to exert himself actively, "my wretched son believes me to be a fool, and listens not to my words". He informs that [eldest] son, Duryodhana, that even his own great-grandfather Devapi, the eldest of three princes, could not inherit the kingdom because he had a skin-disease: "The gods do not approve a king that is defective of a limb". After Bhima has defeated Duryodhana in single combat (with a blow that is against the rules), Pandu's sons go to meet Dhritarashtra. But their ally, Krishna, craftily introduces the blind king to an iron statue, in place of Bhima. The king seizes the statue and crushes it in his embrace, suffering much bruising and vomiting blood as a result. He believes he has killed Bhima. After the rage has passed, they tell him that he has destroyed an iron statue. In a late chapter, Dhritarashtra and his wife Gandhari (who has worn a blindfold across her eyes throughout her marriage, so as not to see more than her husband) move across the scene. Sighted Kunti walks ahead, with eye-banded Gandhari's hand on her shoulder; blind Dhritarashtra follows, with his hand on Gandhari's shoulder.

There are many more references to impairment and characters with disabilities. Some may be found as follows;

- \* Adi Parva chapters 1, 3, 42, 49, 63, 67, 72, 76, 79, 83-84 (Yayati), 95, 98, 104 (Dirghatamas), 106 (birth of blind Dhritarashtra), 109, 110 (Gandhari), 134, 136, 143, 147 (pot-head Gatotkacha), 225 (industrial disability from smoke).
- \* Sabha P. 5, 10, 17 (Jarasandha), 23, 30, 42 (Sisupala), 50, 51, 55, 63, 72, 80.
- \* Vana P. 2 (mental illness), 49, 70 (Vahuka), 107, 112 (Rishyasringa), 116 (sons of Jamadagni), 119, 122 (Chyavana), 124-125, 132-134 (eight-ways disabled Ashtavakra), 136-137, 149, 199, 206 (rottenness in society leads to birth defects), 208, 211, 229 (madness), 231 (how to control husbands), 238, 270 (Vishnu as dwarf), 274 (hunchback Manthara), 292-296 (Savitri and Dyumatsena).
- \* Virata P. 2 (Arjuna as eunuch), 4, 11, 18, 70.
- \* Udyoga P. 12, 22, 30 (Yudhishtira greets all the disabled people at court), 31, 33, 34, 44, 51, 55, 64, 69 (blind leading blind), 71, 92, 130, 147, 149, 163, 169, 195 (spies disguised as disabled people)
- \* Bhishma P. 3, 122.
- \* Drona P. 51, 142, 182, 202 (deformed retinue of Mahadeva).
- \* Karna P. 4.
- \* Salya P. 58 (breaking Duryodhana's thighs).
- \* Saaptika P. 6 (exemption from fighting)
- \* Stree P. 4 (growth of foetus), 12, 24 (roving arm now cut off).
- \* Santi P. 9, 14, 16, 23, 25, 26, 37, 43, 59, 69, 83, 90, 135, 157, 160, 163, 174, 175, 180 (Kasyapa), 213, 214, 262, 266, 278, 281, 287, 288, 289, 299, 302 (infancy), 304, 314 (Tamas), 342.
- \* Anusasana P. 17, 23, 24, 26, 38, 40 (Sakra may appear as an idiot), 49, 59, 85, 90, 99, 104 (don't mock disabled people), 124 (lucky dwarfs), 145, 146.
- \* Aswamedha P. 7, 36, 59, 90.
- \* Asramavasika P. 5, 15, 35.

MASSON, J Moussaieff (1980) Notes on Kubja the hunchback and Krishna, with some observations on perversions. In: *The Oceanic Feeling. The origins of religious sentiment in Ancient India*, pp. 110-124. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Jeffrey Masson, a Sanskrit scholar before taking up psychoanalysis, translates and comments in detail on some legends of Krishna and the hunchback Kubja (in which Krishna straightens her body and then either makes fun of her, or flirts with her, or makes love to her, or all of these activities), with comparison of an episode between Rama and Surpanakha which Masson sees as being a key event in the Ramayana. [A different interpretation would be that it was Rama's behaviour with the hunchback Manthara which set off the chain of events precipitating Rama's banishment. See Noel Sheth, 1983, The justification for Krishna's affair with the hunchbacked woman, *Purana* 25: 225-234, for further complications and recapitulation.]

When Masson reaches for an explanation "that looks to early experience, especially childhood experience" to illuminate Krishna's behaviour, he has the sense to realise that, "Of course, in the case of a legend, we cannot have access to genuine information about the early life of a real patient", but is not deterred from seeking some supposedly 'earlier [legendary] incident' with which to bolster the reconstruction of Krishna's motivations (from a few thousand years later, and half way across the world). Masson "of course" admits something of the leaps involved: "Of course, I am speaking here with reference to the views of redactors of this myth, for whom Krishna represents a later reincarnation of Rama - so the psychological comments relate to the unconscious needs of these redactors, and to readers of the legend who may react with similar feelings" (p. 116).

MASSON JM (1981) Hanuman as an imaginary companion. *J. American Oriental Society* 101: 355-361.

Masson suggests that the universe of the Ramayana is a children's universe. The marvellous divine monkey Hanuman, a child's imaginary companion, is both illegitimate and deformed. [By the time Masson has finished the psychoanalysis, Hanuman is also a seriously mixed-up monkey.]

MEHTA, Ved P (1957) *Face to face; an autobiography*. Boston: Little, Brown. xiv + 370 pp.  
Ved Mehta, born at Lahore in 1934, lost his sight at 8 years. He was later educated in the USA and UK, and achieved fame as a writer and prolific journalist.

MEHTA VP (1982) *Vedi. My early education in an Indian orphanage for the blind*. Oxford UP. 258 pp.  
Childhood reminiscences, and education 1938-1943.

MEHTA, V. (1984) *Daddyji - Mamaji*. London: Picador. 346 pp.  
Combines two books first published in 1972 (Daddyji) and 1979 (Mamaji), giving Ved Mehta's parental family histories. On pp. 121-131, his severe illness early in 1938, consequent blindness, and arrangements for him to attend a special school (when not quite five years old) are told from his father's viewpoint as medical officer at Gujrat (Punjab). On pp. 330-342, the same events are told from his mother's viewpoint, with superstitious reactions and use of quack medicines to try to restore Ved's sight.

*The PANCHATANTRA* (1925) translated by AF Ryder, new edition 1964, Chicago UP. vii + 470 pp.  
The world's first 'special education manual', originating probably between 100 BC and 500 CE. The 'outer shell' story tells of the sons of King Amara Sakti, who were "supreme blockheads". Authorship is ascribed to Vishnu Sharma, a learned Brahmin who undertook to teach statecraft to the stupid princes in six months through a series of amusing animal fables, thus enlisting their interest and motivating them to learn. At least two of the fable characters have the names of fools, i.e. a lion called Dim-Wit (Mandamati), and a foolish king addressed as 'beloved of the gods', a phrase sometimes used for an idiot [cf. French "les enfants de Dieu".] Yet at least two tales have people of modest brain

and common sense who survive, while intellectuals meet their doom. [Stories from the *Panchatantra* have spread to the folklore of half the world.]

*PANCHATANTRA* / *Vishnu Sharma* (1993) translated by Chandra Rajan. New Delhi: Penguin. iv + 453 pp.

(See previous item). Rajan's princes are "dunces of the first water, each one more dull-witted than the other" (p. 4). One story epitomises the traditional husband's contribution to child-rearing. He day-dreams of a son being born to him, whom he calls Moonbeams. One day Moonbeams will see Papa sitting in the garden near the stables, book in hand. He will get out of Mama's arms and crawl over to ride on Papa's knee, but will go too near the horses. "This will make me angry and I shall shout to the Brahmani, his mother, 'Hey, you! catch hold of the boy, pick him up.' But being busy with household chores my wife will not hear. Whereupon I shall rise straight away and give her a good kick on her behind." (p. 420)

RUSHDIE, Salman (1983 / 1984) *Shame*. London: Jonathan Cape. London: Picador (Pan). 286 pp. In this savage political satire, a major character (obviously based on General Zia ul Haque, who ruled Pakistan from 1977 until his assassination in 1988) has a daughter, 'Sufiya Zinobia', variously dubbed an "idiot", "simpleton", "goof", "nothing upstairs" "damaged", "birdbrain", "moron", "mental case", "beast", "deranged", etc, attributed to an early "brain fever that turned her into an idiot" (pp. 100-101, 119-123). Chapter 4 begins "This is a novel about Sufiya Zinobia..." (p. 59), and Sufiya is in trouble from the moment of her birth (89-90). Supposedly, she absorbs and accumulates within herself the shame and shamefulness of Pakistan's corrupt national politics, gender discrimination and inept Islamisation. A narrator's voice reflects "Sufiya Zinobia, the idiot, is blushing. // I did it to her, I think, to make her pure. Couldn't think of another way of creating purity in what is supposed to be the Land of the Pure ... and idiots are, by definition, innocent" (120); yet Sufiya finally is portrayed as a vampire or panther haunting the country, engaging in various kinds of bizarre and disgusting behaviour (135-145, 197-200, 210-220, 231-237, 239, 242-244, 250, 253-263, 285-286).

[The real-life daughter of Zia ul Haque was born with impaired hearing and needed oral surgery and speech therapy, but her difficulties were not accurately diagnosed and addressed for some years, during which it was assumed that she had a mental disability. After taking charge of Pakistan, Zia made no secret of his little daughter, who often accompanied him on state occasions. (A miniature military uniform was made, so that she could 'inspect the troops' along with her Daddy. He addressed some public meetings, speaking specifically as "the father of a disabled child". Later when modern rehabilitative and educational measures were under way with his daughter, Zia could be seen in public using sign language with her). Zia's political and religious impact on Pakistan continues to outrage people holding different beliefs. His intervention to make substantial increases in national investment in disability services and skills development, with appointment of senior military officers (two being also fathers of disabled children) to push the developments forward, usually passes without criticism.]

Rushdie's portrayal of Sufiya Zinobia probably reflected common attitudes and rumours about any kind of presumed 'mental' disorder (or prelingual deafness) in Pakistan at that time, and possibly some of Rushdie's own thoughts and attitudes too. It might not have occurred to the angry young writer, that the entirely harmless, real-life daughter of his political enemy could grow up to live an independent and more or less normal life, which in fact she did; or that readers knowing the background might feel some disgust at his choice of weapon for attacking Zia.

SELIM, KUMUR B (2006) Nonti Natakam. In: G Albrecht et al (eds) *Encyclopedia of Disability*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

The *nontinatakam* (Tamil cripple drama) is a morality tale traditionally performed as street theatre in South-East India, featuring a rascal who enjoys crime and immorality, before being punished by amputation of a leg and maybe an arm. Renouncing evil, he regains his limb by divine intervention; but the story includes much slapstick and bawdy to entertain the crowd. Disability comes through bad behaviour, but repentance may be rewarded. Nonti natakam is at the downmarket end of Tamil lit,

while the classier side runs to kings with physical deformities. (See Shulman, below).

SEN, Dinesh Chandra (editor) (1923-1932) *Eastern Bengal Ballads*. 4 volumes. University of Calcutta.

Compilation of Bengali ballads preserved by rural folksingers, with Bengali texts and English translations. Two of them tell stories in which blind people are prominent ("Kanchanmala. The Bride of a Blind Baby", vol. II (I) 79-116; "The Blind Lover", vol. IV (I) 211-237). The ballad of Kanchanmala is probably among the oldest in the collection. The blind baby arrives suddenly in Kanchanmala's life, carried by his widower father, a Brahmin beggar keen to be relieved of the burden. Kanchanmala's father promptly averts an evil omen by marrying Kanchanmala, aged nine, to the baby. A suitably heart-rending tale ensues. Kanchanmala, bewailing her lot, heads off into the forest with her new husband or toy boy. The babe's eyes (and other deformities) are cured by a sage. At the age of six the boy is abducted. Kanchan wanders the earth seeking him. Eventually she finds him, now equipped with a second wife. Kanchan gets herself hired as their servant, and re-establishes herself in her husband's affections. The second wife, Princess Kunjalata, soon learns the whole story and plots Kanchan's removal. Expelled, Kanchan undergoes further vicissitudes, then meets her husband again, now a beggar with eyes blinded by continuous weeping. She resorts once more to the sage, who agrees to cure the blindness, only on the rather perverse condition that Kanchan return her husband to Wife No. 2, doing so 'with perfect tranquillity of mind'. Kanchan rises to the challenge; then wanders off into a sombre sunset. The curtain falls, to sobbing in the stalls. Here, blindness in a helpless male offers an opportunity for female devotion, self-sacrifice and nobility of soul.

More down-to-earth is the ballad of the Blind Lover, part of which is told from the handsome blind youth's corner. It opens with him begging alms door to door, proclaiming his isolation and desperation, while his haunting flute beguiles the minds of householder and princess alike. The king, enchanted but perhaps lacking in foresight, or Freudian insight, engages the young man to give his daughter flute lessons. To this princess, the blind youth describes his life as a fluting beggar: "I have no name, princess. They call me a 'mad fellow' and mock me. There are some who take delight in throwing dust at my person and annoying me in other ways, while there are kind men who receive me well. Some serve me with refuse food and think that the mad man would be glad at such an act of charity." Inevitably, the princess falls madly in love with him. Many of the ballads contain some disability or child abuse references, e.g. vol. I (I) 52, 73, 196, 230-31, 250; vol. II (I) 14, 200, 228, 251, 286, 292-93, 391, 393, 403, 424, 450; vol. IV (I) 50, 105, 382, 389-90, 395; also descriptions of the near-starvation conditions leading to disabilities e.g. I (I) 170; II (I) 41-45, 223-25.

SHATTAN. *Manimekhalai (The dancer with the magic bowl)*, translated by Alain Daniélou with TV Gopala Iyer (1993) New Delhi: Penguin.

Probably from the 2nd century CE, at the close of the third and final *Sangam* of Tamil literature, the South Indian context and the story of *Manimekhalai* differ substantially from the world of the North Indian Sanskrit literature. Evading hot pursuit by wealthy young men with improper intentions, the ravishing young courtesan Manimekhalai is led to abandon her hereditary profession, in favour of religious notions and social work with the poor and disabled. Behind each character and action is a sub-plot and earlier activity, told by some wise old woman or a passing goddess. Thus the story of the magic bowl (for giving food aid to the poor, sick and disabled) is recounted, and eventually the bowl is handed over to our heroine, after she has duly venerated the Buddha, and on condition that her charitable motives be 'really sincere'. "Around Manimekhalai ... there soon gathered the blind, the deaf, the crippled, the orphans, the idiots, the ascetics who performed severe practices, all those that were hungry, the poor dressed in rags, and hundreds of thousands of other living beings, who crowded together to approach her" (p. 149).

SHULMAN, David D (1985) *The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry*. Princeton University Press.

This is a substantial, somewhat complicated book, devoted to structuralist perspectives on the frailties and humours of historical and literary kingship in southern India. Shulman notes the “amazing number of stories about kings who are afflicted by some physical flaw or disablement”, listing a variety of these before noting “a whole series of lame or crippled kings (including the heroes of the late medieval ‘cripple-dramas,’ the *nontinatakam*)” (pp. 88-94, 373-379).

SIDHWA, Bapsi (1988 / 1989) *Ice-Candy-Man*. London: Heinemann. London: Penguin (1989). v + 277.

Located in a ‘civilised’ quarter of Lahore around the time of Independence (1947), the young girl Lenny (“Lame Lenny! Three for a penny! Fluffy pants and fine fanny!”, p. 3) grows up in a privileged Parsee family, benefitting from extra attention as a ‘polio victim’ (13-17) amidst the casual obscenities and improprieties of the family servants and various hangers-on. The inter-communal mob violence gathers pace as preparations are made for the ancient nation to be ripped asunder. Against this background, Lenny’s limp surfaces only occasionally, as a worry or as the accompaniment to a wiggling *derrière* (216-218). As the book closes, the impairment has practically disappeared.

SMITH, William L (1979) The *Pati-Ninda* in Medieval Bengali literature. *J. American Oriental Society* 99: 105-109.

The *Pati-Ninda* occur in early Bengali *mangal* poetry, often during descriptions of rural weddings. They consist of verbal abuse by married women, denouncing physical defects in their husbands, e.g. elephantiasis, blindness, scoliosis, lameness, sexual inadequacy, ugliness, lack of teeth; and bewailing their misfortune in having to live with such repulsive creatures. Economic poverty did not seem to preclude a richness of descriptive powers. Public recitation of *Pati-ninda* gave some relief from Hindu norms exhorting wives to treat their husbands as gods. Some examples are translated.

SMITH WL (1988) *Ramayana Traditions in Eastern India. Assam, Bengal, Orissa*. Department of Indology, University of Stockholm.

pp. 84-91, “Apologetic Techniques”. Discusses traditional creative efforts to fill perceived gaps in the karmic logic of Ramayana versions, or to provide justifications for characters’ moral lapses. Several of these involve disabilities, e.g. Manthara’s hump and her reasons for taking revenge on Rama; Dasaratha’s accidental killing of a boy who supported aged, blind parents; the blindness of that boy’s father had arisen from his revulsion when washing the legs of a sage who suffered from elephantiasis; Kaikeyi had also been cursed for mocking an aged, infirm, hearing-impaired Brahmin. The nuances of various traditions suggest an ongoing editorial awareness of the depressed position of disabled people as a result of their rejection by society.

STEEL, Flora Annie W (1893) *From the Five Rivers*. (1901 edition.) London: Heinemann. 212 pp. In pp. 79-96, the story of “Shah Sujah’s Mouse” is clearly modelled on the “chuas of Shah Daulah”, i.e. the group of children and young people having microcephaly, who lived together at the shrine of Shah Daulah at Gujrat, in the Punjab. (Currently, the earliest textual evidence of the chuas is from 1839, but the custom may date from the 18th century). Steel includes some discussion of the legends and possible origins of chuas. The novelist’s microcephalic Mouse wanders and begs by himself, for the purposes of the story, whereas the custom recorded from the mid-19th century was for the chuas to be rented out to accompany fakirs on begging itineraries.

SWYNNERTON, Charles (1892, reprint 1978) *Folk Tales from the Upper Indus*. Islamabad: National Institute of Folk Heritage.

Includes the escapades of ‘Lull the Idiot’ (pp. 18-31), with sharp satire of rural society. Lull has approximate equivalents in the Mullah Nasruddin stories of South West Asia, or Till Eulenspiegel of Western Europe, and many other counterparts.

THORBURN, Septimus S (1876/1978) *Bannu or our Afghan Frontier* (Lahore, Sang-e-Meel). Includes many Pukhtun tales and proverbs that concerning numskulls, folly and blindness, e.g. pp. 207-210, 215, 280, 282, 308-312, 349, 357, 364, 370, 375, 398, 405, 411.

VASISHTA, Madan (2006) *Deaf in Delhi. A memoir*. Gallaudet University Press. One of the key participants in Indian Sign Language research over 30 years, Madan Vasishta has written a witty and observant memoir of his earlier years, becoming deaf at the age of 11 in rural India, battling his way through the 1950s with this unexpected turn of life, eventually joining the deaf community at Delhi, and from there moving to Gallaudet University to begin a life of learning, teaching and researching in the US and India.

## 4. MIDDLE EAST

“ABDOLAH, Kader” (2006) *My Father’s Notebook*. Translated by Susan Massotty. HarperCollins. From Dutch original, *Spijkerschrift*, Breda: Uitgeverij De Geus, 2000.

This remarkable book by an Iranian emigré is built around a deaf character, Aga Akbar, who was a carpet weaver in a village of Persia, and later moved to the modern world of Teheran. Aga Akbar is the father of the narrator, and together they communicate by ‘home sign’, which the son interprets to his father’s rural world. Reflections on the culture, religion and history of Persia / Iran are cast in the format of a novel about various kinds of communication. The tale is imbued with the Qur’anic verses, Persian poetry and ceremonies of rural Muslim life, in a world that begins to change rapidly under political and religious pressures.

ABU ‘L-`ALA AL MA`ARRI. *The Letters of Abu ‘l-`Ala of Ma`arrat al-Nu`man, edited from the Leyden manuscript, with the life of the author by al-Dhahabi*, translated with annotation by DS Margoliouth (1898). *Anecdota Oxoniensia*. Oxford Clarendon.

The biography of the blind poet, savant and freethinker Abu’l `Ala al-Ma`arri (973-1057) occupies pp. xi - xliii. He tasted the literary and cultural life of Baghdad, but after some quarrels and humiliations returned to his native city. There he developed an ascetic lifestyle and became well-known and influential. Al-Ma`arri’s prolific correspondence may provide more insights into the man and his times, than the florid and often convoluted poetical and theological writings.

ALSTER, Bendt (1997) *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer. The world’s earliest proverb collections*. 2 volumes, Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press.

Dated before 2500 BC, the proverb collections appear in Volume I in roman transliteration and probable English translation (where known). Volume II provides commentary, glossary and 133 plates. Excluding various duplicates (unless their commentary includes additional points), the proverbs including clear reference to disability are serial numbered: 1.66 lame, halt, (comments in II: pp. 347-348); 2.61, bad hearing (II: 366); 2.120, lame, halt (II: 373); 5.57, deaf; 10.11, paralyzed; 11.85, lame; 12 Sec.C9, paralyzed; 13.22 - 13.25, lame (II: 429); 15 Sec.B6, halt (II: 433); 17 Sec.B3, paralyzed (II: 436); UET 6/2 339 (p. 322), deaf; MDP 27,111, lame, paralyzed (II: 480). Nine of these concern physical disability, though in two cases the point of the proverb is not at all obvious. Three involve deafness or impaired hearing, but in two the hearing problem is incidental to the proverb. There are some proverbs concerning fools (not listed here). Proverbs where a reference to disability is less clear, but may be deduced or appears conjecturally in the commentary, are: 1.29, blind (II: 344); 2.43, maimed, voice problem (II: 364); 3.142, eye problem (II: 390); 5.50, possibly lame (II: 402-403); 8 Sec.B11, blind? (II: 414); 8 Sec.B35, eye problem (II: 416-417); 21 Sec.A16, club foot? (II: 443-444); 21 Sec.D3, temporary mental confusion? (II: 444). Some of these conjectural

meanings make up for the curious lack of blindness proverbs in the initial batch. The first of those listed above (1.66: “In the city of the lame, the halt are couriers”), is known in many languages by the equivalent, “In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king”.

*ARABIAN Nights' Entertainments*, edited with introduction and notes by Robert L Mack (1995 /1998), Oxford World Classics, Oxford University Press. xxxv + 939 pp.

Often known as the “1001 Nights”, many stories in this collection probably originate in India or Persia, and are associated with the story-teller Scheherazade beguiling Sultan Schahriar in order to save her own life and those of many other young women, possibly in the 9th century. The stories are well embedded in the ethics and morality of Middle Eastern life, with features of Islam prominent, but also a few Jewish and Christian characters. Some disabled people appear incidentally; a few are more noticeable, e.g. the disfigured Amine (pp. 66-80); the Little Hunchback (222-228) leading to tales of people with hands severed, and then to the hunchback Bacbouc, his toothless brother Backbarah, blind brother Bacbac, and brother Schacabac with a hare lip (229-306); and the blind man, Baba Abdalla (729-736).

ASIK ÇELEBI. The Tale of Me'ali, Magistrate of Mihaliç, translated by WG Andrews. In: Kemal Silay (editor) *An Anthology of Turkish Literature*, 138-146. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, Turkish Studies, & Turkish Ministry of Culture.

Lewd and humorous 16th century Turkish tale of a magistrate overcome by lust for a lovely boy; interesting for its graphic depiction of the ghastly state of leprosy sufferers in a colony to which the magistrate is lured, who are tricked into believing that he is one of them.

AUBINEAU, Michel (1975) *Zoticos de Constantinople nourricier des pauvres et serviteur des lépreux*. *Analecta Bollandia* 93: 67-108.

This detailed, scholarly study on the martyred saint Zoticos gives a provenance of the sole manuscript (probably 11th century) of his Vita; the available Greek text with French translation; points of philological interest and some detailed textual comparison between the Vita and a later source; and a discussion of the significance of the text in historical and hagiological context. The story begins in the time of Constantine (c. 274-337 CE), whose noble reign reportedly had one blemish: a decree ordering the banishment and destruction of people with leprosy and those combatting the disease. Zoticos had been given responsibilities in the new capital at Byzantium, and enjoyed Constantine's confidence. To by-pass this decree, Zoticos requested and received gold to buy “precious stones” for the benefit of the emperor; but used the gold to ransom leprosy-disabled people who were being taken to their destruction, and to set up an encampment where they were cared for. The scheme was denounced by courtiers when Constantine died and his son Constant[ius] (who favoured Arianism) took power; but Zoticos invited the new emperor to come and see the “precious stones”. Constant was greeted by a congregation of lepers, among them being his own daughter, who had been expelled under the decree, and rescued by Zoticos. Unamused by this ploy, Constant had Zoticos tied and dragged by wild mules until his body fell in pieces. Miraculous events followed. Constant repented of his errors and founded the “Zoticos Hospital” to continue the saint's work.

This foundation seems to have been destroyed and rebuilt a number of times over the centuries (according to *Synaxarion*, Dec. 30, it was rebuilt, after an earthquake, by Romanus III (1028-1034)). Historicity of the Zoticos vita cannot easily be substantiated, but he is mentioned independently in 472, as one who cared for orphans. A tradition of care for the poor, sick or suffering from leprosy continued to the time of the Emperor Michael IV (1034-41), when the extant manuscript originated. Indeed, Michael IV (see Psellus, *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*) suffered from epilepsy; and the Vita concludes with a celebration of this emperor's care for leprosy sufferers, bathing their wounds with his own hands. Aubineau speculates on the concepts and writings of Byzantine and earlier hagiographers, tracing back the idea of money given by rulers for building a palace, but actually spent on the poor. Parallels can be found as far back as the story of the apostle Thomas and



King Gondapor (or Gundaphor and other transliterations) in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (Acts of Thomas, Second Act, 17-24; translation available online).

BOTTÉRO, Jean & KRAMER, Samuel N (1989) *Lorsque les Dieux Faisaient l'Homme. Mythologie Mésopotamienne*. Paris: Gallimard. 755 pp.

With an extensive introduction to the background of Mesopotamian cuneiform literature, religion and mythology (pp. 1-104), selected texts are presented in translation (to French) from Sumerian and Akkadian, illustrating cosmological beginnings. Stories of Enki (known in Akkadian as Éa) occupy pp. 151-202, including the brief tale of Enki and Ninmah (188-194) with commentary (194-198). The available materials, from the second millennium BC, have suffered damage over the centuries, and the meaning of some words and phrases remain obscure, yet the Enki and Ninmah story as a whole is more or less comprehensible, and provides an interesting extension to the general run of cosmological accounts.

**Enki and Ninmah.** After the cosmos was set up, the lesser gods began grumbling about how much work they had to do. Prodded by Namma (the primeval mother goddess), the designer-engineer-fixer Enki made some midwife goddesses, so that mankind could be produced and put to work. Celebrating this manoeuvre, Enki and senior midwife Ninmah had some beer together. Ninmah reflected that their new line, mankind, could turn out good or bad, and boasted that it would depend on what fate she assigned to each. Enki, inventing the role of Vocational Rehabilitation Advisor, took up the challenge. Ninmah took clay and produced a man who could hold nothing in his enfeebled hands; but Enki assigned him to the King's service. Ninmah made one who was blind; Enki put him into the song and music line at court. Ninmah made a man with paralysed feet; Enki's solution here was not so clear - presumably a sedentary occupation, fortune telling? silver-working? [Another version has this third man created as an idiot; he would easily have been found employment in the civil service.] The fourth man had a problem of keeping his sperm or his urine from flowing at the wrong time. Enki worked a cure by driving out a demon. The fifth was a woman who could not have children. This suited her for a place in the royal harem. The sixth person was made without sexual parts. Enki put this one among the eunuchs at court. Having arranged a self-sustaining role in life for these six examples of humans with abnormalities, Enki shaped up a profoundly disabled man [or baby?] and challenged Ninmah to find him a role in which he could earn his bread. Under some taunting from Enki, Ninmah could find no solution, and flunked the test; but the available text has deteriorated, so the endgame is unclear.

Possible clarifications are discussed by Bottéro & Kramer, e.g. the adroitness of Enki's vocational guidance to each disabled candidate. Perhaps the man who could hold nothing in his hand had the merit of being able neither to steal nor to 'palm' a bribe -- ironic commentary on functionaries in all times and places? With whatever nuances of interpretation, the story could be read as one of the world's earliest debates on the need for social roles in which people with disabilities may play their part using other abilities. [It may be significant that another Enki cosmological story, involving the deity Ninhursag, has a herb-tasting session followed by a story listing body parts (head, hair, nose, mouth, throat, arms, sides, flanks), their ailments, and a separate solution is created for each category. (Bottéro & Kramer pp. 150-164, specifically pp. 157-159, commentary pp. 162-64). There seems to be a differentiation between the categories of 'disease' and of 'chronic disabling condition'.]

CHARDIN, Jean [John Chardin] (1711) *Voyage du Chevallier Chardin en Perse et autres Lieux de l'Orient*. Nouvelle edition. Amsterdam.

Jean Chardin (1643-1713) made several visits to Persia, in the 1660s and 1670s. In volume 5, he noted the custom of rendering royal princes blind, to avoid contests over inheriting the throne (pp. 241-243). In volume VIII, pp. 47-48, three blind princes appear, and in pp. 54-59 there is a remarkable description of the blind prince Mirza Rezi and his two blind brothers, and of their lives, studies and activities. [There are various editions, with different volume numbers and pagination.]

DALLEY, Stephanie (editor & translator) (1998) *Myths From Mesopotamia. Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and others*. Oxford University Press. xxi + 337 pp.

The Epic of Gilgamesh (two versions, pp. 39-135, 136-153), possibly from the 2nd millennium BC, appears to contain an early description of a 'feral child and young man' called Enkidu, primitive, hairy (138, 321), raised on wild asses' milk (91, 138, 140), eating grass with gazelles and drinking at cattle's water holes (53, 91), unfamiliar with ordinary human food and drink (138). After some social and intimate education by a hired representative of Eve (55-56, 138), Enkidu joins Gilgamesh in his noble quest. He suffers an episode of paralysis (70, 128, 142), but recovers to support his friend through various battles.

GHALY, Mohammad MI (2006) Writings on disability in Islam: the 16th-century polemic on Ibn Fahd's *al-Nukat al-Ziraf*. *Arab Studies Journal* (Fall 2005 - Spring 2006), pp. 9-38.

While focusing a particular controversy, on the issue whether an author had illegitimately drawn attention to prominent people having physical impairments and exposed them to ridicule, the author usefully sketches and comments on a much wider range of Arabic literature in which people with impairments and disabilities appear for various purposes, e.g. juristic rulings and comic anecdotes, from the 9th century CE onward.

HAMILTON GL (1912) La source d'un épisode de Baudouin de Sebourg. *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 36: 129-59.

The convoluted career, in many language versions, of a legend on how Moses got a speech impediment. As an infant he was shown to Pharaoh. Sat on the monarch's lap, he pulled his crown off and threw it down (or maybe pulled Pharaoh's beard). Courtiers, aghast, debated this ominous act. A test was proposed. The babe was shown two basins. One held a glowing coal, the other a jewel. He reached for the jewel, but an angel guided his hand to the hot coal, which stuck to his hand. Putting his hand to his mouth for comfort, lips and tongue were also burnt; hence the speech impediment.

HERODOTUS [5th century BC]. *The Histories*, translated by A de Sélincourt, revised with introduction and notes by AR Burn (1972). London: Penguin. 652 pp.

Herodotus recorded and commented on much Middle Eastern history or legend of his time, with incidental comments on people having various kinds of impairment or disability, and some remedies, e.g. deafness or muteness (pp. 54-55, 75, 129-130); leprosy (98); the 'marriage market' in which men paid for the pretty girls but others were paid to marry the ones with impairments (120-121); dwarfs or pygmies (141, 284); blindness (170, 183-85, 430); punitive amputation, mutilation, blinding, impalement (181, 195, 233, 251, 266-269, 271, 284, 564, 613-14, 621); madness, behavioural disturbance, or epilepsy (21, 217-219, 263-64, 355); eunuchs, castration (204, 244, 284, 558-59); lameness, prosthetic foot (256-258, 325, 374); speech defect (322-23); and more. Some have independent historical confirmation, others do not.

HUSAYN, Taha (1929-32) *al-Ayyam*. 3 volumes. Cairo: Dar al-Ma`arif.

Vol. 1, translated by EH Paxton (1932) *An Egyptian Childhood*. Washington: Three Continents Press.

Vol. 2 transl. H Wayment (1948) *The Stream of Days*. London: Longmans.

Vol. 3 transl. K Cragg (1976) *A Passage to France*. Leiden: Brill.

Famous autobiography of the earlier years of a blind Arab who became one of Egypt's outstanding 20th century literary figures and modernisers. Taha Husayn (1898-1973) was born in an Egyptian village and lost his sight early in life. He learnt to memorise and recite the Qur'an, and later studied at Al-Azhar, and then at the secular university of Cairo, writing a dissertation on the blind poet Abu'l Ala al-Ma`arri (see above). Husayn studied in France 1915-1919, gaining a doctorate and a French wife. Back in Egypt, he taught literature at Cairo. His first book, using source criticism on pre-Islamic poetry, was controversial; but successive volumes of *al-Ayyam* (The Days) were well received. A

prolific writer, critic, and campaigner for modernisation, he became Egypt's Minister of Education (1950-1952).

IBN KHALLIKAN. *Ibn Khallikan's Biographical Dictionary translated from the Arabic*. 4 volumes (1842-1871), translated by Baron Mac Guckin de Slane, Paris, for Oriental Translation Fund. Thirteenth century CE collection of 865 biographies of well-known Muslims through six centuries, many also giving information on lesser known persons. Over 100 entries mention some disability, often recorded in a nickname (e.g. II: 3, 10, 'broken-tooth', 'the one-handed', 'the club-footed'). Some became learned men in spite of childhood disabilities; others became disabled in old age. Many entries have anecdotes involving disabilities. See e.g. Volume I: 83-86, Thalab, a deaf scholar who died in a traffic accident; I: 191-92, the proverbially stupid Ijl; I: 633, academic fraud at the expense of a blind scholar; I: 662-667, Abu'l-Aswad Ad-Duwali could hardly walk but knew he must appear in public or be forgotten; Volume II: 32-36, Sharaf ad-Din ibn Abi Ustrun and debate over whether a judge could continue in office after becoming blind (cf. IV: xiv, refusal of office to a deaf judge); II: 132, Abu Hashim al-Jubbai's son, a simpleton; II: 203-205, Ata ibn Abi Rabah, a notable black lawyer at Mekka, who had the use of one eye, one arm and one leg; II: 425-37, al-Faiz al-Obaidi, a child ruler suffering epileptic fits; II: 513-14, Katada ibn Diama as-Sadusi, a learned blind man who "used to go from one end of Basra to the other without a guide"; II: 551-54, Majd Ad-Din Ibn al-Athir, who had reasons for wishing to remain disabled; II: 586-89, Muhammad Ibn Sirin, a highly esteemed law lecturer with impaired hearing; Volume III: 269, an early writing prosthesis; III: 459, grief of Muwarrij as-Sadusi on losing his sight; Volume IV: 379-85, Ibn as-Saigh, a teacher known for his patience with slow learners; IV: 416, notes on some Arabic disability terms.

A contemporary of Ibn Khallikan was Muzaffar ad-Din (1154-1233 CE), known as Kukuburi, ruler of Arbela (Iraq) from 1191. Among many welfare institutions, Kukuburi built "four asylums for the blind, and persons with chronic distempers: these were always full, with all things requisite for their wants". An unusual detail was that "every Monday and Thursday he visited these establishments and entered into all the chambers", giving gifts, asking how people were, "conversing affably with the inmates and jesting with them so as to soothe their hearts." (volume II: 535-43). Ibn Khallikan's own family had received many benefactions from this ruler, but he emphasized that he had witnessed all the humanitarian work of Kukuburi, and "avoided even the slightest exaggeration". See also:

Volume I: 12, 39, 66, 88-89, 94, 95-96, 119, 155, 185, 188, 193, 254-55, 317-18, 329, 353, 396, 398, 405, 409, 434, 438, 457-58, 487-88, 496-97, 507, 510-11, 547, 575, 576, 587-88, 635, 641, 651-55; Volume II: 6, 37, 65-66, 87, 118, 125, 127, 144, 149, 186, 191-92, 199, 201, 205, 216-18, 245, 272-73, 290, 325-26, 333, 341, 347, 365, 375, 379, 398, 405-10, 414, 415, 421, 439, 465, 484, 492-94, 498-99, 503, 543, 521, 535-43, 562, 596, 602, 617, 632, 669, 677, 679.

Volume III: 3, 23, 25-26, 32, 33, 36, 40, 56-61, 92, 162-63, 175-76, 268-69, 312-13, 322-33, 327, 346, 366-67, 391, 413, 415, 434-37, 446-49, 501, 504, 510, 533, 535, 567, 598-99, 614, 623-24 (a rather rude reference), 627, 642, 644-45, 650, 677.

Volume IV: 34-35, 68, 120, 138, 154-55, 178-79, 197, 199, 200-203, 275, 300, 304, 330-31, 356-59, 386, 397, 415, 427, 434, 473-74, 563.

AL-JAHIZ (Abu Othman Amr bin Bahr). *Al-Barsan wal-Argan wal-Umyan wal-Hawlan* [The Lepers, the Lame, the Blind, and the Squinting], edited by Abdel-Salam Haroun (1998). Cairo.

Al-Jahiz (776-868 CE) was a prolific, influential and notably ugly writer with 'goggle eyes' (*jahiz*), at Basra (now in Iraq), whose work has been much quoted across the Arab world. Here, according to Michael Dols, he discussed "physical infirmities such as skin disorders, lameness, paralysis, and deafness and personal characteristics such as baldness, leanness, and ugliness." His aim was to show that "physical infirmities and peculiarities do not hinder an individual from being a fully active member of the Muslim community or bar him from important offices. Al-Jahiz maintained that physical ailments are not social stigmas but are what may be called signs of divine blessing or favor."

(M DOLS, 1983, The leper in Medieval Islamic society. *Speculum* 58: 891-916, on p. 901). A recent paper by Geert Jan van Gelder discussed “two concluding chapters” of this work, on right-handed, left-handed and ambidextrous people, and the advantages and disadvantages of different laterality.

Despite his own experience of negative public reactions, al-Jahiz in one of his better-known works, ‘The Wonders of Creation’, wrote harshly about social aspects of deafness. Apart from the deaf person’s loss of music, “People are bored in his company and he is a burden on them. He is unable to listen to any of the people’s stories and conversations. Though present it is as though he were absent, and though alive it is as if he were dead.” (quoted by F Haj, *Disability in Antiquity*, p. 159). See next items. Another commentator notes that “Al-Barsan wal-Argan...” is among the most difficult works by al-Jahiz, and its topic is practically unique in historical Arabic literature. A footnote by Lawrence Conrad (*ARAM*, 6, 1994, pp. 225-244, on p. 234) notes that in “Al Bursan wa-l-`urjan...”, Jahiz collects “a large corpus of the lore extant in his day on leprosy, famous people who had suffered from the disease, and poems and tales concerning them...” [There does not seem to be a European-language translation available at present.]

JASON, Heda (1972) Jewish-Near Eastern numskull tales: an attempt at interpretation. *Asian Folklore Studies* 31: 1-39.

Sample ‘numskull tales’ appear (pp. 27-38) from Jewish origins in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Persia, Turkey and Yemen. Jason suggests that they differ from tales ridiculing “normal human stupidity”. They may represent efforts to depict the distorted thinking of an underclass of ‘others’. Perhaps they serve many purposes.

KORDI, Gohar (1991) *An Iranian Odyssey*. London: Serpent’s Tail. 141 pp.

Born in a remote, Turkish-speaking village of Iran in the late 1940s (pp. 30, 141), Gohar Kordi lost her eyesight from smallpox when about three years old (p. 13), taking some time to realise what this meant (p. 28). Most of her description of early life seems to be constructed from what she learnt much later, interspersed with fragments of memory. Throughout the early blind years, her mother repeated to the world that the little girl had brought bad luck to her family, she was a misfortune, useless, a burden. Another woman said ‘Don’t say that in front of her.’ ‘Oh, she doesn’t understand,’ replied mother (p. 14). The child got the message loud and clear.

If this were a novel, it would be criticised for overloading the odds and miseries against the protagonist. Kordi’s father was a Turk, a hawker of goods around the villages, broken by torture during the Russian occupation, later an unemployed city labourer (28-30, 50-51); her mother Mahi was Kurdish, and became a washerwoman, earning small change or a portion of food (28, 51-54), and later a domestic servant (67-68, 71). The languages of education were Farsi and English; the chances for blind girls’ education were minimal, and for a poor, ethnic minority, blind girl, nil. Her family moved to Teheran, with thousands of others in flight from rural poverty to the deeper hell of urban slums. Eventually, blind Kordi was put on the street to beg, and collected a boxful of small coins, her first earnings: “It was all mine. Mine only. My brother didn’t have a money box. This was wonderful.” For once in her life, she acquired some value. Then the adults took away the money, to buy food. Kordi saw for the first time that “I’d been used, misused” (55-57), a theme of injustice that would recur. Swept up by the government beggar-control lorry, Kordi was dumped in a Beggars’ House, from which her mother reclaimed her reluctantly two months later. Meanwhile her baby sister had died of starvation - Kordi’s fault, of course, for failing to beg more money (58-61).

Kordi entered education by listening to people, radio, everything, and using her brains to make some sense of it all. Befriending a girl who went to school, Kordi listened to her reading her schoolbooks, and “I would in turn explain to her what she had read” (72-73). How did the girl who never went to school understand the meaning? She did the same trick with her younger, school-going brother, hearing and explaining his school books to him (77). [Curiously, William Cruickshanks, a blind boy in a Madras orphan asylum in the 1810s, recorded a similar experience. Another boy read passages of the Bible to him. William told them back, with explanation and elaboration. He educated himself thus, and later become a famous teacher and headmaster.] Kordi, aged 13, from a neighbour’s

house contacted a radio phone-in program, then got an older friend to help her write, stating that she was dying of uselessness, boredom and frustration, and desperate for a proper education (75-79). Things began moving, though hardly in a straight line. Eventually Kordi was given a place at Noorain [Nur Ayin] boarding school for blind girls at Isfahan, run by European missionaries (86-95). The other girls showed Braille to Kordi, who leapt on it and was reading within a few days. During the first year she caught up five grades, and three more in the second year (95-97). Brailled material then ran out, and "we had to transcribe books as we went along". Further time went on coping with sexual abuse from one of the senior teachers. Kordi absorbed textual knowledge like a famished tiger, but emotionally was a vulnerable small child. One means of flying turned up in the headmistress's office: a typewriter. Kordi mastered it in a few days, then went on to a Farsi typewriter. With skill on these machines, and also a violin, the world could be conquered (112-122) -- with a few obstacles. "'Why should you go to university? I didn't go to university', the deputy head told me." (120). Kordi went anyway, still getting the other students to read textbooks to her, then explaining to them what they had read (129), still being used and abused, still finding a few true friends.

Unaware that her program was impossible, Kordi ploughed onward, becoming the first blind graduate from Teheran University in 1970, with a BA in psychology, while around her student protests were raging and repression was tightening in a long-drawn-out revolution that would sweep away the Shah. The book came 20 years later, written in England. (In 1995, Kordi the Psychologist dug further into her bitter early experiences, and produced *Mahi's Story*, with greater understanding of her mother's struggle for freedom and life). The 'Odyssey' is most remarkable for the low-key telling of the author's achievements. She did what she felt driven to do, putting aside the rage, the despair, the exploitation, the obstacles.

LANE, Edward William (1890) *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians. Written in Egypt during the years 1833-1835*. Reprinted from the Third Edition, 1842. London: Ward, Lock. xxiv + 552.

First published 1836. Describes in considerable detail the beliefs and practices of Muslims in Egypt, as observed by Lane and discussed with his local teachers and advisors. One of Lane's Arabic teachers and key informants was nearly blind (pp xii-xiii); eye disease and blindness were common (pp 2, 3, 23, 47, 139, 236-37). There are numerous mentions of active blind men, e.g. pp. 107, 165, 417-418 476; including description of a college of some 300 blind students and teachers, one of whom became the Sheikh of al-Azhar (pp. 192-93), blind beggars (299, 394, 431); lunatics, idiots and holy fools, who are regarded as being those "whose mind is in heaven, while his grosser part mingles among ordinary mortals" (pp. 208-210, 398, 410) and other men with disabilities (pp. 111, 177, 361, 415), also charms and healing (pp. 233-38). Massage and joint manipulation took place in the bathhouse (311-14). In effect, these urban disabled men seem to have been casually integrated in street life and public religious ceremony, their poverty and disadvantage shared with many non-disabled people, with a few specific religious roles for some blind men. (Disabled women are hardly mentioned - presumably they stayed mostly within family dwellings).

LUNDE, Paul & WINTLE, Justin (1984) *A Dictionary of Arabic and Islamic Proverbs*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Some proverbs suggest folk attitudes to disability, often (not always) of a negative nature. "The mother of the mute understands what he says" (p. 94) could be derisive, or sympathetic, or purely metaphorical. "If you meet a blind man, throw him on the ground and steal his lunch, for you are not more merciful than God" (p.14), could be dismissive of disabled people's lives. Spoken by a blind man, it would be unanswerable. See also pp. 22, 23 35, 45.

MALTI-DOUGLAS F (1988) *Blindness and Autobiography. Al-Ayyam of Taha Husayn*. Princeton University Press. xi + 202 pp.

In a critical examination of Taha Husayn's autobiography, Malti-Douglas reviews various aspects of

blindness in the current and historical Arab world. Husayn's education initially aimed toward the traditional blind male skills of memorising the Quran and teaching it with an orthodox approach and exegesis. He studied further at Al-Azhar, where there had long been a school for blind students of Islam, then moved to the new, modernising University of Cairo where he wrote his thesis on the blind freethinker Abu 'l-'Ala al-Ma'arri. Advanced studies and travel in Europe brought further challenges and secularisation of Husayn's thoughts. His first book was controversial, using source criticism on pre-Islamic poetry and seeming to suggest a possibly heretical view of the Quran. In this, and at other points in his life, Husayn may have been influenced by his literary predecessor al-Ma'arri.

PAYNE, Holly (2002) *The Virgin's Knot*. London: Orion. 303 pp.

[Not seen. Novel set in rural Turkey. The heroine is a young woman weaver, Nurdane, who was disabled by polio as a child, was taught to weave by her father, and makes rugs that are credited with powers of healing and good fortune.]

ROMAN, André (1970-71) A propos des vers des yeux et du regard dans l'oeuvre du poète aveugle Bashshar b. Burd. *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 46: 481-514.

With a brief review of the status of blind men in the early Islamic world, the author quotes and comments in detail on the work of the blind poet of Basrah, Bashshar bin Burd [c. 690-783], and the extent to which he used visual imagery and described situations as though seeing them (sometimes aided by being seriously enamoured of the young woman he was describing). Weighing evidence and counter-claims, it seems likely that Bashshar was blind from birth or early childhood.

ROTH, S John (1997) *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor. Character types in Luke-Acts*. (Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 144). Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press. Detailed study of "the captive, the shattered, the blind, the deaf mute, the lame, lepers, the maimed, the dead, and the poor" (pp. 17-19, 23-24, and *passim*) as portrayed in first century Palestine and earlier, based in two Christian 'New Testament' texts in Greek, the 'Gospel of Luke', and the 'Acts of the Apostles', attributed to a common author, Luke. Roth examines concepts, identities, character groups and stereotypes within poverty, disability and marginality, both in the Lucan texts and in the assumed background of the Septuagint, i.e. the Jewish scriptures in Greek translation, which were available and familiar to Luke's expected Hellenistic readers; and also in a wider pool of literature available to them. In the Septuagint, "The blind, the lame, the poor, and the others are typically anonymous, powerless, vulnerable, and a-responsible. In addition, and most significantly, these character types are standard, conventional recipients of God's saving action" (p. 214). Roth suggests that the stereotypes persisted in Luke's Gospel, in which Jesus is portrayed as healing and blessing them, as the agent of God and with eschatological reference; but they are practically absent in Luke's 'Acts', for reasons that are discussed. The aim was supposedly to change the expected readers' perspectives on the mission of Jesus and his credentials during his earthly life (in the Gospel), and his subsequent life as the risen Christ, represented by the Spirit, among the nascent Christian church (in the Acts of the Apostles).

WITTKOWER, Rudolf (1942) *Marvels of the East. A study in the history of monsters*. *J. Warburg & Courtauld Institutes* 5: 159-197.

Erudite study tracing from Babylonian and classical Greek sources, via medieval muddling, the origins of European notions of "monsters in India", and some debates and artistic representations along the way. Suggests a perennial human tendency to find both disgust and attraction in 'different' beings at the margins of the known world.

WOLFSON, Harry A (1935) The internal senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew philosophic texts. *Harvard Theological Review* 28 (2) 69-133.

Detailed, scholarly account of the varied understanding of terms in Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, (and also

Greek) for the ‘internal senses’ as used by thinkers in the classical and medieval Mediterranean and Middle East, ranging from Aristotle through the Church Fathers, the major Arab philosophers and later Medieval Christian theologians. Various systems of classification were used for cognitive processes, with some mutual influence, sometimes hampered by shifts of meaning in translation. [While not concerned with disability, the paper has importance, and a cautionary function, for historical studies of the meaning of some impairments and disabilities across the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. Lack or serious diminution of receptive senses such as sight and hearing (and to a lesser extent, touch, taste and smell) is both historically inherent and fairly transparent in ideas of impairment and disability. Absence or diminution of internal processing by the ‘cognitive faculties’, exhibiting as weaknesses in the development, maturing and practice of thinking, awareness, common sense, intellect, focus, memory, imagination, planning, communication, (and other related terms), seem to be inherent in concepts of ‘mental retardation’ or ‘intellectual impairment’. Yet these have been, and are, considerably less transparent in their meaning, as there is a wide range in both the popular, the educated, and the scientific conceptualisation of these processes.]

## 5. AFRICA

“ARMEN J-C” (1974) *Gazelle-Boy*, translated by S Hardman. London: Bodley Head.

The strangest, and paradoxically the most natural, surrogate parents communicating with their child by an elaborate language of body signals must have been a small group of gazelles of the Western Sahara, who were observed in 1961 and 1963 by the Basque artist and traveller Jean-Claude Auger (writing as “J-C Armen”). Among the gazelles was a human boy aged perhaps 10 years (in 1961), probably adopted by the gazelle group in his infancy. He was far from deaf, but practically mute in spoken human language. After making the group accustomed to his presence, and observing them closely, Auger suddenly realised that they were constantly inter-communicating as a group, with a well-organised system using various parts of the body - limbs, skin, tails, hair - in which the boy also took part. Auger stayed long enough to begin to decipher some of this language (Armen, 1974, pp. 61-67, 83-87). His account has, of course, been questioned from the armchairs of literary critics.

AXELROD, Cyril (2005) *And the Journey Begins*. Coleford, UK: Douglas McLean. iv + 228 pp. Axelrod was born profoundly deaf in 1942 in South Africa, to an orthodox Jewish family from Eastern Europe (pp. 10-63). With considerable difficulties (pp. 64-113), he was ordained as a Catholic priest in 1970 in Johannesburg. Axelrod worked for many years with young black deaf people, and in 1980 his eyesight became impaired (114-160). He moved to Hong Kong in 1988, and then to Macau. In chapter 22 (pp. 169-178, and photos pp. 179-186) Axelrod tells of twelve years’ work in Macau, building the Macau Deaf Association into a self-governing organisation run by capable local deaf people. By the time he retired to England he was both deaf and blind, and continued a ministry that seems to have been enhanced, rather than diminished, by his disabilities.

BAMBA SUSO & BANNA KANUTE (1999) *Sunjata. Gambian Versions of the Mande Epic*, translated and annotated by Gordon Innes, with Bakari Sidibe. Edited by Lucy Durán and Graham Furniss. London: Penguin.

Penguin has provided translations of two of the many legendary versions recounted by West African griots about the ancient Malian kingdom, celebrating the 13th century warrior king Sunjata, who had a severe childhood impairment. Sunjata’s exploits have been retold for 700 years by the bards, and now reach a wider audience on various websites. The exact nature of Sunjata’s impairment is now impossible to discover (p. 97). Versions have him crawling for several years, unable to stand up, let alone to walk (pp. ix, 57, 59, 74-75, 113). Did he refuse to get up out of pique, because his half-

brother was mistakenly recognised as the first-born? (p. 5) Did the extraordinary pregnancy of his hunchback mother have any bearing on the issue? (pp. 4, 42, 99, 110). Efforts were made to provide him with a crutch (“Forge iron and give it to him so that he can rise up” ... “They quarried iron and smelted it, And they fashioned it into a very long rod. They cut it in two And they bent it. Three full-grown men took each rod and brought it” {p. 61}), which at least is supported by historical records of early iron working in West Africa. Sunjata’s reaction, like many a lame child being fitted with his first calliper, was to throw out the ironmongery, which in any case could not support him (62-63, 115). Fortunately, the story provided this difficult kid with a big sister having a smart grasp of behaviour management, who appears from time to time to calm him down, carry him on her back, or find the missing piece of the jigsaw (13, 81-84, 112, 116).

BENZAHERA, Salwa Ali (2003) *Dis/Abling the narrative: the case of Tombéza*. *College Literature* [West Chester University] 30 (1) 124-134.

Analysis of the novel *Tombéza* (Rachid Mimouni, 1984, Paris: Laffont), in which the main character is deformed in body and further disabled by social rejection, in Algeria of the 1930s and 1940s.

BLAXALL, Florence M (1948) *Mapupula, the one who touches*. London: Society for Propagation of the Gospel. viii + 52 pp.

Story of the deaf-blind Zulu, Radcliffe Bhekinkosi Dhladhla, to the age of 21. He lost his hearing and sight through a high fever in infancy, which also left him unable to walk. His mother Rhoda took him to Durban from their native village. At the hospital he received treatment which restored his mobility. He was returned to his mother with the advice that his mind was unimpaired, and he should be encouraged to do and to learn everything possible. His mother kept him until he was 11, then tried to get him into a deaf school or a blind school, but no special school was willing to take in the deaf-blind boy. Eventually the Rev and Mrs Blaxall took charge of Radcliffe, around 1937. Florence Blaxall worked on his education, and here tells the story in detail, without sentimentality, and with many lively drawings by Monica Hope. They learnt the Tadoma method of teaching, when its originators, Miss Hall, Tad Chapman and Mrs Chapman, visited South Africa. After this, Radcliffe made more progress, and revealed more of his character and individuality. In 1938 the Blaxalls with Radcliffe moved to Ezenzeleni, a new work for adult blind people near Johannesburg. Later two other deaf-blind young men, Franz and Johannes, joined him for their education.

BLIXEN K (1954) *Out of Africa*. London: Penguin.

A brief, dispassionate account was given by Karen Blixen (pp. 264-66) in her chapter “Karomenya” about a “deaf and dumb” boy, nine years old, who lived on her farm near Nairobi in the 1920s. Karomenya was strong, a skilled stone-thrower and an eager fighter with the other children. Blixen gave him some opportunities to make himself useful in kitchen or house, but the boy was hardly adaptable to such tasks, and the Danish lady was willing to let him be himself - though she foresaw that he would have a hard time when he grew to be a young man.

CAMUS A (1994) *Le Premier Homme*. Paris: Gallimard.

The special relationship of Albert Camus (1913-1960) with his uncle Etienne was finally revealed in the posthumous publication of his unfinished autobiographical novel, *Le Premier Homme* (Camus, 1994). The uncle, Etienne Sintès, “tout à fait sourd, lui”, lived with his widowed sister Mme Camus, worked locally as a cooper, and to some extent was a surrogate father for the orphaned young Albert, a role he shared with successive schoolmasters who initiated Albert into the world of literacy, masculinity and power. In the main body of Camus literature and literary criticism, the uncle has hardly figured at all; and the partly deaf mother is a silent presence. But in *Le Premier Homme*, Uncle Etienne has a full chapter (pp. 95-128), a full characterisation, described through the clear eyes of the boy, the fond recollections of the man, and the sharp pen of a formidable literary craftsman. As a portrait from the 1920s of an active, rumbustious deaf man, popular among his hearing mates in



Algiers, expert when hunting with gun and dog in the mountains, it is unique. It may be the best-drawn portrait of any deaf person in historical Africa, at least before 1960.

DETTWYLER, Katherine A (1994) *Dancing Skeletons. Life and death in West Africa*. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland.

Painfully frank account of ordinary life, disease and death in rural Mali, with disability casually interleaved. The author leaves her 4-year-old son (who has Down's syndrome) back home in the US, but takes her 9-year-old daughter on anthropology-cum-health field-work ("Miranda was along mainly because I needed the company", p.3), measuring children's growth, or more likely their wasting and stunting from malnutrition. Dettwyler describes children and adults with significant impairments, not always obvious (to the foreigner) in the normal daily background of severe poverty and social deprivation. Some features were shockingly obvious, such as a huge untreated hydrocephalic head; others, such as large goitres, seemed to pass unnoticed by local health workers (pp. 31-35, 82-89, 93-98, 103, 108-110, 117, 136, 160). Notions of American Motherhood collide sharply with local realities of what can offered to children with extremely poor quality-of-life prospects ("I gave her one last hug and a balloon and sent her out the door after her siblings" p. 98). The benefits of civilisation ("Women in the United States might have the freedom to choose not to give birth to children with handicaps...") are balanced against a different kind of society in which "women in Mali had freedom from worrying" over such ethical problems, but worried instead about evil spirits striking their child (p.99).

DEVLIEGER PJ (1999) Frames of reference in African proverbs on disability. *International J. Disability, Development & Education* 46: 439-451.

Discusses the life context and possible meanings of some 55 proverbs involving disability, from languages of Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia, Zaire, Zimbabwe, with some local informant information.

GLINGA W & LÜSEBRINK H-J (1986) Sourd-muet, je demande la parole. Dossier sur Dono Ly Sangaré (Sénégal). In: W Zimmer, W Glinga, H-J Lüsebrink, et al. (eds) *Interviews avec des écrivains africains francophones*, 15-28. Bayreuth: Bayreuth University.

See SANGARÉ, below.

GÖRÖG V, PLATIEL S, REY-HULMAN D & SEYDOU C (1980) *Histoires d'enfants terribles (Afrique noire)*. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose.

Many West African legends tell of strange children with extraordinary behaviour.

HOVE, Chenjerai (1996) *Ancestors*. London: Picador. 195 pp.

A tale of Africa's troubles and women's oppression. The action moves between an imagined life in the 1850s when Miriro was born "deaf and dumb" in an African village and had sorrowful experiences, and scenes from the 1950s to 1980s when her (silent) voice spoke to a later generation about their disregard for traditional ways.

LESSING, Doris (1968, reprinted 1972) *Nine African Stories*. London: Longman. vi + 266. (Selected from Lessing, 1964, *African Stories*, Michael Joseph).

One story, 'The Nuisance' (pp. 73-80) concerns the elderly first wife of an African driver who has two younger wives and works for a white farmer. [The story is narrated, in Lessing's familiar, rather complacent style, by the farmer's young daughter, reporting the regular visits of the driver to complain to her father as he holds court and dispenses wisdom to his servants at sunset each day. Lessing notes (pp. 1, 8) that the story, written in the 1950s, "was based on an incident on our farm", remembered presumably from the early 1930s in Southern Rhodesia where she spent her childhood.] The driver's eldest wife, not dignified by her own name but called by the narrator "the cross-eyed

one”, was clumsy, and also “her body was hideous” (p. 74), though in what way remains unspecified. “Because of her eyes her body lumbered (74); she was “the ugly, sour-faced old woman ... the drudge of his household and the scourge of his life” (78) Trouble between the wives was reported, and the driver complained of nagging and bad food from his first wife. Yet the two young wives benefitted from the old woman, who was handy with the children, did gardening, fetched wild relishes for cooking, and “provided endless amusement with her ungainliness. She was the eternal butt, the fool, marked by fate for the entertainment of the whole-limbed and the comely” (77). Eventually the “cross-eyed one” was reported to have gone away, maybe back to her home in Nyasaland. Later, groups of women came to complain of the foulness of water from one of the wells. Finally, when the farmer’s family needed to use that well, it got a clean-up. Then they learnt that the old woman’s corpse had been in the well, polluting the water. Accident, suicide or murder?

[Reported attitudes of the Africans towards the ungainly ‘nuisance’ have some parallels in the responses of the whites toward their black servants, though this is not necessarily intended by Lessing, who is not the most reliable source of information in this field. Her father lost a leg during World War I, and Doris’s curious family arrangements are well known. As late as 1989, when she had spent many years in Europe and could have made some efforts to repair her lack of knowledge and education, Lessing produced an appalling book, *The Fifth Child*, in which she depicted, with some apparent seriousness, a supposed ‘changeling’, elf, or genetic throwback to the ‘Neanderthal’ race, born to a middle-class family having four ‘normal’ children, and seemed to suggest that such feral or non-human children exist across the urban underworld.]

MUTWA, Vusamazulu Credo (1964, reprint 1998) *Indaba My Children. African tribal history, legends, customs and religious beliefs*. Originally printed in South Africa by Blue Crane Books. Reprint Edinburgh: Payback Press. xxi + 696 pp. (Many other reprints exist.)

This retelling and discussion of legendary and historical material from the Bantu peoples of Southern Africa aims to educate ‘the White man’ about the hidden springs of African life, and to correct some misapprehensions. Throughout the legends, some beings with deformities and peculiarities appear. The opening “Sacred Story of the Tree of Life” (pp. 5-41) shows the Great Mother, Goddess of Creation, as both immortal and imperfect, passing on physical imperfections to her creation (p. 8). There follows the birth of the first deformed child, the call to destroy this child, and its mother’s flight (23-40). Saved from death, the baby grows up to be a monstrous and destructive tyrant. The concluding postscript is that “The main reason why the Africans used to destroy crippled and otherwise deformed children was to prevent this fabled tyrant from ever being reborn...” (p. 41) [NB Earlier editions do not contain all this material, some of which was considered controversial within South Africa.] Among the subsequent characters is Nonikwe, a blind hunchback child whose gift of clairvoyance saved her from the usual fate of being destroyed (pp. 113-117); the ugly hunchback idiot Zozo, who one day paid some people back for their ill treatment (153-154); the impotent and cruel Vamba, and his one-handed, mute mother Luojoyo, who communicated by signs with her one hand (232-239, 261, 313); the deaf-mute Muwende-Lutanana (414-415, 422) and other people who also used sign language (358-359; 574-576); the beautiful albino queen Muxakaza (262-263, 267, 309-313); the blind ‘Lost Immortal’ Lumukanda (159, 192, 203, 257-258, 342); the idiot tokoloshes, and their origins (308, 606-607); and many more, e.g. pp. 269, 272, 315, 339.

NESBITT, Murrough de Burgh (1956) *The Road to Avalon*. Johannesburg: Central News Agency. x + 166 pp.

This autobiographical work, and the next entry, concern the struggle for independent living by Murrough Nesbitt (1898-1959), a South African who lost his legs in an accident at age 13. He later taught other physically disabled people to achieve a normal and successful life. Here, Nesbitt outlined his dream of a rural centre for self-help rehabilitation, run by disabled people.

NESBITT, M de B (1958) *Avalon Adventure*. Cape Town: Timmins. 216 pp.

[See previous annotation.] The dream became a reality in 1946, as the centre 'Avalon' was built and developed by Nesbitt, his wife Fraan and others, near Tulbagh in the Winterhoek Mountains. Many descriptions and first-person accounts appear, in which people overcame their disabilities or gathered strength to persevere with their lives. Fundraising and control was vested in a committee of like-minded people at Johannesburg. Later, however, the original committee had changed and the Nesbitts were ousted from the centre they had built, and took up farming in the Orange Free State. Nevertheless, Murrough Nesbitt was 30 years ahead of his time in implementing ideas of self-help, mutual therapy, and the importance of disabled people as leaders and role models.

NGUGI, James [Ngugi wa Thiong'o] (1971) *A Grain of Wheat*. London: Heinemann.

The Kenyan writer Ngugi wrote into this book (pp. 6-7) an admirable young deaf labourer, Gitogo, "handsome, strongly built", popular with other young men, who cared for his elderly mother, and "spoke with his hands". During a government raid on Gitogo's village, he ran to protect his mother. A soldier shouted "Stop!". Gitogo ran on and was shot. Apparently that character was based on Ngugi's own deaf step-brother Gitogo, shot by government troops in 1954 or 1955.

OKRI, Ben (1991) *The Famished Road*. London: Jonathan Cape. London: Vintage edition (1992), viii + 500 pp.

The harsh life of a Nigerian shanty town somewhere between city and forest, at the close of the colonial period, is described through the eyes of the 'spirit child' Azaro who has returned for another rebirth amidst human beings "all of whom are born blind, few of whom ever learn to see." (p. 1) Mundanely, Azaro is a sharp-eyed, stubborn little boy whose father earns a pittance by casual labour while his mother hawks small items at market or on the roadside. Survival amongst the wretched of the earth, with thrashings at home and school and aimless adult brutality, is interspersed with dream sequences in a spirit world heavily populated by freakish entities. These are often depicted with gross abnormalities, having multiple heads or as midgets or with smashed features (e.g. pp. 15, 25, 134, 136, 274, 305, 326, 455, 459-60, 473), who are eventually understood by Azaro as non-human (p. 136). Some characters in the 'ordinary' world are more normally disabled. One old blind man of the neighbourhood, who perceives that Azaro is a spirit child, engages in various mischief and magic (pp. 313-314, 318-22, 349, 361-62, 393-400, 415, 420, 428, 454, 456, 464-65, 470, 472, 474-75). Other disabled characters vividly described through the boy's eyes are incidental to the narration, such as the market lunatic (p. 17), the lame woman "deformed in a way I couldn't define" (p. 38), the blind head-priest who is Azaro's grandfather (p. 70), some six-fingered strangers (p. 77), the madman who smashes up Madame Koto's bar (pp. 83-85), the cross-eyed man and "the weird, the drunk, the mad, the wounded, and the wonderful", not to mention the albinos, in the same bar where Azaro hangs out (pp. 87, 89, 102, 106-108, 133). Between the mystical and the real are various deformed tramps and beggars (pp. 415-16, 422, 429-30, 442-44, 447, 466).

Deformity and freakishness are mostly signals warning of mischief and violence in both the slum and the spirit world as perceived by Azaro; yet most of the 'normal' humans also appear more or less grotesque to his eyes. (The entire novel may also be interpreted in political terms).

OKRI B (1993 / 1994) *Songs of Enchantment*. London: Jonathan Cape. London: Vintage (1994). 297 pp.

This book purports to be a continuation from *The Famished Road* (see previous item), with extensive dream-like rambling in a supposed spirit world, amidst drifting clouds of African myths and ominous figures, while the hopeless poverty, drunken rampaging, and brutalities of political thugs proceed at ground level. Some 'disabled' characters continue to appear, such as Azaro's friend Ade, whose epileptic fits are a gateway to the spirits; also the dangerous blind old man, who declares what he sees in the future, leads a kind of cultic dance, and finds a place in Madame Koto's political spinning. [Azaro now knows too much -- the sharp-eyed little boy has transmigrated into the body of a celebrated author, who piles on the metaphorical agony, blindnesses and death, waxing philosophical

about Africa, from a great distance.]

OTENG, Florence Serwaa (1988) *Give Them A Name*. Kumasi. iv + 110 pp.

Florence Oteng was one of the earliest deaf pupil teachers to be trained by Andrew J. Foster at his Ghana Mission School for the Deaf in 1957. In this novelette, Oteng depicts the strong social stigma of deafness in rural Ghana, and celebrates Foster's insistence that deaf people be known by their proper name rather than the traditional derogatory nickname "Mmum".

OTENG FS (1997) *Deaf Adwoa Benewaa*. Kumasi Catholic Press. xii + 63 pp.

The lengthy battles of an intelligent Ghanaian woman, deafened in early adulthood, are depicted in this largely autobiographical novelette, set amidst the petty politics of a boarding school for deaf children.

PARKYNS, Mansfield (1854) *Life in Abyssinia: being notes collected during three years' residence and travels in that country*. New York: Appleton. 2 vols.

Parkyns travelled rough around Abyssinia in the mid-1840s, wearing local dress, sleeping on the ground, eating local food. He displays more subtlety in a vignette of disability in the community. In I: 276-78, he made a friend at Tokhulimny, one Aito Merratch, who was "usually accompanied by an idiot, named Maghovai, - a poor fellow whom he took about with him as an occasional source of amusement." This Maghovai suffered much harassment from the boys of the neighbourhood, who would goad him until he flew into a rage and engaged in some crazy behaviour. Parkyns offered to try to cure Maghovai, if he could have him for a while, to which Merratch agreed. Parkyns engaged in a textbook program of behaviour modification, rewarding desirable behaviour step by step, while at the same time working a change in public behaviour: "I forbade any one to laugh at him, or speak to him otherwise than to a sensible person. Even when he made any absurd mistakes in the little jobs I set him to do, I punished severely any of the people who might happen to titter." Under this regime, Maghovai "became quite steady and tolerably reasonable". Parkyns returned him to Merratch, and showed him how to continue the treatment, which he did successfully.

PATON, Alan (1948) *Cry, The Beloved Country*. London: Jonathan Cape. Reprint 1949, London: Reprint Society. 256 pp.

In pp. 82-88 the action of this famous South African novel takes place at Ezenzeleni, the centre founded by Arthur and Florence Blaxall, where blind Africans learn vocational skills, described here as "a wonderful place" (p. 85). The rest of the novel, as is well known, has a background of various political forms of blindness, and some different sorts of rehabilitation.

QUAYSON, Ato (1999) Looking awry: tropes of disability in post-colonial writing. In: R Mengham (editor) *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction. International Writing in English since 1970*. Cambridge: Polity.

Quayson reviews some aspects of how 'the disabled' have been represented, with particular focus on JM Coetzee, 1980, *Waiting for the Barbarians*; K Hulme, 1986, *The Bone People*; and B Okri, 1992, *The Famished Road* (see above). Quayson follows a familiar but curious pattern of taking the events and personalities (as created and reported by the authors) as though they were 'real life', projecting into the imaginary characters his beliefs about what they 'must have thought or felt' (i.e. what perhaps he might have thought or felt if he, in real life, had been a man or woman in the fictionally created position), and making assertions about them, elaborating his beliefs with theories developed in distant cultural milieux, further interpreted (e.g. those of Lacan, in France, translated to English and published in London,) as though such theories (e.g. of psychoanalysis, and early childhood cognitive development) had already been shown to be of universal significance.

SANGARÉ ML (1978) *Sourd-muet: je demande la parole*. Dakar: Nouvelles Editions africaines.

Senegalese writer Moussa [Dono] Ly Sangaré reported his experience of deafness, starting c. 1953 when he was a schoolboy and suffered some hearing loss. Then one day, silence fell upon him. Moussa saw his teacher speaking, but heard only “une dérisoire cacophonie” (Sangaré, 1978, pp. 120-22). A tonsil operation brought slight relief, but his family could bear no more medical expense, at risk of starvation (p. 127). Moussa learnt to lip-read, capturing meaning from odd words half heard (p. 134). Further illness affected his mobility, and removed his voice. He decided that creative writing should speak for him.

SELLIN E (1988) Obsession with the white page, the inability to communicate, and surface aesthetics in the development of contemporary Maghrebian fiction: the *mal de la page blanche* in Khatibi, Farès, and Meddeb. *International J. Middle East Studies* 20: 165-73.

Sellin depicts the Moroccan writer Abdelkebir Khatibi (born 1938) returning “time and time again to the theme of the orally and aurally handicapped and relat[ing] their handicaps to the creative process, while Nabile Farès from Algeria uses “mute Siamese twins”, a “dumb interlocutor”, and other symbols of communication difficulty in his books. The sight of two deaf people in a cafe at Damascus (“They were holding a dialogue in sign language. Their hands were dancing”) inspired Khatibi with the “somehow compelling alternatives to conventional speech and writing”.

SILLA E (1998) *People Are Not The Same*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Detailed, well-written account, based on doctoral research, concerning people with leprosy in Mali who have usually lived in very considerable poverty and degradation. Starts from Arabic descriptions by Ahmad Baba al-Tinbukti, c. 1600, and proceeds to personal accounts of individuals organising themselves for group campaigns through the 20th century, with medical advances and complex social changes shifting the battlegrounds and their struggles for identity.

TAYE, Kibra (1993) Life within deafness (a poem from Ethiopia). In: MD Garretson (editor) *Deafness: 1993-2013. A Deaf American monograph*, v. 43, p. 32. Silver Spring, Md: National Association of the Deaf.

Brief statement of ‘deaf identity’ by a young Ethiopian deaf woman.

TURNER, Victor (1967) *The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

This classic collection of Turner’s papers, on work among the Ndembu people of north western Zambia in the 1950s and early 1960s, includes Chapter 6, “Muchona the Hornet, interpreter of religion”, giving the experience of a healer and specialist in divination and other rituals, who was himself a stigmatised person. Muchona was of short stature (“a swart elderly gnome”), dubious local status (son of a debt slave mother, given to women’s company, “a Tiresias figure”), suffering “social marginality and psychical maladjustment”. The incongruity of this weak little man’s strong intellect and insight into village politics and undercurrents led him to a defensively comic or jester role; yet Turner and the local teacher, Windson, were able to spend eight fruitful months exploring local beliefs, customs, rituals and healings with Muchona (pp. 131-150). Chapters 9 and 10 (pp. 299-393) give considerable detail of medicine, disease, misfortune and affliction among the Ndembu, with practical treatment or management. Disabling conditions such as backache, epilepsy, eye diseases, insanity, leprosy, otitis media, smallpox, and their treatment, are discussed and indexed.

UPRETY, Sanjeev Kumor (1997) Disability and postcoloniality in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and Third-World novels. In: LJ Davis (editor) *The Disability Studies Reader*, 366-381. London: Routledge.

Upreti focuses on both Rushdie’s work and the two ‘Azaro, spirit child’ books by B Okri (q.v.), and throws in some experience from Nepal, suggesting that this country “unlike other nations of the Indian subcontinent was never under colonial rule; yet it displays the same signs of the neocolonial

condition as the rest of the subcontinent”, and therefore he will use “postcolonial lands” and “third world” synonymously, but with further creative numbering (“fourth” world, “fifth” world) as required. His exposition is a little more reticent than, for example, that of Ato Quayson (see annotation above) when it comes to thinking himself into the skin of fictional characters; yet a European theory of ‘symbolic castration’ is rather indiscriminately applied to both characters and their mother[?]lands.

VAN HEERDEN, E (2002) *The Long Silence of Mario Salvati*, translated by C Knox. London: Sceptre.

[Not seen. A fictional deaf builder, Mario Salvati, has the central role in this allegorical novel of South African history.]

WHYTE, Susan R (1998) *Slow cookers and madmen: competence of head and heart in rural Uganda*. In: R Jenkins (editor) *Questions of Competence: culture, classification and intellectual disability*, 153-175. Cambridge University Press.

Meanings of mental incompetence among the Nyole people of eastern Uganda are described and discussed, with attention to the terms used, individual cases in their family context, and various means of management within the community. Local beliefs were not an issue, but one of the subjects with mental peculiarity, nicknamed “Obutu”, had a rather fine religious vision or obsession, the “angelic construction project”. This he was building not only in his imagination, but by ‘construction’ on a massive scale in fields of several acres (with land and bricks ‘borrowed’ from his brothers): “a heavenly city of the future where all of us, men and women, black and white, Muslims and Christians, angels all, will enter into a life of harmony and ease” (p. 168). The idea had come from God. What was visible so far was a series of “wide ditches and pillars of locally made bricks”; but the author was given a tour with description of the great city that was taking shape for the benefit of humankind. Obutu’s vision was not widely shared in the neighbourhood. His brothers gave him food and shelter, but were unhappy that valuable land has been requisitioned for a project lacking any clear earthly benefit.

WILSON, Sir John (1963) *Travelling Blind*. London: Hutchinson.

The book gives a personal account of travels and studies of blindness (in e.g. Tanganyika, pp. 96-112; Northern Rhodesia, 113-129; Barotseland and Southern Rhodesia, 130-145) by a blind man who was one of the 20th century’s most energetic and successful advocates for blind people.