



Unruly Bodies: Life Writing by Women with Disabilities

Susannah B. Mintz

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The first critical study of personal narrative by women with disabilities, *Unruly Bodies* examines how contemporary writers use life writing to challenge cultural stereotypes about disability, gender, embodiment, and identity.

Combining the analyses of disability and feminist theories, Susannah Mintz discusses the work of eight American autobiographers: Nancy Mairs, Lucy Grealy, Georgina Kleege, Connie Panzarino, Eli Clare, Anne Finger, Denise Sherer Jacobson, and May Sarton. Mintz shows that by refusing inspirational rhetoric or triumph-over-adversity narrative patterns, these authors insist on their disabilities as a core--but not diminishing--aspect of identity. They offer candid portrayals of shame and painful medical procedures, struggles for the right to work or to parent, the inventive joys of disabled sex, the support and the hostility of family, and the losses and rewards of aging. Mintz demonstrates how these unconventional stories challenge feminist idealizations of independence and self-control and expand the parameters of what counts as a life worthy of both narration and political activism. *Unruly Bodies* also suggests that atypical life stories can redefine the relation between embodiment and identity generally.

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