

Res(crip)ting the Gaze: Agency and the aesthetics of disability in 'Animal's People'

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Peer review: This article has been subject to a double-blind peer review process.



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Abstract

The interaction between human and humans, and the environment is crucial to understand the signature of the human impact upon human bodies as well the environment.

This article takes into consideration Indra Sinha's 'Animal's People' that unravels the life of the eponymous character, Animal – a victim of a gas leak in his village of Khaufpur (alluding to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy). Animal comes to be known so after the gas leak twists his spine, rendering him to walk on all-fours.

I will engage in a close reading of the primary text, placing it in conversation with the theories of Jasbir K. Puar, Tobin Siebers, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. I will investigate the porous boundaries of dis/ability in the face of Anthropocenic disasters, the aesthetics of disability politics – the visibility of the disabled protagonist who refuses to be obliterated and strikes back by negotiating his peripheral and perilous position bringing to the fore the biopolitics that plays out in the Anthropocenic age, thereby linking ecology and civilization in adamant chains.

Keywords: agency; disability; disaster; Anthropocene; body; religion; logo; simplicity; memorability; versatility; distinctness; appropriateness

Introduction

To launch directly into a reading of 'Animal's People' is bound to be a restrictive exercise, since the text is layered 'voices' (Sinha, 2007: 44) that require a hearing, a background for a better understanding.

'Animal's People' is set in the fictional town of Khaufpur (roughly translating to 'the city of terror' in English). The town is actually a stand-in for Bhopal, and the gas leak is a direct reference to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, the 'Kampani' is the Union Carbide Company. The Bhopal Gas Tragedy is counted as one of the world's worst industrial disasters, and as Veena Das succinctly sums up the disaster:

a multinational corporation was engaged in the production and storage of an extremely hazardous industrial chemical for which it had been given license to operate by the Indian government, Despite the known hazards of industrial isocyanates and diisocyanates, neither the multinational corporation nor its Indian subsidiary nor the Government of India had considered it important or necessary to enquire into the nature of the hazard to the people posed by the manufacture and storage of this toxic material between the setting up of the factory and the pillage of the gas. The people of Bhopal, and especially those staying around the factory, had not been warned of the dangers posed to them by these industrial activities, nor had any regulations been made and implemented about the placement of such factories. The result of all these activities, geared towards the development and industrialization of India was that more than 300,000 people were suddenly, one night, blighted by a crippling disease, of which more than 2500 died horrible deaths, yet the people declared incompetent and irresponsible were neither the multinational nor the government but the sufferers. (Das, 2018: 160 – 1)

This shifting of blame upon the victims, the 'sufferers', and their being declared 'incompetent' and 'irresponsible' provides a good starting point to un-layer the novel, placing it in an intricate matrix of biopolitics.

Whose Disability is it Anyway?

'Animal's People' is a text at the intersection of disability and environment, a convergence of the unnatural and the natural. Sharon Betcher (2015) connects the dots between the environment and disability in her essay, 'The Picture of Health', wherein she writes that 'images of health in body' inform able nationalism (Ibid: 2), conversely then disability is 'failed health'. Her point finds further substance in M.R. Reich's scholarship which mapped the relation between chemical disasters and the responses they elicited to pronounce the 'construction of normality' in a society. He

observed, 'chemical disasters appear by surprise (emphasis mine). They represent an extraordinary event that disrupts the normal flow of social life. But paradoxically, such crises in society create windows on normality. Through the windows of a chemical disaster, once can peer at political and social processes not usually accessible or visible' (**Reich, 1982: 1**).

The society accommodates, or rather skews the 'surprise' through its exercise on the most tangible representation of the self– the body. The body becomes the contested site, where violence manifests.

Tobin Siebers (**2008**) in 'Disability in Theory: From Social Constructivism to the New Realism of the Body' writes of the anxiety that disability poses to the representation of the body, 'usually it means that the disabled body provides an insight that all bodies are socially constructed- that social attitudes and institutions determine the greater than biological fact- the representation of the body's reality' (**Ibid: 2**), echoing Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (**1997**) in her 'Extraordinary Bodies': 'physical disability is not an absolute, inferior state or a personal misfortune. Instead, disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration, and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions. Disability then, is the attribution of corporeal deviance – not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do' (**Ibid: 16**).

Disability scholars opine that disability is a 'representation' that needs to be made comprehensible. The need for comprehensibility arises out of the urgency to 'make the world seem knowable and predictable' (**Garland-Thomson, 1997: 21**). Relegating disability to the realm of the unknowable, or the random exposes the 'complex constructedness of society, culture, language, and meaning' (**Ibid: 2**). Garland-Thomson analyses disability as 'social dirt', the 'matter out of place' (**Ibid: 43**). It is 'aberrant', 'anomalous', 'does not fit the place of ordinary', it is extra-ordinary, a freak, a monster, thriving on the margins.

The need to make the world 'knowable' places one at odds in the face of disasters such as the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, Chernobyl, as well the Agent Orange incident. When such events occur 'by chance', the mutilation and the amputation accrued is by no 'chance'. Deleuze and Guattari read such accidents as events that are 'part of the biopolitical scripting of populations available for injury, whether through labouring or through warring or through both' (**Puar, 2017: 64**), allowing biopolitics to gain agency.

This 'randomness of fate' (**Garland–Thomson, 1997: 94**) is reasoned out in the interstice of religion, 'theodicy' as articulated in Lerner's 'Just World' Theory, as well as by Veena Das (**2018: 137**). In 'Animal's People',

discussions abound of 'thighs of fate' (Sinha, 2007: 111), of understanding disability as 'god's knot in humanity' (Ibid: 123). Animal draws attention to the condition of the victims of 'that night' – Shambhu believes his condition to be 'god's will' and resigns to his fate (Ibid: 147).

In an eloquent passage, Elli reasons why she 'fell out with her god' (Ibid: 203) when she realized that her 'mother's illness could not be cured by prayer, or by (my) own force..., we went our separate ways, he to demonstrate his strange way of loving human beings, while for me began the long process of learning how to heal their broken bodies and minds' (Ibid: 203). Religion offers a vista for reform in the novel, hence Farouq's request to Animal to 'embrace a religion... get to Paradise' (Ibid: 206), for if he fails to prove his purity while walking on the 'fire', he will go to 'hell' to which he retorts that he has 'already been to hell' (Ibid: 207). Chunaram, a Hindu offers another point of view to demystify the mysteries of the universe – for him, Animal 'suffers' in the present because he sinned in his past life (Ibid: 207). Animal's disability elicits interpretational responses that are grounded in religious or superstitious beliefs. Even death is rationalised through religion- the 'Angel of Death' upon seeing a 'healthy image' of Alia who is wearing a 'fancy new dress' will believe that he has 'made a mistake' and will spare Alia (Ibid: 326).

It is also crucial to note that the entire accident of 'that night' is talked about in theodic terms – Ma Franci interprets it as the 'Apokalips', and the 'fire scene' at the mosque which highlighted the way bodies are used as sites of violence be it for the sake of Holy Wars (the murder in Karbala) (Ibid: 221) or the 'accident' of 'that night', to visualizing Ma Franci as Ma Kali, the harbinger of the 'Apokalips', the 'Qayamat', to Isa resurrecting to 'fix' Animal's body with glue (Ibid: 334), to his further inebriated rendezvous in the jungle where after a cathartic rejection by the animals who declare him to be 'human' (Ibid: 346), he 'rejects all gods including deities.....policemen...conmen, the living, the dead', the tripartite of Power- Religion, Medicine, and Politics, he finds himself in a unified 'Brahma', the 'Paradise', placing himself in a pre-lapsarian state, after coming to terms with himself as well as the 'suffering' and 'cruelty' on Earth. (Ibid: 352)

Animal also subtly brings to the surface another 'biocidal' disaster, if I may hazard to say- the 'Agent Orange' incident and the mention of the Vietnam War when Elli recounts her days in 'Amrika' (Ibid: 137 – 9). Wars are deliberate actions on the body – the enemy's body and seek an erasure of the same. The use of chemicals in the Vietnam War- napalm (white phosphorus), as well as Agent Orange reveal the atrocities that humans readily inflict upon one another, misusing and damaging ecosystems in the process.

Disasters such as the Bhopal Gas Tragedy cause the body to respond to the environment by means of which it is at risk – the catalogue of all the victims of the Kampani- Somnath, Gargi, Shambhu, the nursing mother who cannot breastfeed her baby since her milk is ‘poisonous’ (**Ibid: 107**) imply the long term risks such disasters pose to humans and their environment, they are victims of ‘slow violence’ (**Nixon, 2009: 13**).

In the face of the ‘supposed inevitability’, how are the crips to claim agency, their own ‘picture of health’? Betcher posits the view that ‘as a picture of health, the cripp refuses to resent the world. S/he exercises forbearance with humanity, given that environmentally induced disabilities in the Anthropocene are not innocent of human on human injustice, of human on human violence’ (**Betcher, 2015: 21**). This leads us into a ‘post human’ realm- of understanding ‘environmentally induced disabilities’ as mutation, a way of survival, a reminder of ‘more fluid relation between capacity and debility’ (**Puar, 2017: 168**), something that was apprehended by the disabilities scholar David Mitchell who re-interpreted the Darwinian theory and hailed ‘randomness and non-directed nature’ along with ‘adaptive interactions with the environment’ (**Mitchell, 2000, 25**). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson too, writes of an ‘alternative vision of nature wherein the picture of health refers not to bounded self-enclosure or its dream of purity but to living with carnivalesque vigour amidst the human and planetary manifold, having learned to abide the unexpected, to live with dissonance, to rein in the impulse to control’ (**Garland-Thomson, 1997: 348**).

This ‘refiguring’ of the ‘somatic wholeness’ allows the ‘Eyes’ for an unsettling confrontation ‘with the abject, entailing those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal’. The abject in Kristevian scholarship is the ‘rupturing of systematic order and sealed identity from within’ (**Kristeva, 1982: 23**). Animal occupies this porous boundary- the uneasy spot between human and non-human, and due to this liminality becomes the ‘post human changeling’ (**Nixon, 2009: 14**). Fiedler (**1993**) opines that ‘the true Freak, however stirs both supernatural terror and natural sympathy, since unlike the fabulous monsters, he is one of us, the human child of human parents, however, altered by forces we do not quite understand into something mystic and mysterious, as no more cripple ever is.. Only the true Freak challenges the conventional boundaries between the male and the female, human and animal, and consequently between reality and illusion, experience and fantasy, fact and myth’ (**Ibid: 24**). The Freak, thus can be said to embody abjection, and Animal is a ‘freak’ of ‘that night’ – becoming a ‘(corpo)realized entity of our worst fears and anxieties’ (**Kristeva, 1982: 160**), alluding to somatic mutations and other ‘such accidents’.

In 'The History of Disability', Henri-Jacques Stiker (2015) writes that the integration of the disabled in the society will 'prove inadequate if it must be on the terms of the dominant culture's normalizing criteria' which is concerned more with 'eugenics', a sanitized way of looking at, and containing things, 'curing' them, 'disciplining', and 'regulating them'. So, what is to be done?

Mitchell and Snyder in 'Narrative Prosthesis', write, 'like other social movements, advocates for disability rights, artists, and scholars have recognized the power available in resignifying terms such as cripple and gimp. As opposed to substituting more palatable terms, the ironic embrace of derogatory terminology has provided the leverage that belongs to openly transgressive displays. The power of transgression always originates at the moment when the derided object embraces its deviance as value. Perversely championing the terms of their own stigmatization, marginal peoples alarm the dominant culture with a canniness about their own subjugation. The embrace of denigrating terminology forces the dominant culture to face its violence head-on because the authority of devaluation has been claimed openly and ironically. Thus, the minority culture deflects the stigmatizing definition back on to the offenders by openly advertising them in public discourse. The effect shames the dominant culture into a recognition of its own dehumanizing precepts. What was most devalued is now righted by a self-naming that detracts from the original power of the condescending terms. Disability representation explicitly evokes powerful sentiments within the safe space of textual interactions. These 'powerful sentiments' emanate from the transgressive power signified by physical and cognitive differences. Readers are seduced into an encounter with their most extreme reactions as a way of facing up to the imagined threat that they pose' (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000: 52).

Indra Sinha allows Animal a platform to tell his story, to catharticulate; allowing the 'crip to strike back'.

The Crip Strikes Back: On Animal's agency

The novel can be considered as autoethnographic account – Animal's audio tapes are transcribed to words, a project that allows Animal agency to 'voice' his story, opening 'focus beyond the individual life to examine the culture in which it is embedded, and in the case of disability especially, it has the power to expose how dramatically social representations determine the nature of the disabled body and the forms of the self-knowing attached to it, providing a convincing example of the explanatory power of the social construction model' (Siebers, 2008: 196).

Disabled characters appear in literary texts as marginal characters or as ‘uncomplicated figures or exotic aliens whose bodily configurations operate as spectacles, eliciting responses from other characters or producing rhetorical effects that depend on disability’s cultural resonance. Indeed, main characters almost never have physical disabilities. Even though mainstream critics have long discussed how literary characters look at disabled characters metaphorically or aesthetically, reading them without political awareness as conventional elements of the sentimental, romantic, Gothic, or grotesque traditions’ (**Garland-Thomson, 1997: 209**).

Disabled characters have functioned as ‘narrative prosthesis’, their representation dominating two popular modes address; either as ‘overheated symbolic imagery’ or as a ‘persuasive tool of artistic characterization’ (**Mitchell & Snyder, 2000: 32**). Almost all theorists of disability studies have voiced concern over the ‘negative imagery’ of disabled characters- disability is viewed as ‘a restrictive pattern of characterization that usually sacrificed the humanity of the protagonists and villains alike’ (**Ibid: 34**), thus ‘misrepresenting or flattening the experience real people have of their own or other’s disabilities’ (**Garland-Thomson, 1997: 214**).

‘Animal’s People’ marks a departure from the ‘literary traffic in metaphors’ that tends to disable the understanding of the stigma that attaches itself to disabled bodies. The text is an ensemble of Animal’s recordings (‘Tapes’) along with a hyperlink to the information on Khaufpur, and an Editor’s Note - a collection of para-texts that further disembodify the book to en-able the disabled voices.

Animal, the eponymous character ‘used to be human once’, something that he is ‘told’ but ‘does not remember it (himself)..... (I) walked on two feet just like a human being’ (**Sinha: 2007: 1**).

Tape One and Tape Two not only materialize Animal’s voice into text but also pronounce the anxiety that is projected upon disabled bodies, a mix of compassion and pity.

Born a few days before ‘that night’ in ‘Khaufpur’ (literally translating to ‘City of Terror’), an allusion to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy of 1984, Animal is one of the victims of the methyl isocyanate leak from the ‘Kampani’s plant’ (again, an allusion to the Union Carbide India Limited Plant) that contorts his spine, rendering him to walk on all fours.

Animal is continuously reassured of what he once was – ‘such a beautiful boy you were’, ‘so sweet you were, a naughty little angel. You’d stand up on tiptoe’ by Ma Franci, a French nun who is rendered unstable and converses only in French post ‘that night’.

Animal iterates that he is told that he could 'walk upright' but refuses to be 'comforted' by such 'news' and aligns himself further with the peripheral bodies and objects – blind men, corpses, and turd.

Animal no longer wishes to be 'human' and consciously makes an effort to 'avoid mirrors' but cannot avoid his shadow. Mirrors are most often than not, 'sites of trauma' for people who are 'different', but function as a 'site and sight of affirmation for dominant groups' (Mirzoeff, 2015: 54). He has internalized the 'raw disgust' so much so that he is 'filled with rage' at 'all things that go or even stand on two feet', and his catalogue includes not only Ma Franci (who is rendered senile after 'that night' but otherwise shows no visible sign of disability), the watchman Chukku, women carrying pots on their heads, waiters carrying four plates per arm but also 'performing bears, stilt-walkers, one-leg-and-crutch beggar at Pir Gate, herons, ladders leaning against walls, and Farouq's bicycle' (Sinha, 2007: 2).

Animal further charts his peripheral position and at the same time becomes a mouthpiece for the disabled community when he realizes that 'the world of human is meant to be viewed from eye level. Your eyes' adhering to the 'normative' discourse of viewing and being viewed, and later exclaiming that 'at least standing on two feet' should ameliorate one's misery.

Animal furthers the idea of cripple as a 'spectacle' when he talks of the 'Kakadu Jarnalis' whose 'eyes lit up' when he sees Animal, but later assumes a solemn garb, speaking in a 'hushed respect as if he were speaking a prayer in the presence of the lord of the death' (Ibid: 4).

Animal sees through the 'Jarnalis' who asks him to talk about 'the usual' – 'ous raat, that night, cette nuit, always that fucking night.' Animal is a living, 'freak'ing testimony of 'that night'.

Animal understands that he is a freak on display, that the 'jarnalis are like vultures, who suck (our) stories from us, so strangers in far off countries can marvel there's so much pain in the world. 'What I say becomes a picture and the eyes settle on it like flies' (Ibid: 5).

He gauges his disabled position- understands the jarnalis' gaze and strikes back – 'don't fucking stare or I won't speak'. The bodily difference between the two is pronounced when Animal likens the jarnalis' eyes to 'buttons' and his to 'buttonholes', very thoroughly aware of the lack that he is.

Had it not been for his corkscrewed spine, Animal is aware that he would have cut a 'handsome figure had he not been sullen' with a 'chest as deep as a wrestler's, pawled legs like hanks of ropes...' (Ibid: 5).

Thousands of people ‘look through (jarnalis’) eyes) – ‘thousands staring at me through the holes in your head. Their curiosity feels like acid on my skin’ (**Ibid: 2007: 7**). It is this ‘awful idea’ that titillates viewers and exhibit disabled people as ‘objects of suspicion’ (**Mitchell & Snyder, 2000: 36**).

Disabled characters are either extolled or defeated according to their ability to adjust or overcome their tragic situation. Animal then is an exception. He derides the jarnalis and lashes out at the image of disabled people fostered by the able-bodied consumers – ‘Jarnalis, I am a hard bastard, I hide my feelings. Ask people they’ll tell you. I’m the same as ever, anyone in Khaufpur will point me out. There he is! Look! It’s Animal. Goes on four feet, that one. See, it’s him, bent double by his own bitterness. People see the outside but it is the inside where the real things happen, no one looks in there, maybe they don’t dare.....’ (**Sinha, 2007: 11**).

Animal takes command and prevents appropriation of his voice, he is ready to res(crip) this story.

I have already posited the view of Animal as a ‘post human agent’. According to Bart Simon, ‘post human is figured not as a radical break from humanism but rather as implicated in the ongoing critique of what it means to be human’ (**Simon, 2003: 67**), an opinion that gains currency by Badmington who believes that the ‘Posthumanist cultural criticism is forever happening within humanism itself’ (**Ibid: 5**).

So Much Longing, So Little Space: On Animal’s resistance

If Animal embodies the ‘abject’, his ‘intimate side is suffering, and horror its public feature’ (**Kristeva, 1982: 34**), and his narrative is the ‘most elaborate, next to syntactic competence to situate a speaking being between his desires and their prohibitions’ (**Ibid: 45**).

Animal is aware that he is ‘no longer talking to the Jarnalis. (I am) talking to the eyes that are reading these words.’ (**Sinha: 2007, 12**). Animal recounts the horror of ‘that night’, and while doing so, extricates himself from the garb of religion, declaring, ‘I am not a Muslim, I am not a Hindu, I am not an Isayi, I am an animal, I’d be lying if I said religion meant a damn thing to me. Where was god the cunt when we needed him the most’ (**Ibid: 14**). Animal refuses to embrace any theodic reasoning to justify his way of corporeal being. The name ‘Animal’ sticks to him, ‘like the mud’, it leaves behind a stain that makes him super aware of the corporeal difference.

Animal survives by befriending the outlaws and the outcasts, who, like him occupy the periphery, unassimilated by society. His friends include Ali Faqri, a beggar on the crutch who cons people by assuming the role of a witch ‘doctor’, Anjali, a prostitute, and Jara, the bitch. His human and non-

human companions make him feel comfortable, if not at home by integrating his corporal difference into their daily lives.

Animal is hyper-aware of the 'disgust' his body elicits from the onlookers, and despite Nisha treating him as 'normal', or Zafar declaring him to be 'specially abled', Animal knows that the 'best (I) could expect was disgust or maybe a kicking' (*Ibid*: 19). Tobin Siebers furthers the disability aesthetics. In his essay of the same title, Siebers writes, 'aesthetics tracks the emotions that some bodies feel in the presence of other bodies. But all bodies are not created equal when it comes to aesthetic response. Taste and disgust are the volatile reactions that reveal the dis/ease with which one body might incorporate another. Continuing in the same tone is Fiedler's (1993) observation, 'the terror of the challenge to the self's boundaries which are believed to be more or less absolute suggests that the spectacle of the extraordinary bodily difference upsets the viewer's faith in his/her own biological integrity. The viewer of the freakish spectacle does not experience a feeling of superiority in his or her closer proximity to the normal ideal, but rather senses his or her own body to be at risk. The power is in the challenge of the self's stability rather than its security.'

Animal is strongly attracted to Nisha but in a case of role reversal, declares that 'she is not my type.' Drawing from contemporary culture, he views his life parallel to a movie that ironically goes by the name, 'Dil Hi Dil Mein'. Nisha embarks upon a journey to teach Animal- breaking his name to 'Jan-var – the one who lives', praising him to be worthy enough of getting into Harvard, and applauding him for his 'uniqueness.' By coming in contact with Nisha's social circle, Animal navigates through the intricacies of society – despite his moniker and the physical evidence of disability, Animal is entrusted with duties that demand honesty and trust – be it carrying money on Zafar's behalf, or 'jamisponding.'

All in all, Animal despite claiming that he is one real animal, reveals his bare bones of humanity- he envies Zafar and believes him to be his 'rival in love', he gradually tries to poison him, he deliberately does not disclose to Somnath Ellie's secret for the simple fear of breaking his heart, he cares about Alia, he cares about Farouq, he makes Zafar see through his unintentional joke about his 'gallop', and he regrets 'poisoning' Zafar amongst other things.

He is the mouthpiece for the critique of 'democracy' as a farce, when he realises that 'the democracy is a meeting where everyone does what Zafar wants' (*Sinha, 2007: 123*), as well as the flawed medical practices that keep 'samples' (Kha-in –the Jar) but fail to deliver in the times of need. Through his sharp observations, he strips through the falsities of imposed layered identities, and reveals that there are 'just humans'.

An important episode in 'Animal's People', and perhaps, Animal's life is Holi. Reading it through the Bakhtinian lens would lend a carnivalesque shade to it. However, I am wary of such an interpretation because it is important to understand that hierarchies in Khaufpur have already overturned post 'that night'. It is in chaos, and the festival of Holi brings order in Animal's life. However, this order is uncanny for Animal because he had been an animal for too long. Nevertheless, Animal gets to share physical proximity, an erotic encounter (despite him being inebriated), with Anjali, a prostitute.

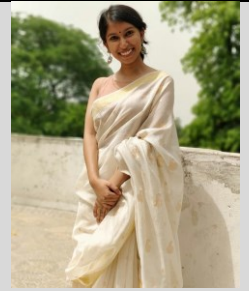
Animal from the onset had always been vocal about his urges- and he as a voyeur, satisfies his urges (quite unethically) by peeping on Nisha (claiming it to protect her 'honour') and 'blue jeans', Ellie. A refusal from Nisha too, resigns him to his lot- that he will never articulate his erotic desires.

However, the festival of Holi allows him the opportunity to satisfy his urge, to foray into the 'privileged domain of ability to have sex' (Siebers, 2008: 149). It is noteworthy that Anjali does not find Animal's body repulsive- and if were to study Animal as a potential 'mutant', 'a post human agent', then his success at being able to perform sex bestows upon him a sexual identity that firstly proves that 'disability is not a defect that needs to be overcome to have sex but as a complex embodiment that enhances sexual activities and pleasure', and secondly, it promises a 'political dimension' – the right to reproduce, the right to be recognized as 'sexual citizens' who need not be 'quarantined' to fulfil the State or Society's eugenics drive (Ibid: 153).

By refusing to undergo corrective surgery, Animal exercises his agency as a 'free human', and towards the end of the book, he keeps his name, he is the only Animal with a capital A- who is not an 'upright human' a term suitable for his condition. By exercising his agency, Animal's body offers a new interpretation, a new site of resistance- the new potentials that the body manifests in keeping up with the dynamic environment.

The porous boundaries of dis/ability navigated by Animal – renders only one thing true- the 'Apokalips' does not distinguish between bodies, all bodies are at risk to the 'accidents', the 'disasters' that the humans have unleashed on and within one another in the Age of the Anthropocene. However, bearing in mind the spatio-temporal co-ordinates, it may be nothing short of a truism, that some bodies are more disposable than others.

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To cite this article:

Srivastava, S., 2023. Res(crip)ting the Gaze: Agency and the aesthetics of disability in 'Animal's People'. *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 10(2), 131-143. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.31273/eirj.v10i2.1127>.