

## **Book Review**

**Title:** *My Body of Knowledge: Stories of Disability, Healing, and Life.*

**Authors:** Karen Myers and Felicia Ferlin (Eds.)

**Publisher:** Ostego, MI: PageFree, 2006.

**Paper, ISBN** – 1-58961-509-3, 220 pages

**Cost:** \$14.95 USD

**Reviewer:** Steven E. Brown

*My Body of Knowledge* contains 34 entries from established authors and unknowns. Many disabilities are represented in five chapters or sections, divided into: “Affliction, Onset, and Crisis;” “Isolation, Preoccupation, and Recovery;” “Reflection, Interpretation, and Spirituality;” “Interaction, Negotiation, and Relationships;” and “Integration, Distraction, and Recreation.”

Each section begins with a short description of its contents by the editors followed by a poem. Sections address disabilities as diverse as Crohn’s Disease and migraines, and activities as common to those with disabilities as anyone else (e.g., sex.). The final piece, written by editor Myers, narrates a daunting experience made palatable by an awaiting meal. This is fitting since editor Ferlin literally begins the book with the cover illustration of a disembodied skeleton.

Like all anthologies, a story that appeals to one reader may not be as appreciated by another. Unlike most collections about the disability experience, this one includes authors of color and diverse sexual orientations, which makes the book unusual.

One of my favorite essays describes a trip to Martinique in the Caribbean, after the author learns that he is HIV+. His encounter with a white sea snake, which he learns the next day is one of the world’s most venomous, and contemplation of his condition, leads him to the conclusion “Wherever I go, I am my own home” (p. 121).

One of the funniest writers around, Sharon Wachsler, describes an encounter with a local health clinic. After an enervating day she concludes, “I’m ready to celebrate by going to bed for several days” (p. 72). Anyone whose disability includes pain and fatigue will identify with that comment.

The strength of this set of essays is that readers will find themselves both identifying with some writers and learning about experiences outside of their own from others. I highly recommend it.

Wachsler, S. *Pap goes the wheezer*. pp. 68-72.

Williams, A. *Pas de deux with Mr. D*. pp. 112-121.

**Steven E. Brown, Ph.D.**, is the Media Reviews Editor for *RDS* and an Associate Professor at the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawai‘i. He may be contacted at: [sebrown@hawaii.edu](mailto:sebrown@hawaii.edu)