

Book Review

Title: *Re-membering: Putting Mind and Body Back Together Following Traumatic Brain Injury*

Author: Ann Millett-Gallant

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Reviewer: John Derby, PhD

Ann Millett-Gallant's *Re-membering: Putting Mind and Body Back Together Following Traumatic Brain Injury*, is a self-published memoir "about being congenitally physically disabled and experiencing traumatic brain injury" (back cover). Millett-Gallant focuses primarily on her recovery from a 2007 mobility scooter accident that resulted in an extensive hospital stay and lengthy rehabilitation characterized by memory loss and recovery amidst a host of physical, mental, and social highs and lows.

The memoir begins with a gripping account of Millett-Gallant's accident and her mindset of feeling perpetually lost. After outlining the non-linear, collage-like structure of the book and its major components in the introduction, Chapter 1 explicitly discusses the accident, hospital stay, and early recovery. Millett-Gallant draws from clues such as family member notes and journal entries, hospital photographs and fMRI scans, personal drawings and collages, and others' stories, to reconstruct this period. Following a medically induced coma, she worked through paralysis, pneumonia, almost complete memory loss, inability to speak, cranial reconstruction, new prosthetics, marriage, and returning to work, most of which involved physical or mental setbacks, progress, and eventual resolution. The tone of the first chapter is casual and accessible to a broad audience interested in disability, Disability Studies, and the intersection of disability and art. Sizable attention is paid to interpersonal relationships with close family members and friends, especially her mom and dad. She divulges considerable pain, anxiety, and self-blame, but emphasizes hope.

Subsequent chapters incorporate substantial information on traumatic brain injury, contemporary art history, and art therapy as well as on key figures and iconic visual culture that pertains to these topics. Chapter 2 incorporates traumatic brain injury research into the author's experience of the condition. Chapter 3 addresses Millett-Gallant's physical rehabilitation, which is contextualized by her preexisting disability and the need to fit new prosthetics—twice! Chapter 4 and the conclusion resolve the memoir by discussing the pivotal role of art therapy in Millett-Gallant's journey.

The major payoff of Millett-Gallant's memoir is her ability to weave her scholarly expertise tightly throughout the book, creating an atypical art book that culls from a variety of loosely connected artifacts and fields of study. Central to the discussion is analysis of relevant

visual culture, including medical images of Ann's brain and skull and her own artwork, especially collages produced in art therapy.

In the opening pages of the introduction, Millett-Gallant introduces her collage "Remembering," after which the book is titled, as an "accidental masterpiece," which, although "hardly a masterpiece in the conventional sense," functions as an expression of inner strength, encompassing the overlapping and sometimes competing aspects of raw energy with frustration, confusion, randomness, impulsivity, and imperfection in a therapeutic manner (p. 11). The lone contention of the book is not the amateur quality of Ann's collages, but rather her chief assertion that "Art can be therapeutic within and beyond one's work with an art therapist" (p. 119). While art *can* be therapeutic, it is not *necessarily* therapeutic, and we should be cautious not to mistake the author's success and enthusiasm as an endorsement for self-management of our own mental health.

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