Public Abstract

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Department:Theatre

Degree:PhD

Title:BODILY DIFFERENCE, INTERDEPENDENCE, AND TOXIC HALF-LIVES:
REPRESENTATIONS OF DISABILITY IN D.W. GREGORYS DIRTY PICTURES, THE GOOD
DAUGHTER, AND RADIUM GIRLS

People with disabilities have been a part of theatre for thousands of years. But typically they are represented as metaphors, where blindness or a limp symbolizes something about their character and has nothing to do with how they live their lives. When disability is reduced to a mere metaphor, it influences the way audiences perceive real people with real disabilities. D.W. Gregory is a contemporary playwright who is challenging the way people with disabilities are represented on stage.

My research uses traditional dramatic criticism and close textual readings to analyze three plays by D.W. Gregory: *Dirty Pictures*, *The Good Daughter*, and *Radium Girls*. I use a number of theories from the field of Disability Studies to unpack these plays and learn how the disabled characters are crafted, how they interact with their worlds, and what implications they might have on wider culture.

My results indicate that D.W. Gregory is writing characters with disabilities in ways that challenge traditional understandings of disability. Using Disability Studies as a way to analyze play texts is a powerful tool that has significant implications for social justice. Understanding these theories can change the way that artists create, and as a result, change the way that culture understands disability. Perhaps these ways of thinking and these plays can influence the way people with disabilities are treated, and improve the lives of all people. All our lives are interdependent upon each other.