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**Rousso, H. (2013). *Don't Call Me Inspirational: A Disabled Feminist Talks Back*.
Philadelphia: Temple University Press. ISBN 978-1439909379.**

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Harilyn Rousso's memoir *Don't Call Me Inspirational: A Disabled Feminist Talks Back* engages with both the personal and the political. Rousso herself is an accomplished psycho-therapist, disability activist, and feminist. She is president of Disabilities Unlimited Consulting Services and the founder of the Networking Project for Disabled Women and Girls. Rousso is no stranger to the literary world, having co-edited the anthology *Double Jeopardy: Addressing Gender Equity in Special Education* (2001), and authored the book *Disabled, Female, and Proud!: Stories of Ten Women with Disabilities* (1993). She identifies as disabled, naming her disability cerebral palsy (CP).

In honour of Rousso's unabashed engagement with positionality, I might begin this review (as I often do in my own work) by situating myself in relation to it: I too have cerebral palsy. And I might warn readers now that I tend to find my disability studies analyses entangled in my experience of disability. I mean to make some of these connections explicit in the review that follows. I believe doing so keeps with the spirit of Rousso's text, and is in general consistent with the disability memoir tradition to which she belongs, where experiences from the margins are identified and storied for the purpose of pulling down pillars of ableism.

The book is a collection of short reflections and stories that move from an introduction involving a story about the author's literal birth, to more theoretical reflections on the birth of political and social identities. There are five central sections, which are then broken up into small narrative chapters. Each chapter addresses facets of Rousso's identity, even the varied identities

she has worn through her life. In the eulogies she writes to the various persons she has been, the author suggests identity can be fluid, and multiple, and radically revised. For example, in the first chapter, “Who is Harilynn?”, she frames identity as a fluid journey, and self-acceptance as a process. In her own words: “I’m not entirely comfortable with my disabled body even today. But other experiences, besides disability activism, helped me progress in the process of truly embracing myself as a woman with CP” (8).

Don't Call Me Inspirational provides the reader with a generously candid narrative of how the author became politicized as a feminist and disability activist. Her work is reminiscent of Anne Finger (1990) and Susannah B. Mintz (2007) when she weaves the intimate, the political, and the disabled together. Often the memoirs of disability activists or scholars, whether intentional or not, invoke a sort of super-crip narrative, where disability features in the story as the enemy to overcome, and consideration of the privileges integral to normalized success is absent. Yet this memoir offers greater nuance, and could instead be characterized as a behind the scenes look at what it might be like to achieve neoliberal successes while negotiating the social position of disability. Her story, in contrast with the disability memoir trope, may not be as tidy, may instead be more fragmented and fraught, and is certainly not inspirational; but it rings far more honest.

If I were to offer critique, it would entail the suggestion that this sentiment might have been expanded further, and Rousso might have grounded herself more firmly in her own privileges. For instance, one provocative narrative in the text, where a homeless person refuses her money, even insists upon returning it as though Rousso needs it more, leads to the confession that poverty frightens the author. It well should, as disabled people disproportionately find themselves below the poverty line, so poverty has a habit of haunting disabled people, nipping at

their heels. Latent in this account may be anxiety over sliding down the disability hierarchy, bereft of the shielding forces of privilege. While her fear may be understandable, readers can only guess at its roots.

I offer this critique and speculation after reflecting upon my own scholastic grapplings with privilege, and while I would not want to reduce her narrative to the bits we hold in common, I might admit that it is because of our shared embodied experiences that I especially appreciated her more intimate stories: her frustration around physical therapy, enduring anxieties over failing a mother who wanted her to walk straight. Rousso juxtaposes her mother's discomfort with her "awkward" walk with her parents' fierce belief that she was capable and could do anything. The experience mirrors my own, where my mother worked at ensuring my intelligence would eclipse my diagnosis, especially so after rehabilitative strategies proved unsuccessful. The author here strikes a balance between vulnerable personal narrative and nuanced political commentary, offering a story that was very much her own, and yet she speaks to broader, shared experiences of navigating an ableist world.

What Rousso offers here is a sharing of stories, a meditation on life, activism, disability, and womanhood. This book would work well in an introductory disability studies or gender studies course, so that students can meet real people in the readings they consume. It would be an ideal text for healthcare providers in need of avoiding entrapping their disabled clientele in indifferent biomedical classifications. The book has clear plain language and the narrative style makes it accessible to a wide audience. As a disabled woman I wish more people in my life would read work like this as it so well encapsulates the tension I oft confront between pride in my own embodiment and confrontation with a world that tells me to be ashamed.

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