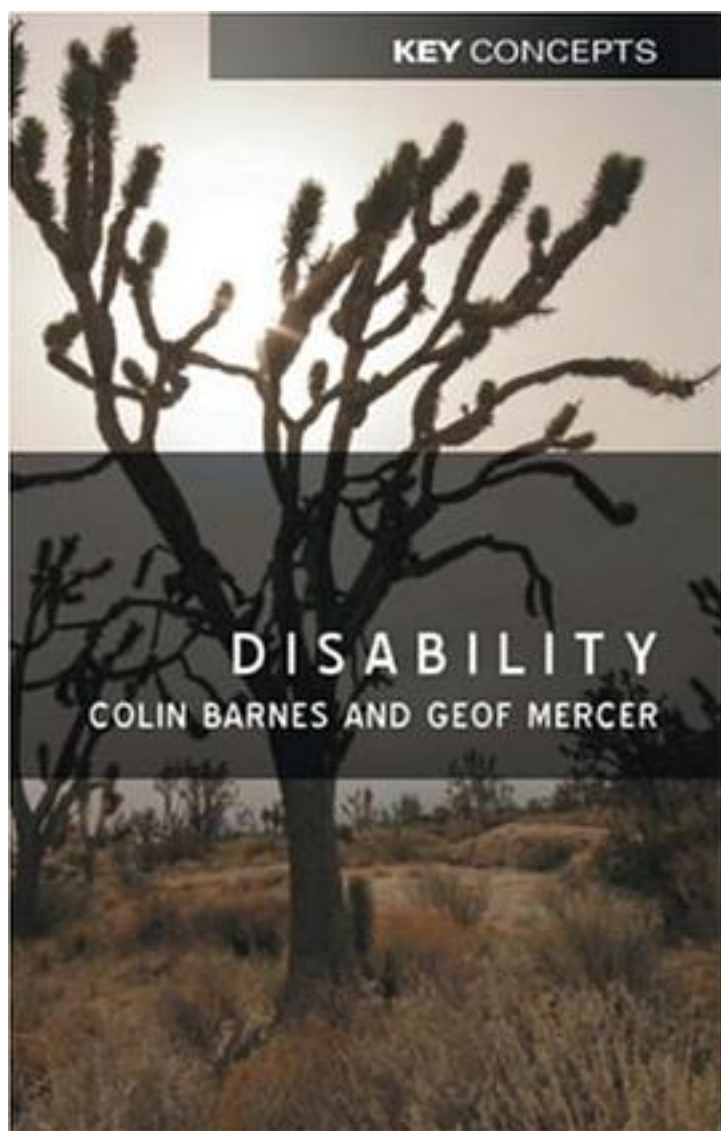


Disability



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Told in a broken shorthand voice, Mazza's language is acute, evoking a place where the patients, the caregivers, and the system are all disabled. Teri and Cleo are minimum-wage nurse-aides at a state ward for severely retarded and physically handicapped children. They are expected to feed, bathe, clothe, and carry out the required therapies for their patients in a 4-hour shift. They're working within a system where money for therapy is only continued if therapy shows improvement--and yet the state-paid therapists who oversee the ward know the patients will never show any improvement. To keep the money coming in, it is up to the minimum-wage caregivers to "see" and chart important improvements, thus keeping the therapy program alive. Blinded in their own way by their pet-like adoption of favorite patients, Teri and Cleo struggle to remain both optimistic and realistic. As their personal failures mount--and even transpose or emulate the travesties within the state ward--Teri and Cleo, with their own unseen "disabilities" in dealing with their lives and pasts, react harshly to the breakdown in the emotional balancing act.

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